



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Tuesday 13 December 2016**

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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 13 December 2016*

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

## Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Ms Jennifer Buchan, who is a celebrant of the Humanist Society Scotland.

**Ms Jennifer Buchan (Humanist Society Scotland):** Good afternoon everyone, and thank you, Presiding Officer and members of our Scottish Parliament, for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Sixty-eight years ago this week, on 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris. The declaration recognises that

“the inherent dignity and ... the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family”

are

“the foundation of freedom, justice and peace”

in our world.

For me as a chaplain, a parent and a humanist, the two most significant words in that sentence are “human family”. As an entire race, each one of us has the right to lead a safe and dignified life, no matter who we are or where we have come from.

When we are born, we are not born into a world of equality and, as a humanist, I believe that everything that can be done should be done to level the playing field. Each individual, no matter their sex, nationality, culture, language, colour or sexuality, those with a religious faith and those of us with none, should be treated with kindness, tolerance and respect, and encouraged to live useful and fulfilling lives.

I was asked, “Why are you bringing up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Tuesday? Sixty-eight years is not a significant anniversary.” The anniversary is not important—the declaration is.

As a global society, we are going through a period of upheaval and change, and we have been told that the world in which we all live has entered a “post-truth” era. For reasonable and rational people, that is not reasonable or rational and we must prioritise the truth. We must look to the document, which was written following the

realisation of the worst atrocities committed against mankind, and which was drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of our world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not open to misinterpretation, and so, perhaps, before making any decisions that affect ourselves, our families, our communities and our planet, and to ensure that we are definitely doing the right thing, we should give it a read.

Maybe we should take a few minutes to print it off and pin it above our desks or stick it on our fridges—to make it a document that we and our families are truly familiar with, because we take notice of it every day. Maybe, in a post-truth era, we should be looking at actual truth for us and the whole of our human family. It is universally agreed that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace, and we should all be familiar with every single word of it.

## Parliamentary Liaison Officers

14:03

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):**

Before we move to the next item of business, I draw members' attention to a revision to the ministerial code in relation to parliamentary liaison officers, which comes into force from today.

Up until now in this session, PLOs have been required to declare their appointment the first time they participate in parliamentary business relating to the portfolio of their cabinet secretary. I am pleased to advise you that, following a request from the Standards Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, the First Minister has now revised the code, requiring PLOs to declare every time they participate in business relating to their cabinet secretary. That applies from today. I am sure that members will agree that that is a welcome change to procedure that will enhance the transparency of parliamentary business.

## Topical Question Time

14:04

**Amazon (Working Conditions)**

1. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports of "intolerable" working conditions at Amazon's Fife warehouse. (S5T-00259)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown):** It is important that all employees in all workplaces are treated fairly. The Scottish Government is doing everything that it can to drive up employment standards and to promote good working practices with the powers that are available to us.

**Willie Rennie:** Reports by an undercover reporter about workers camping outside the warehouse have lifted the lid on Amazon. In one case, the company penalised a worker for being in hospital with a kidney infection. Last year, the Scottish Government paid almost £1 million to Amazon, even though it did not pay all its workers the real living wage. Will the minister rule out paying Amazon any more grants?

**Keith Brown:** All the grants that were awarded to Amazon have been paid and the conditions that were attached to them have been fulfilled. It is also true to say that those grants go back many years to 2005.

I am concerned about the reports over the weekend. My office has been in touch with Amazon and we are working on establishing a meeting to take place in the next seven days, so that the issues can be raised.

The matters are of concern to the Scottish Government, as they will be to anybody. It is important that we do what we can to raise them. We do not have the powers to change the living wage or the employment laws that would allow us to take the action that we would like to take. We would like to legislate for a living wage—we have said that on many occasions. In the absence of those powers, we can make representations and speak to Amazon to make clear that we find such practices unacceptable. That will happen in the next few days.

**Willie Rennie:** I am afraid that the minister has ducked my question. When I have raised the issue with the First Minister before—I have done so on a number of occasions—she has sent Roseanna Cunningham to the Amazon warehouse. What happened with those meetings? Did she tell Amazon that it would receive no grants? If not, why not? It is about time that the Government was clear on whether it will give Amazon grants.

**Keith Brown:** I have just said to Willie Rennie that we have no outstanding grants and that there are no proposals from Amazon for further grants. We have no intention of providing further grants, not least in the absence of any application. In the case of previous applications, the conditions that were attached to the grants have been fulfilled and the grants have been paid, as were the grants that were made by the previous Liberal Democrat-Labour Administration. I imagine that the same conditions applied at that time.

It is important that we do what we can to bring jobs to Scotland, which is the purpose of the grants. It is also important that we promote fair work and practices, and that will be the focus of my meeting with Amazon in the coming days.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that Amazon has a global value of £290 billion, with £6 billion-worth of revenue in the United Kingdom, yet it pays little tax. It gets employees to opt out of the working time directive to get a job and, as we have heard, it threatens workers with the sack if they are off sick and it pays so little that staff are camping out in order to avoid travel costs.

I understand what the cabinet secretary is saying about the grants that have been given to Amazon in the past. However, will he review the conditions that apply to any regional selective assistance or other grants that are given by the Government to companies—not just to Amazon but to all companies—so that they reflect fair work practices?

**Keith Brown:** First, I thank Jackie Baillie for acknowledging the simple fact that we do not hold the powers that would allow us to insist on a living wage or the employment practices that she mentions.

For future grants, we will continue to look at each application on its merits. Jackie Baillie will know that the Living Wage Foundation often works with companies that do not pay a living wage in the belief and the hope that it can encourage them to pay a living wage. In fact, companies can even be given accreditation in advance of their paying the living wage.

The focus of our activity must be on, first, bringing jobs to Scotland and encouraging job creation. We must also encourage those companies that do not pay the living wage to do so and drive up the nearly 80 per cent of people in Scotland who are paid the living wage. That is the practical and responsible way to go about the matter.

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Although the cabinet secretary does not have the power to create new employment laws, what steps is he taking to ensure that Amazon is in

compliance with existing employment laws? Amazon is not a signatory to the business pledge, which has been signed by fewer than 300 businesses in Scotland—that represents less than one in every 1,000 businesses. Is he pleased with the current uptake of the business pledge?

**Keith Brown:** I did not mention this in my response to Jackie Baillie's point, but we have no powers to raise tax from those companies and, as I have mentioned already, the same is true for employment law. I have written to Amazon and we expect to meet it shortly. Of course, we are looking at and we will review its practices, not least in relation to the press reports that we have had over the weekend, but not only in relation to those reports.

It is extremely important that we encourage companies to sign up to the business pledge. There are many other companies that are currently considering it. They want to know about the terms and the provisions of the pledge to see whether they can meet them. It is a good initiative and it is important that we start to do this—the UK Government has not done it. I would have thought that Dean Lockhart would welcome the initiative and the 300 companies thus far—plus the others that are considering it—that have signed up to vital provisions, which, to remind Dean Lockhart, include a commitment to pay the living wage.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** The cabinet secretary will be aware of repeated reports in the media that Amazon has been hostile towards unionisation. In fact, a couple of years ago, the GMB described one unionisation drive there as like being “in the French Resistance”. Will the Government commit to ensuring that union membership is available and respected for staff members at all companies that receive grant funding and subsidies from the Government?

**Keith Brown:** We routinely encourage companies throughout Scotland to recognise and to work with trade unions, because we believe that the influence of trade unions is a positive for workforce development and for the welfare of workforces. We do that as a matter of course. Companies have the right not to do that and, when that has happened in the past, we have been willing to get involved by making connections with relevant trade unions or by encouraging companies to reconsider their position. We will continue to do that when we deal with companies in the future.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** In 2012-13, Amazon paid £3.2 million in corporation tax on £4 billion-worth of UK sales and it claimed back £2.5 million in public grants, plus a further £1 million last year, as Willie Rennie said.

Tax avoidance, low pay, poor working conditions and no trade union recognition—what exactly is the Government's message to companies that breach the principles of fair work and breach the business pledge? The Government needs to call them out. Those employers need to be exposed for what they are—exploiters, cheats and throwbacks to a Victorian era.

**Keith Brown:** I have done precisely what Neil Findlay says in his point. I have contacted Amazon, as my predecessor Roseanna Cunningham did, and we intend to put those points to it and, in particular, the allegations that were made at the weekend.

Neil Findlay started by talking about tax. We do not have the power to insist on a tax regime to clamp down on what I agree with Neil Findlay are widespread tax practices that we do not condone.

**Neil Findlay:** The Government could stop paying them grants.

**Keith Brown:** Neil Findlay does not want to listen. We would not want those practices to be repeated if we had control over those tax-raising powers. As ever, there is a great deal that Neil Findlay and I agree on but, at each point, he is determined to ensure that that is not the public perception. Regardless of that, I will continue to work to encourage Amazon and similar employers to have good and fair working practices, and to recognise trade unions.

### **British Medical Association General Practitioner Survey**

**2. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the latest BMA GP survey. (S5T-00254)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison):** As demonstrated by the recent joint memorandum, we are working closely with the BMA to deliver a new vision for general practice and primary care that will help to address the workload challenges that are faced by Scotland's GPs. That is why, by the end of this parliamentary session, we will have increased spending on primary care services to 11 per cent of the front-line national health service budget. We will deliver an extra £0.5 billion for building a genuine community health service with general practice at its heart.

**Anas Sarwar:** Let us look at the figures in the BMA survey. We already knew that one in three practices is reporting a GP vacancy now, and that practices are closing. The BMA GP survey found that 91 per cent of GPs believe that their workload negatively affects the quality of patient care, and that only 7 per cent of GPs think that consultation times are adequate. New figures that have been

published by the BMA today show that 35 per cent of GPs plan to retire from general practice in the next five years, 20 per cent plan to move to part-time work, 6 per cent plan to move abroad and 6 per cent plan to quit medicine altogether. That is directly linked to the £1.6 billion cut to GP budgets that the Government has imposed over the past 10 years.

Will the cabinet secretary take responsibility and accept that her party has been in control of the NHS for 10 years and that, in her two years as cabinet secretary, she has overseen declining performance? Will she therefore apologise to Scotland's GPs and their patients?

**Shona Robison:** We are getting on with working with Scotland's GPs, through the BMA, on a new contract that will deliver a new vision for primary care, along with £0.5 billion additional investment over this session of Parliament.

Investment in GP services has increased in cash terms each year under the SNP Government. It has risen by £175 million, from £704.6 million in 2007-08 to £879.9 million in 2015-16. That is a cumulative increase of £920 million, under the Scottish National Party, to 2015-16.

We accept that there is more to be done, which is why we are working on the new contract and why I announced a £20 million package to help to ease pressures on workload in the short term and to contribute to putting general practice on a more long-term sustainable footing.

I have said in the chamber on a number of occasions that I acknowledge the pressures that Scotland's GPs are under. That is why we are working hard with the BMA to deliver a new contract, address workload issues and ensure that we get general practice and primary care on to a more sustainable footing.

**Anas Sarwar:** It is clear that the cabinet secretary is not saying "Sorry" to our patients and our NHS workforce.

The reality is that there has been a real-terms cut of £1.6 billion under the SNP Government. I welcome the reversal of the cut to GP budgets, but my fear is that it may be too late and is nothing more than a sticking plaster after 10 years of SNP mismanagement.

Labour has pressed the Government to take steps to help to alleviate the pressure and to build for the long term; to reverse the cuts to funding and to prioritise retention and recruitment of GPs; to increase funding for auxiliary staff including nurse practitioners, mental health nurses, counsellors, physiotherapists and others to work in practices and support GPs; to expand the minor ailments service in pharmacies to help to take the pressure off GPs; and to use the opportunity of the



new GP contract to renew and revitalise primary care. The chair of the BMA's Scottish GP committee has said that if the Government does not change course

"we could soon be in a situation where we do not have enough GPs to deliver effective care to patients."

Will the cabinet secretary accept our proposals and avoid that being her legacy?

**Shona Robison:** I do not regard £500 million over the session as a "sticking plaster". An 11 per cent share of NHS front-line funding is exactly what the profession has asked for, and that is what the Government will deliver.

Anas Sarwar ran through a number of suggestions. Maybe he should look at what is already happening, because all the things that he suggested are already happening. The new model of primary care will be built around multidisciplinary teams, and the minor ailments service is being tested in Inverclyde as we speak. Those things are going forward. He should, perhaps, do his homework before he turns up to the chamber with a list that is a direct lift from what the Scottish Government is already doing.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** Three weeks ago, the City of Edinburgh Council passed its local development plan and, with it, rubber-stamped nearly 5,000 new family homes in my constituency, in which a new health centre has not built in 45 years. That will lead to potentially 20,000 new patients exerting demands on practices that are already on their knees. When I raised that with the First Minister two weeks ago, she unfairly suggested that I was trying to tell local authorities how to do their job. I was asking for the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and the Minister for Local Government and Housing to work together so that the forthcoming planning bill can give local authorities the tools that they need to compel local developers to consider building things such as health centres, and to rule out developments on the ground that they include no healthcare infrastructure. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that she will work with the Minister for Local Government and Housing to that end?

**Shona Robison:** The First Minister's point was that the Liberal Democrats often criticise us for what they term "centralisation", but then come to Parliament asking us to tell local government what it should do on such matters.

However, in a spirit of consensus, I will agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton that we need appropriate primary care infrastructure in new housing developments and where there is increased demand. My officials and I have had regular discussions with NHS Lothian around the need for infrastructure investment in primary care and—as

far as I am aware—plans are being developed to ensure that the primary care infrastructure is fit for purpose. There are particular issues in NHS Lothian, so I have spoken to Alex Cole-Hamilton and other Lothian members to ensure that we address those short-term issues that are very real for patients who are struggling to access a GP.

I am happy to write to Alex Cole-Hamilton with further details of what NHS Lothian is planning. I will do that after topical question time has finished.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** The cabinet secretary may be aware that figures that were released today show not only that there are fewer GPs in Scotland than there were two years ago, but that there is now the lowest number of practices since her party came to power. In fact, the number of practices has decreased in every year in which the SNP has been in power. There is rising demand, more GPs are nearing retirement and there is a significant GP shortage, so will the cabinet secretary take responsibility for her party's abject failure to manage primary care over the past 10 years?

**Shona Robison:** I accept responsibility, which is why we have come up with a comprehensive plan for what we will do to turn the situation around in general practice and primary care. The issues that Donald Cameron has raised today are exactly the issues that the NHS in England faces. Before he levels criticisms here, he should look at the situation down south. To be fair to the UK Government, some of the actions that it is taking to address problems in primary care are the same as the actions that we are taking here.

We are making sure that we have the right workforce in the right place, and that we have more GPs and other health professionals so that we can deliver multidisciplinary teams. We also need to ensure that clusters are developed so that practices can be supported with staff in the right places. All the actions that I have laid out, along with the additional funding of £500 million over the course of the parliamentary session, will help to address those issues. I am happy to make sure that Donald Cameron, or anyone else who wishes them, is furnished with the details of those actions.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** That concludes topical question time. Before we move to the next item of business, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the VIP gallery Her Excellency Ms Janice Charette, who is the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. [*Applause.*]

## Education (Improvement Plan)

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on the Scottish Government's improvement plan for education. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of the statement, but there will be no interruptions during it. I encourage and exhort all members to keep their questions short. The opening two questioners will get additional time but, after that, all questions should be succinct, where possible. The same goes for the cabinet secretary's answers.

14:23

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney):** The Government has today published data from the school census; statistical information on the achievement of curriculum for excellence levels by children and young people at school, local authority and national level; and the 2016 national improvement framework evidence report.

I will take the school census first. The statistics for 2016 tell us that there were 253 more full-time equivalent teachers than there were last year, of which 160 were directly funded by the Scottish Government's attainment Scotland fund; that class sizes in primary 1 to P3 are the same as last year and are broadly static across primary school; that the pupil teacher ratio remains unchanged for the third successive year at 13.7, in line with the Scottish Government's agreement with local authorities; that most children are achieving the expected curriculum for excellence level for their stage, based on teacher professional judgment, with all young people expected to have achieved at least third level by the end of secondary 3; and that a record 666 school buildings are in the top condition category of "good", with 84 per cent being in good or satisfactory condition.

I very much welcome the rise in teacher numbers compared with last year, the fact that class sizes are broadly stable and the fact that the pupil teacher ratio has been maintained. That is all good news, particularly when Parliament considers the teacher recruitment challenges that are being faced in some areas of the country.

The statistical information on the achievement of curriculum for excellence levels by children and young people at school, local authority and national level has been published today for the first time. That data has been produced in direct response to last year's recommendation by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that we develop

"a more robust evidence base available right across the system, especially about learning outcomes and progress."

The information illuminates where excellence already exists and where there is more to do to target resources where they are needed most and to ensure that children get the right support at the right time.

As this is the first time that we have gathered such data, it is being published under the official label of "Experimental Statistics". As with many new data collections, it will need further development before its accuracy and quality can be guaranteed. It is clear, for example, that some issues remain with the consistency of teachers' professional judgments across different local authority areas. Most notably, it is clear from the S3 data that there are differing approaches to the assessment of third and fourth levels. Education Scotland and local authorities have a vital role to play in providing the support that is needed to deliver greater consistency in that area. A national programme of moderation activity is under way to build a shared understanding on those questions.

Even if we take those inconsistencies into account, the data shows that significant improvements are required in some local authority areas and that significant challenges exist in delivering the progress in literacy and numeracy that we seek. I encourage parents to consider the school-level information that is now available and to discuss it with their child's school.

The data provides a basis on which to build our knowledge about how children are progressing at school, but the variation in some of the data highlights the value that standardised assessment will bring in providing teachers with nationally consistent data to help to inform their professional judgment.

Today's data reinforces the messages that we took from the programme for international student assessment results and is consistent with what we know from the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy. Most children and young people progress well through the school system but, for some, overall performance drops and the poverty-related attainment gap widens.

There is much to be proud of in Scottish education. We need to remain focused on and committed to curriculum for excellence and we need to continue to implement the reforms that we are putting in place. That is the course that we established after the publication of the SSLN data and it is the course that we intend to continue to take.

It follows that the "2017 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education", which is the third document that I am publishing today, reinforces that approach. The vision, key priorities and drivers for improvement that we identified in January this year have

stakeholder support, and they remain as true and as important now as they were then.

The improvement plan sets out what we need to do at all levels in the system to deliver better outcomes for our children and young people. It brings together in one place all the improvement activity, from the delivery plan that I published last summer to the curriculum for excellence implementation plan that was published in the autumn. It takes into account the information that is published today in the evidence report and sets out our plans for improvement. It will serve as the single definitive plan for securing educational improvement, as it provides absolute clarity of purpose for all who are involved in education.

To drive improvement for children and young people, we need a shared understanding across all parts of the education system of our key strengths, the key challenges that we face and the actions that we are taking to deliver improvement. I encourage everyone who is involved in school education to make the priorities of the national improvement framework a reality in their school.

Teachers have a key role to play in closing the attainment gap and are central to achieving our vision of excellence and equity in Scottish education. I am committed to ensuring that we have the right number of teachers with the right skills in the right places to educate our young people. We know that the quality of teaching is a key factor in improving children's learning and the outcomes that they achieve. I want teachers to have the time to teach, plan their working lives and reflect on their professional learning needs. I want teachers to be able to enjoy their jobs and I want teaching to be seen as an attractive and rewarding career choice.

I have already moved decisively to free teachers to teach by removing unnecessary bureaucracy and workload. We have set out clearly and concisely what teachers should and should not focus on. However, I will continue to take all possible measures to lessen workloads, tackle bureaucracy and enable more time for learning and teaching, for the benefit of all.

As part of that work, Education Scotland will release next week its new websites, which will radically streamline the level of guidance, resources and materials available to teachers and other practitioners to support improvement. That equates to a 90 per cent reduction in volume, and all materials have been reviewed and updated to meet current needs, which will enable teachers to have ready access to the support, information and guidance that they need.

I recognise that some councils still face challenges in teacher recruitment, as do universities in recruiting teaching students. I am

focused on addressing any barriers to the recruitment of teachers and will work with our partners to address issues of staffing supply and capacity at a national level, while maintaining Scottish teaching as a graduate profession. On 30 November, I announced a package of innovative new routes into teaching, which will be ready for an intake of students in 2017. It includes accelerated routes, more distance learning opportunities and an increase in joint degrees that combine primary teaching with specialisms such as chemistry.

We will build on last year's successful recruitment campaign to encourage more people into teaching, with a particular focus on hard-to-fill subjects and areas that have difficulty in recruiting. We are also continuing to support teachers' professional learning through further investment of £1 million in 2016-17 in masters level learning. I assure Parliament that, in considering any new routes into teaching, I will work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland to ensure that quality is assured and that the next generation of teachers is qualified, skilled, motivated and ready to teach.

I have visited many schools and spoken to hundreds of teachers and children since I took up my post, and I know that in Scottish education today we have hundreds of thousands of good pupils being taught by tens of thousands of good teachers in thousands of good schools. I want to build on that, and I invite everyone in the chamber to join us in that effort. For all of us, there is a moral imperative to deliver excellence and equity, and we have the clear policy framework in place to deliver that approach.

The principles of curriculum for excellence are the right ones. Throughout CFE's development, there has been unanimous agreement in the Parliament and across the education sector that it is the right approach. In its review of curriculum for excellence in 2015, the OECD recognised the strong, powerful and enduring characteristics of our curriculum; commended the bold reform that we are driving forward; and urged us to continue on our reform journey. Our international council of education advisers has further endorsed our approach to education and has provided advice about where we need to improve. We are on course to deliver those improvements through our current actions.

The collaboration in our education system is one of its great strengths and it is essential that we work together to deliver the improvements that are required to make Scotland's education world class. There is much to be proud of in Scottish education but, with pace and urgency, more must be done with every single one of our teachers around the country, with our professional

associations, with our parent organisations, with Government agencies and with our local authority partners to ensure that we close the attainment gap in education that has for so long blighted our country.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the cabinet secretary for prior sight of his statement, which follows the publication of statistics this morning that are proof—further proof, I may say—that the attainment gap is as wide as ever, despite the promises that the Scottish Government has made.

Can the cabinet secretary tell the Parliament exactly why some of the top-performing local authorities can get around 70 per cent of their S3 pupils to level 4 in curriculum for excellence, whereas many other local authorities that have performed well in the past can get only very low numbers to level 4? If that is because their structures and CFE implementation timings are so different, why is that happening? Is that not more evidence of the problems that the Scottish National Party Government has allowed to develop regarding the delivery of curriculum for excellence in the middle to senior year phases?

Does the cabinet secretary agree that many parents have a right to be very angry about those differences? Does he accept that the long-term decline in teacher numbers in secondary schools is a big part of the reason why so many schools are finding the delivery of CFE in its middle and senior year phases so very difficult?

**John Swinney:** First, on the attainment gap, the statistics that were published this morning confirm what we have long known—the existence of the attainment gap and the fact that it becomes more acute as young people proceed through the education system. That is precisely why the Government is taking the steps that it is taking in such a focused way to tackle the attainment gap.

However, for completeness, Liz Smith should recognise that the data that PISA published last week confirms that the progress that was made in the early part of this Administration to close the attainment gap has been sustained. For completeness—I am sure that Liz Smith would want to make sure that her point to Parliament was made completely—I make that point.

The second point is about differential performance between schools and between local authorities. In that regard, with the greatest of respect, I think that Liz Smith got the tone of her question entirely wrong. The statistics and the data demonstrate the need for us to be focused on a culture of perpetual improvement. That is what drives my thinking about Scottish education, and that is why the information has been published—to

enable us to have a focused discussion about how we can deliver progress.

The data demonstrates that there are areas of the country that can deliver stronger performance than others, and schools within local authorities that can deliver more progress than others with a comparable background. It is vital that we focus on the improvement journey to ensure that all young people can experience excellence and equity in their education.

This point gets to the heart of one of the fundamental contradictions of Liz Smith's arguments on education. She argues for variability and flexibility amongst schools, but when the schools exercise that flexibility and variability, she comes to the Parliament and asks me to lay down the law and stop them doing so. I invite Liz Smith to reflect on the fact that she has put forward an utterly inconsistent proposition in her arguments today.

My third point is that I would have thought that a day such as this, when the number of teachers in our schools has increased and some of the increase is because of the direct investment of the Scottish Government through the attainment fund, would be a day for Liz Smith to welcome the fact that there has been a growth in teacher numbers across Scotland.

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement. I welcome the increase in primary teacher numbers, but I remind the cabinet secretary that we are still 4,000 teachers down and he has a long way to go to reverse the damage of the past 10 years.

That is surely the message of the attainment data, too. A quarter of children leave primary school unable to read at the expected level, a third fail to achieve the expected numeracy levels, and the attainment gap between the rich and the rest rises at every stage. That is a measure of 10 years of SNP failure, as were last week's PISA results.

We have an improvement framework, an implementation plan, a delivery plan, a governance review and, now, a performance improvement plan. No doubt there is a delivery performance framework review report in the pipeline. What we need is a promise to stop the cuts and an apology to children, parents and teachers for the past 10 years. Can we have that?

**John Swinney:** First, on teacher numbers, I am glad that Iain Gray got somewhere close to acknowledging the fact that teacher numbers have actually gone up today. That is welcome. It is significant progress that Mr Gray was even able to acknowledge that. He managed to get further ahead than the Conservatives managed to get today.

However, I make the point to Iain Gray that much of the reason why the teacher numbers have increased is the stance that I took in my former role to protect teacher numbers despite the protestations of many Labour local authorities that wanted to reduce teacher numbers further. I would not allow them to do so. Perhaps Mr Gray will get some clarity and consistency in his party's arguments. When I meet local authority leaders from the Labour Party, they moan about the way in which the parliamentary Labour Party agitates about teacher numbers when they want to be given a free hand to reduce them. Perhaps Mr Gray will get that point straight.

Mr Gray explained the P7 data accurately; the data he put forward was correct. Again, for completeness, I would have thought that Mr Gray would have then looked at the achievement levels at S3. What young people are able to achieve in S3 at the third and fourth levels combined is 86 per cent in reading, 86 per cent in numeracy, 87 per cent in listening and talking, and 84 per cent in writing. As an illustration of young people progressing through the education system, I would have thought that that would have been a more complete measure to put in place.

Mr Gray referred to a series of documents. If he was listening to my statement, he would have heard me say that I have consolidated into one document, as a simple reference point for everybody who is involved in education, the measures required to be taken on improvement. That is what is called focusing the agenda to make sure that we can unite around progress and improvement. That is exactly what the Government is focused on doing and that is what we will deliver for Scottish education.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Patrick Harvie to be followed by Tavish Scott. Please can we have succinct questions and answers from now on.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** The Government has said that it does not want to return to crude league tables but, as it moves ahead with standardised assessment, is it not inevitable that data will end up being used in that way? Does that not stand in contradiction to the goal of trusting teachers to know who in their class needs a bit of extra help?

**John Swinney:** On that last point, I do want to trust teachers to make those judgments in the classroom because that is the only place where those judgments can be made. However, I also want teachers to be well informed by reliable and consistent mechanisms of assessment in making that judgment. That is what standardised assessment is all about.

I certainly value—and I think that teachers will value—the information that is now available on

comparative performance, which helps to identify how improvement can be strengthened in individual schools. That is what this agenda is about. I am not interested in crude league tables and I have not presented the data in that fashion. I am interested in giving the information that can drive an agenda of improvement within Scottish education. The parents and pupils of Scotland would expect nothing less of their Government.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** Is the Government's answer to the international figures that were published last week, which show that Scotland's educational performance is falling, the national standardised assessments for pupils that the cabinet secretary has talked about, and reform of schools and local government, but not of the Government quangos that, along with ministers, have had responsibility for policy and implementation for curriculum for excellence for the past nine years? Did not the OECD conduct a review of curriculum for excellence rather than an evaluation? Finally, in the improvement framework that the cabinet secretary has just talked about, I can find 30 new improvement activities. How is that consistent with the points that have been made about simplification and easing bureaucracy?

**John Swinney:** Mr Scott has looked at the governance review material and he will have found that, in it, the Government poses questions about the role of all the bodies that are involved in education, including Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. It is a comprehensive review of governance in education.

On Mr Scott's point about responsibility for implementing curriculum for excellence, I totally acknowledge and accept the Government's role in its delivery and implementation, but one of the points that is frequently missed in this debate is the one that is made in the submission to the governance review that was published last week by the Educational Institute of Scotland. The approach to Scottish education has always been a partnership approach in which professional associations, local authorities and professional bodies are all involved in discussions about the delivery of curriculum changes and educational improvements. I am prepared to accept my share of the responsibility as a Government minister but I point out that that responsibility has been exercised in a collaborative fashion across many organisations in Scotland.

The final point is about the OECD review and how that relates to the improvement framework. Mr Scott is literally correct to say that the OECD carried out a review and not an evaluation. The OECD told us that we needed to get more data to enable us to undertake the evaluation, which is

precisely what I was doing with the publication this morning of the school-based assessment approach.

The OECD also said that we must take a number of steps to strengthen Scottish education, which is what is in the improvement plan. Some people are criticising me for applying far too much pace to the reform agenda in Scottish education. I make no apology for that because we must get on with taking the necessary steps to improve Scottish education. The improvement plan enables us to do that.

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer for education.

As a former teacher, I welcome the moves to reduce workloads and bureaucracy and I am sure that the new Education Scotland websites, which streamline guidance, will be welcomed by teachers. Will the cabinet secretary outline how Education Scotland will monitor the uptake of the guidance, resources and materials that will be available to teachers next week?

**John Swinney:** The reduction in the volume of material has been at my request to ensure that the materials that are available to enhance educational development around the country are visible and compelling to members of the teaching profession. I hope that the reforms in that respect are of assistance.

On monitoring uptake, Education Scotland tracks significant use of the materials, which will also form part of its dialogue with schools on encouraging and improving educational practice around the country.

The most recent guidance that I issued to schools was in August and Education Scotland was able to advise me from the data that was available of the significant level of interest in those materials from the teaching profession. I look forward to that being replicated in relation to these reforms that we are undertaking.

**Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con):** The cabinet secretary referred to the scheme that he announced on 30 November. For clarity, will he advise the chamber how many of the current teacher vacancies he expects that scheme to fill?

With an accelerated or fast-track route into teaching, what measures will be put in place to ensure that new teachers are sufficiently qualified, given that teachers have already expressed concern that there is not enough focus on literacy and numeracy in the current teacher training?

**John Swinney:** On Mr Thomson's first question, my expectation is that approximately 200 places will be filled by the new routes into teaching that I announced on 30 November.

On Mr Thomson's second question, the approaches to encourage a swifter route into teaching will be designed by the colleges of education, which are independent educational bodies that are not controlled by the Government. The colleges have to design those courses to the satisfaction of the General Teaching Council for Scotland. The colleges need to produce graduates who will be able to satisfy the standards that the GTCS would expect for proficiency within Scottish education.

It is entirely in the hands of the GTCS and the colleges of education to ensure that the individuals who emerge from those particular routes meet the standards that we would expect.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** Although the news that so many young people are achieving their expected curriculum for excellence level is welcome, we want a world-leading education system, with more schools and local authorities supporting young people to achieve beyond their expected level. In my roles as a constituency MSP and as convener of the Education and Skills Committee, I would appreciate it if the cabinet secretary could outline to me what evidence he has that that is happening.

**John Swinney:** We have put in place a framework of data that will enable us to see, on a sustained basis, the progress that young people are making. More data is more visibly available than has ever been the case in the past. We will be able to see the progress that young people are making at a school level and that will help to inform the steps that are necessary to improve performance at a local level. The data demonstrates some significant variation in the performance of different local authority areas; that should be the subject of and the focus for improvement, and the national improvement plan is designed to assist in enabling schools to tackle performance and to ensure that young people fulfil their potential.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** There are almost 72,000 more primary pupils with additional support needs than in 2007. A better understanding of the individual needs of pupils is, of course, welcome, but in the same period, the number of learning support and additional support needs teachers in primary school has decreased by 31 per cent, a fact that the cabinet secretary did not highlight in his statement. He said that he is committed to ensuring the right number of teachers with the right skills in the right places. When can children with additional support needs expect to see that commitment fulfilled?

**John Swinney:** As part of the Government's agenda to ensure that we get it right for every child, we focus on the needs and requirements of

individual children as they present themselves in the system. As I have discussed with Parliament before, we have a presumption about mainstreaming, but we are looking to ensure that the correct judgments are being made and that the educational situations for young people are appropriate to meet their needs.

I add that between 2007 and the current period, there was a significant change to the legislative framework in relation to children with additional support needs, which broadened significantly the definition of young people with additional support needs, so that there will be a much broader range of such needs than would have been the case under the previous arrangements that Monica Lennon set out.

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** I take the opportunity to thank the cabinet secretary and his ministers for recent visits to my constituency to see first hand some of the innovative work that goes on in the schools of Coatbridge and Chryston. I ask the cabinet secretary to outline how many schools have been built or refurbished since 2007-08 and how that compares with the number under the previous Administration and to explain what impact he expects that to have on attainment.

**John Swinney:** More than 600 schools have been either rebuilt or refurbished since the Government came to office in 2007, which has delivered the type of improvement and enhancement in the learning environment that young people experience the length and breadth of the country. Well over 80 per cent of young people are now being taught in either good or satisfactory educational environments. That is testament to the investment that has been made by the Government.

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** The cabinet secretary said in his statement that the data shows that significant improvement is required in some local authorities and that real challenges exist in delivering progress on literacy and numeracy. That is definitely a statement that we agree with. What will the cabinet secretary do in practical terms to give that support to local authorities and to local schools?

**John Swinney:** The Government has set out the steps that we consider to be appropriate in improving performance within education in the national improvement framework and we encourage all local authorities to take those steps forward.

Secondly, the Government has made available to a wide variety of local authorities in Scotland resources to assist in closing the attainment gap; we await the conclusion of the budget process on Thursday to give us further information on the

delivery of assistance to a wider cohort of pupils as a consequence. The Government is focused on ensuring that we play our part in strengthening performance in educational achievement at local level in Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. That concludes the statement. I point out that, despite my exhortations and encouragement, there are four members who did not get in. I ask all members to reflect on that. Please ask a question—there might be one sentence beforehand, but then a question. I am sure that the minister is also listening to that encouragement.

We move on to the next item of business.

## International Migrants to Scotland

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-03049, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on welcoming international migrants in Scotland.

14:55

**The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan):** I am honoured to be here today to acknowledge international migrants day 2016, which takes place this Sunday. The United Nations encourages us to mark the day by sharing information on the rights and freedoms of migrants and by designing actions to ensure their protection.

Today, I hope not only to acknowledge the rights of migrants and Scotland's duty to offer a place of protection and safety, but to send a warm message of welcome to all those who choose to make Scotland their home. That message of welcome extends to everyone who comes to Scotland from other countries, whether they are seeking asylum and refuge, choosing to work or study here, or joining family. The motion therefore uses the word "migrant" in its widest sense.

We must remember that all those people are individuals, with their own stories and their own sets of circumstances. I want to mark international migrants day by highlighting the valuable contribution that migrants make to Scotland's economy and the vibrancy that they bring to our society and culture.

Following the European Union referendum, it is more important than ever that we stand up against negative rhetoric surrounding immigration and strive to provide a welcoming and tolerant society for migrants in Scotland. I am sure that members from all round the chamber will join me in recognising Scotland's moral obligation to offer a place of safety to desperate people who are fleeing conflict and persecution.

It is with great sadness that I note the increasing number of fatalities in the Mediterranean since the beginning of 2016. The number of people who have tragically lost their lives this year in the Mediterranean while attempting to escape conflict or destitution has risen to 4,690. That is 1,225 more people than this time last year. Such numbers, which are used so frequently to describe the size and scale of human tragedies, tend to strip away the humanity from and, subsequently, the devastation that is caused by each individual death.

Let me put the number in context: 4,690 is equivalent to about 17 per cent of my constituency's population. That number includes men, women and children who were not fortunate enough to experience peace and a decent standard of living in their native countries. Let us remember those brave and courageous people today and focus on how we can support measures to ensure that migrants and refugees are protected in the future.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I am grateful to the minister for taking an intervention. I agree with the comments that he has made so far. Is he planning to refer to the dismantling of the camp at Calais? There is a great deal of concern about the welfare of unaccompanied children. Parliament would benefit from an update on the steps that are being taken by the Scottish Government to secure the interests of those most vulnerable children and young people.

**Dr Allan:** I agree with the sentiments that Liam McArthur has expressed about the responsibility that we all have for unaccompanied children and the especially concerning situation of people who have been through the experience of the camp at Calais. The Scottish Government has always made it clear that we stand ready to do our share, and more, in welcoming people from those and other difficult situations.

There is much in the EU's actions that the Scottish Government can support—for example, the focus on taking action to save lives in the Mediterranean and the recognition that migration to Europe is a complex global issue that has its roots in other countries. I am also keen to highlight—especially in the current political climate—that European co-operation, and not isolation, is key.

As members will know, last Saturday was human rights day. On 10 December 1948, the United Nations general assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set out for the first time the fundamental human rights to which all people are entitled. Although it is clear that those rights belong equally to all people, this year the UN urges each us to step forward to defend the rights of particular groups of people—among them refugees and migrants.

In Scotland, we are fortunate to live in a country where our human rights are, generally, respected; where the Government and society more widely are committed to defending the existing human rights protections that we have and to embedding human rights in everything that we do; where there are duties on public authorities to respect and implement human rights principles; and where an active civil society undertakes invaluable work to help make rights real in people's day-to-day lives. That places us under a moral obligation to



respond to the United Nations' call to stand up for the rights of other people, both at home and throughout the world. I am pleased to be able to say that, in Scotland, we have responded positively to that call.

The past 12 months have been a time of unprecedented change for refugee resettlement in Scotland, as we have stepped up to play our part in responding to the refugee crisis. Scottish local authorities were quick to reflect the mood of the Scottish people by stating their willingness and desire to help, even although many had no experience of working with refugees. We have now received more than 1,250 Syrian refugees under the Syrian resettlement programme since October 2015—which amounts to more than 27 per cent of all refugees who have been resettled under the scheme in the United Kingdom—and 29 local authorities have now received refugees in their areas.

As I mentioned earlier, I also want today to focus on the contribution that all migrants bring to Scotland and to thank Scotland's migrant community for the diversity and wealth of experience that they bring to our country, as well as thanking the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, local authorities, the Scottish Refugee Council and many other people and organisations that have worked to make the experience such a success.

Unfortunately, divisive, misleading and inflammatory information regarding migration is all too easy to come across. It concerns me that, following the Brexit referendum, some people now believe that it is socially acceptable to say some fairly extreme things, perhaps in ways that they thought in the past would not be accepted. Contrary to that rhetoric, migrants are not a drain on society and can contribute significantly if they are given the same rights and opportunities as other citizens.

In October, the Scottish Government published two reports: one on the impacts of migration and one on the characteristics of migration. Those reports help to debunk many of the myths around migrants, such as the claim that migrants create strain on the benefits system. Our research has disproved that claim and has found, in particular, that our recent non-UK migrants are more likely to be in work than people who were born in Scotland. Another popular myth is that migrants force down wages. In reality, studies have found that there is little or no impact on average wages as a result of migration, and that any adverse effects on wages due to migration are likely to be greatest for workers who are themselves migrants.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Does the minister agree that the main culprits when it comes to spreading vile propaganda about

migrants and refugees are right-wing tabloid newspapers such as *The Sun*, and that we, as politicians who represent and defend those people, should distance ourselves from such vile claims?

**Dr Allan:** It is certainly the case that all of us, as politicians, have a responsibility to make clear the positive message about what refugees, among many other migrants, have contributed to this country, and to stand up against messages that make contrary claims, wherever they are found.

In doing that, it is important that we consider the evidence and how we can help to shape opinion in the future, because we should be concerned about the impact of negative rhetoric on the everyday lives of those who have chosen to make Scotland their home. We must continue to call for increased maturity and responsibility in how migration is discussed: the onus is on all of us to be conscientious as we choose our words.

The effect of what we might call an anti-migration discourse was raised at a recent focus group that I hosted for 11 EU nationals last month. Throughout our discussion, participants expressed unease about the language that is being used in some quarters to describe immigration. To many, that language represents a move towards dehumanisation and devalues individuals and their contribution. Such messages, along with the UK Government's unwillingness to guarantee the rights of EU nationals following the referendum, had forced some of them to question whether they even want to remain in the UK, including people who have lived here for some 35 years.

It is utterly disgraceful that the UK Government has not yet guaranteed the immigration status of our non-UK EU nationals. It has created a feeling of apprehension that is affecting every aspect of their lives. For those EU nationals who have, until now, felt that they are part and parcel of the fabric of our society, their nationality is now a constant reminder of how insecure their future might be. Today, I reiterate our message that Scotland's EU nationals are welcome here and that Scotland remains their home. Their contribution to our nation is valued and we will continue to press the UK Government to guarantee their rights.

In the coming weeks, we will present our proposition to protect Scotland's place in Europe and to keep us in the single market. Our remaining a part of the single market means retaining freedom of movement: the two things are indivisible.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** Will the options paper that the minister has just referred to be published before Christmas? I think that that was the commitment that the First Minister gave to Parliament earlier in the year.

**Dr Allan:** I can tell that Tavish Scott is urgently thumbing through his Advent calendar. I refer him to the earlier commitments that have been made.

I call on members to urge the UK Government to stand by the rights of immigrants in Scotland from all parts of the world—in particular, Europe. I also call on the UK Government to treat our EU nationals with the respect and dignity that they deserve, and to guarantee the right that they seek to remain in the UK. Our EU nationals need answers now, which is why the Scottish Government will continue to stand up for their rights and for the rights of anyone from any other country who has done us the honour of making Scotland their home.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the UN's International Migrants Day on 18 December 2016; remembers the refugees and migrants who have lost their lives while trying to reach safe harbour; welcomes the opportunity to celebrate the contribution of those who have chosen to make Scotland their home; embraces a culturally diverse community that enriches Scotland's intellectual, social and cultural life; acknowledges the impact that the result of the EU Referendum has had on many of Scotland's friends and neighbours and seeks to reassure all that they are welcome in Scotland; urges the UK Government to guarantee the rights of fellow EU nationals to live and work here, and calls on it to deliver a fair and sensible immigration system that meets Scotland's needs.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** I call Liam Kerr to speak to and move amendment S5M-03049.2. You have seven minutes, Mr Kerr.

15:08

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I beg your pardon, Presiding Officer. Did you say seven minutes?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Yes. Were you expecting more?

**Liam Kerr:** I was, rather.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Well, it is seven.

**Liam Kerr:** Of course. Thank you.

We need to talk about international migrants but, more than that, we need to listen. Alasdair Allan talks of negative rhetoric and I have four quotes right here—one from a Scottish National Party MSP, one from an SNP MP, one from an SNP councillor and one from an SNP aide. All separately seek to suggest that being a member of the Conservative Party equates to being anti-immigrant and anti-immigration. Another recently tweeted:

“Tories don't care about vulnerable families”.

It is lazy, dog-whistle politics and base-level debating. Let us have none of that here today. Dr Allan is absolutely right. We must be careful how we use language in this debate.

Let us clear up something else: 17 million people exercised their democratic right to vote to leave the European Union, and their vote to leave does not mean that those individuals are in any way racist. We must not forget that 1 million people in Scotland voted to leave and they had legitimate reasons for doing so. I hope that the SNP will start to speak up for those who voted leave—around 38 per cent of whom were, famously, SNP voters—as well as those who voted remain. The SNP should stop casting aspersions on those who accept the democratic result of the referendum and it should try to work with the UK Government to secure the best deal for the UK.

**Dr Allan rose—**

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

**Liam Kerr:** I will not take any interventions, I am afraid. I am four minutes short of what I thought I would have.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will give you 30 seconds if you take an intervention, but it is up to you.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** It is a point of order.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There is a point of order. I beg your pardon.

**Sandra White:** Presiding Officer, can you clarify or explain why the speech from the Conservatives has not even touched on what the motion is about?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am monitoring when Liam Kerr will come to the material part of his amendment. I am sure that he is moving to it now.

**Liam Kerr:** Yes. The answer, of course, is that I was only one and a half minutes into my speech.

Let me make clear where we agree with the motion. Do we welcome international migrants to Scotland? Of course we do. Britain at its best has for centuries been a shining light of democracy, liberty and hope, and we believe that our internationalism abroad must be echoed here at home. As Ruth Davidson has said many times, in the debate on numbers, criteria, quotas, rules and percentages, we must never forget that behind those things are homes, families and human beings. Let me make it clear: we whole-heartedly support the UN's international migrant day, and we welcome the fact that the motion clearly signals the status of refugees.

However, we must also acknowledge, as the first part of our amendment does, that the UK Government is on track to meet its target to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020; that the UK Government has pledged that refugees will receive £8,500 per head for housing and healthcare in the year that they arrive, along with lessons in the English language; and that the UK Government has spent more than £2.3 billion on providing opportunities for work and access to services. We must acknowledge, too, that the majority of people who become refugees do not want to leave their home, community or country and live in hope that one day they will be able to return and rebuild their life. The first part of our amendment pays tribute to the UK Government, the Department for International Development, our aid workers and our staff from around the world.

Britain is the second-largest bilateral donor supporting Syrian refugees in the region. The United Kingdom has contributed £1.1 billion since 2012 for food, tents and other humanitarian aid and is giving a further £10 million to help vulnerable refugee minors who are already in Europe. The UK Government has provided more funding for refugees than any other western European country. It is a Government that is less about gestures and more about the solid long-term work at the root of the problem that aims to prevent people from taking life-threatening journeys and funding traffickers.

I turn to economic migrants and I agree with the Scottish Government's motion. We make clear again and again what Ruth Davidson said to Conservative Party conference in October:

"for those who have already chosen to build a life, open a business, make a contribution, I say this—this is your home, and you are welcome here."

We urge the UK Government to guarantee the rights of EU nationals to live and work here. However, as the next part of our amendment proposes, that must be a two-way process. The Prime Minister has to ensure that she looks out for the 1.2 million UK nationals, of whom 120,000 are Scots, who are in the EU. That means that we aspire to an open, reciprocal agreement in which UK citizens in other EU countries would be guaranteed rights to remain, and in turn those from the EU who have already settled in the UK would receive the same guarantee: mutual assurance for mutual benefit. That is, of course, a little different from the

"robust and common sense position"

that

"There are 160,000 EU nationals from other states living in Scotland ... If Scotland was outside Europe, they would lose the right to stay here."

Those are not my words, but the words of the First Minister in 2014.

I am pleased at reports that the EU may be relaxing its hard-core position. Just recently we have heard prominent MEPs talk about possible associate citizenship of the EU. That will require rigorous scrutiny and inspection, but let us hope that the EU sees sense, confirms UK citizens' status as soon as possible and allows our Government to make a reciprocal promise.

The next part of our amendment is on non-EU migration and a future immigration system that would provide migrants from outwith the EU equal opportunities to live and work here. I cannot imagine that anyone in the chamber believes that the UK should not have a border. Certainly

"Nobody's suggesting uncontrolled and unmanaged immigration"

because

"we've ... got to get more of our own young folk staying here, maximising good jobs and more women in work as well."

That was the First Minister again.

If we start from that premise, we have to accept that there must be criteria under which people can and should enter. The white paper on independence talks about

"a controlled, transparent and efficient immigration system"

that

"includes a points-based approach".

That is a fair system, in which the doors are open to anyone who meets the criteria—currently, they are not open.

We will always work to make this country a welcoming place for international migrants, but we must make the immigration system a fair system that works for all and is in the interests of our communities and country.

Of course we acknowledge the UN's international migrants day; of course we remember the refugees who have lost their lives; and of course we celebrate the contribution that migrants have made. However, we take an incoherent approach if we sit here and call on the UK Government to guarantee the rights of EU nationals and do not urge the EU to do the same for British migrants.

This Parliament must note that non-EU migration is essential and that a future, fairer immigration system can provide equal opportunities for all. Our amendment also notes the significant powers that the Scottish Government has at its disposal to create incentives for people to live and work in Scotland, and we must note the UK Government's aid and

support programme—the second largest in the world—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** And that is where to stop. I am so sorry; you have done very well, Mr Kerr, as you were misinformed by your whip. Please move your amendment.

**Liam Kerr:** I move amendment S5M-03049.2, to leave out from “welcomes the opportunity” to end and insert:

“notes the UK Government’s extensive aid programme to support refugees; welcomes the opportunity to celebrate the contribution of those who have chosen to make Scotland their home; embraces a culturally diverse community that enriches Scotland’s intellectual, social and cultural life; acknowledges the impact that the result of the EU Referendum has had on many of Scotland’s friends and neighbours and seeks to reassure all that they are welcome in Scotland; urges the UK Government to guarantee the rights of fellow EU nationals to live and work here and urges EU countries to offer reciprocal assurances for UK nationals living and working in the EU; notes that non-EU migration is essential and that a future, fairer immigration system can provide equal opportunities to live and work for migrants from outwith the EU; further notes the importance of attracting migrants from elsewhere in the UK, and believes that the Scottish Government has significant powers to create incentives to live and work in Scotland.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excellent. I now call Lewis Macdonald to speak and move amendment S5M-3049.1. Mr Macdonald, I hope that you were told that you have six minutes.

15:16

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

When the United Nations established international migrants day at the turn of the century, it declared that migration could be beneficial for all concerned. It could be good for migrants, moving country to better themselves and to improve life chances for their families. It could benefit destination countries, bringing in new people to do jobs that other people did not want, and gaining new residents who were on average younger and more active than the people there already. It could also be good for countries of origin. Migrants around the world sent more than \$400 billion home to their families last year—more than three times as much as all the world’s development aid put together.

That is the up side, but of course it is not the whole story. Migrants can also be exploited and underpaid by employers; ripped off by landlords; trafficked into slavery—or something like it; treated as expendable; or placed in mortal danger on the journey from one country to another, as we have already heard today.

Countries of origin can lose their best-qualified and most enterprising people, while older, poorer

and less able citizens are left behind. One country’s demographic solution can be another country’s demographic disaster. As the UN also says, in destination countries

“Migration may reduce wages or lead to higher unemployment among low-skilled workers in advanced economies, many of whom are themselves migrants who arrived in earlier waves.”

That is why it is right to manage migration, and to do it in the context of wider society, protecting the rights and interests of new migrants and established residents alike.

Scotland has been at both ends of the migrant journey. That point was made at the St Andrew’s day rally in Aberdeen by Piotr Teodorowski, a local member of the Scottish Youth Parliament. He reminded us that, when the merchant Robert Gordon traded between Aberdeen and the Baltic region, thousands of Scots lived and worked in what is now Poland. Those Scottish migrants had gone to the other side of Europe in pursuit of opportunity. Among other things, they were known for their strong work ethic and for looking out for one another, much as Polish migrant workers are known in Scotland today. Some of today’s Polish migrants work or study at the university that is named after the said Robert Gordon, which was founded with the profits of Scotland’s Baltic trade 300 years ago.

Every part of Scotland has a similar story to tell of outward migration in centuries past and inward migration in recent years. Some parts of Scotland are still experiencing both at the same time. As First Minister a decade ago, Jack McConnell saw that inward migration offered part of the answer to Scotland’s demographic deficit, and his fresh talent initiative was so successful that it was extended by the then Labour Government to the rest of the UK.

That is important, for a number of reasons. It is an example of managed migration: an immigration policy that was tailored to Scotland’s needs, including an incentive for overseas students to study at Scottish universities; and an immigration policy that was for only one part of the United Kingdom, but which was supported by a UK Government, with overall immigration policy still decided at Westminster. Scotland’s devolved Government was leading the way, with the rest of Britain following.

That example still matters today. After scrapping post-study work visas across the UK in 2012, Tory ministers are now piloting a very modest variant at four English universities, prompted no doubt by the potentially devastating impact of Brexit on excellence in higher education.

Perhaps more significant—and also in the context of Brexit—the idea of enabling skilled

migrants to work in only one part of the UK has been taken up elsewhere. The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is exploring the idea of a regionally specific work permit that would allow people to enter the UK to work in greater London alone. Last month, when members of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee met our London Assembly counterparts, they were keen that Scotland and London should work together to see whether such schemes could be part of the answer to the challenges posed by Brexit. I hope that ministers share that view and that they will work with the mayor of London and other devolved Administrations to explore whether it is possible to devise a work permit scheme that is specific to given nations or regions and could operate in the context of the UK as a whole.

The outcome of the EU referendum has changed the picture profoundly as far as European migration into the UK is concerned, as well as for migration from here to other European countries. We have heard important words about the need, over the next two years—and, indeed, beyond—to support the position of migrants from other European Union countries who are resident or moving here. That message to those migrants is important and to say that they should be used simply as a bargaining tool is not acceptable.

The Tory amendment talks of levelling up the opportunities for migration from non-EU countries. In reality, UK Tory policy is much more likely to level down opportunities for migration to and from our nearest neighbours, potentially doubling the number of people who would require a visa or permission to enter the UK.

We should reject the folly of Tory plans to impose artificial caps on inward migration, which take no account of our demographic deficit or economic needs. We should instead embrace managed migration to grow Scotland's skills base and our economically active population. We should explore all means to do so in the context of the United Kingdom.

To that end, I move amendment S5M-03049.1, to insert at end:

“, based on a recognition of the country's demographic deficit and economic requirements, noting in particular the importance of students and graduates from both other EU countries and other parts of the world, and calls on the Scottish Government to co-operate with devolved and city administrations seeking to address similar concerns in other parts of the UK.”

15:22

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** Presiding Officer, thank you for your indulgence in letting me leave the chamber after I have made my speech.

“On the morning of October 3,”—

2013—

“a fishing boat leaves Tripoli. It is a small wooden boat, like a child's drawing, with a high wheelhouse. It is old, worn out, no one can remember its name. Fish are scarce, and its owner would have been happy to get rid of it for a handful of sticky notes. On board are 520 passengers; they pack every inch of the hold, a biblical human fish, and they stand crammed on deck. Each has paid about \$1,600 for the one-way trip. It is a calm, warm day, the tideless Mediterranean is blue, the rickety engine warbles and chokes, slowly pushing north. Its destination is Lampedusa.

This is the last journey, whatever the outcome. The boat is a disposable bark with a disposable cargo: Eritreans, mostly, some Somalis and Syrians, with a couple of Tunisians, men and women and children. There are 41 unaccompanied minors—the youngest is 11. They look back at their last view of Africa. The distinction between an economic migrant and a refugee is simple: are you running from or to? All these souls are escaping.

... on the night of October 3 that ... old fishing boat, with its exhausted passengers, ran out of steam and fuel.

They wouldn't normally have expected to get this far: as a practised rule, the Italian coastguard tracks and picks up the trafficking boats at sea and transfers the refugees to the small port in the town. These arks usually call ahead on satellite phones or short-wave radios. It is an organised and familiar run, except not this time. There was no call and somehow no one noticed the blip of 500 Africans on the radar. The boat began to drift towards the cliff. Someone set fire to a blanket to attract help. They could see the lights on the shore. The passengers were tired and frightened and so close to the promised land they panic and move to one side of the ship, which swayed, yawed, lost its slippery balance and capsized: 368 Africans drown.

... When the refugees are brought ashore they're given a medical check and their names are taken, then they're bused to a camp on the outskirts of town that's been pushed into a thin, dead-end valley: two-storey blocks of dormitories and an administration building, surrounded by a chain-link fence ... The dormitories are packed, there is barely enough room to walk between the beds, the walls are covered in hopeful, religious graffiti and names, the place smells of sewage and sweat. There are no dining facilities; refugees squat in the open or eat on the beds. There is a small area set aside for nursing mothers, otherwise there is only one lavatory for 100 women.

A Syrian complains that she hasn't been able to go to the loo for days because the door doesn't have a lock and there are always men there.”

That is the reality of the people who are trying hard to come to this country for a decent life. They are not coming here as economic migrants who are trying to steal our jobs and they are not coming here to take away our public services. They are coming here because life in their own country has become completely and utterly unbearable.

Remember young Alan Kurdi—when the photos of that poor boy hit the media, the world responded with a collective gasp. People could see that real children who had once had lives, feelings and a family were being washed up on the shore as if they were part of a shipwreck. As we

look forward to the UN's international migrants day next week, I am proud to be part of a Government, a Parliament and a country that has sought ways to save refugees and that has responded to the crisis with compassion and welcoming arms.

When the First Minister committed to taking more than 1,200 refugees as a starting point, it became apparent that local authorities would be tasked with rehoming and integrating those new members of Scottish society. The most recent figures to be released show that 29 out of 32 local authorities had taken in a proportion of refugees and it is to their credit that that work was done quickly and that timely adjustments were made in response to the urgency of the appeal. We must congratulate the many third sector and religious organisations that have helped those refugees to adapt to life in a strange country.

Education has a role to play in the adjustment to the lives of those vulnerable children who have arrived on our shores. Teachers have the challenging task of being a constant in the lives of the children—sometimes the only constant—while aiding them as they grasp the English language and the Scottish customs that can be so unfamiliar to them.

Kids can and do adapt well. Recently, staff in my office had the joy of meeting a young man—Hassan Ibrahim—whose family had fled from war-torn Iraq. He had learned English from watching box sets of “Friends” and he went on to obtain outstanding grades at high school. However, he was faced with a challenge when it came to university funding. For young asylum seekers, funding can be a sticking point, but—to the great credit of the University of Strathclyde's student support and wellbeing team, along with back-up from the university's institute of pharmacy and biomedical sciences—Hassan now has a place to study chemistry. When he is qualified, there is no telling what skills he could bring to the way in which we shape our nation. That is another great news story of how migrants and refugees enrich the fabric of our society.

Migrants bring so many gifts and Scotland is a tapestry of colourful cultures as a result of years of migration from all over the world. We cannot speak of how wonderful it is to welcome refugees and migrants into our society without again touching on some of the brutal stories that those people experienced before they fled. Atrocities on an unimaginable scale were committed to some of those people and will leave them damaged and traumatised for the rest of their lives.

A young woman who came to Scotland with two young girls was shown her new living arrangements. She was led to a balcony and she made the comment that it was bigger than where she had lived before. Staff thought that she meant

the whole house, but she was referring to the balcony alone, as she had been surviving with her two girls in a chicken coop. It is unimaginable to think of that woman living in that way while bombs fell around her beautiful daughters.

The quotation that I started with came from an article by A A Gill, who passed away just last week, unfortunately. In that article, he also said:

“Most of the Eritrean men I spoke to have been imprisoned in Libya or held hostage in the Sahara, all beaten, all tortured. They knew others who had died of thirst, of beatings, of starvation, the girls who'd been raped, whole families abandoned in the desert, disappeared under the sand. They tell the stories with a matter-of-fact fatalism. ‘Please,’ says Natneal, ‘tell the world about our people in Libya. They are dying in prison.’”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I ask you to conclude there, Mr Dornan; it is a good quote to end with.

**James Dornan:** When we are talking about this issue, I suggest that we are very careful with our language—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry, Mr Dornan, please sit down. It was a good quote to end with; do not spoil it.

15:28

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I recognise the considerable contribution to Scotland that many migrants and people from across the world make. Many play vital roles in our health sector and education services, as well as in many other sectors of the economy—we should welcome that. They play a vital role in our culture, our economy and our way of life.

Since the United Kingdom made the decision to leave the European Union earlier this year, many members and people outwith this chamber have sought to portray that decision as somehow inward looking when, in fact, it was quite the contrary. We are looking forward to the possibilities and the opportunities that exist now and in the future.

When I campaigned, I made it quite clear that what was needed was not no immigration to the United Kingdom, but having some control over the migration that takes place. We needed a system that did not allow for unlimited migration, and which would plug some of the skills gaps that we have in our economy. As a result of being part of the European area of freedom of movement, our current immigration system not only prevents us from doing that, but unfairly focuses on disadvantage so that we are unable to deal with people from the rest of the world.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** Is it not entirely unhelpful in this debate, which

celebrates the UN's international migrants day, to describe immigration as being good or bad, as the member seems to have implied it is so far?

**Alexander Stewart:** I certainly did not do that. I will continue.

During the referendum campaign, I and many others argued for a new immigration system that would ensure that the best and the brightest people from around the world would have the opportunity to come to this part of the country. That is very important.

**Dr Allan:** Does Alexander Stewart really think that the tone that was struck in certain quarters in the leave campaign urged wider immigration from beyond the EU and celebrated its potential contribution to our country?

**Alexander Stewart:** The minister has made a valid point. However, individuals had the right to put forward their case during the referendum campaign, and they did that. As I have said, we have to represent and respect the result, which I do.

I am very disappointed by the First Minister's posturing over what she purports to see as the threat to EU citizens who currently live in Scotland. The leave campaign was absolutely categorical when it stated that we value the contribution of people from the EU who currently live in the United Kingdom and that they should be allowed to remain in the UK post-Brexit. That is exactly where the UK Government is in looking at the topic. It wants to ensure that expatriates who live in other parts of the European Union are granted that ability. The only reason why such an agreement has not yet been formally reached is that the EU refuses to negotiate on any issue prior to the triggering of article 50. That has already been mentioned, and that is where we find ourselves. We cannot reach an agreement because of the situation that we find ourselves in. Labour has asked many questions about that in the chamber in other debates. Nothing can happen until article 50 has been triggered.

The Scottish National Party has a somewhat hypocritical record when it comes to immigration and migration. Members might be interested to know that, in the Scottish independence referendum, the First Minister said:

"There are 160,000 EU nationals from other states living in Scotland ... If Scotland was outside Europe, they would lose the right to stay here."

No spokesperson for the official leave campaign made such a threat during the campaign.

It is very important that we look at our own labour force and encourage its greater participation in our economy. The Scottish National Party's record in government of doing

that is quite unbelievable. Let us consider the rate of economic inactivity in Scotland, for example. That stands at 37.9 per cent compared with 36.4 per cent in the rest of the UK. During the SNP's time in government, 176,000 people have become economically inactive in Scotland.

**Daniel Johnson:** Will the member give way?

**Alexander Stewart:** Time is short, and I have given way twice already.

Long-term unemployment is a measure that shows individuals who have been unemployed for over a year. It is 2 per cent higher in Scotland than in it is the rest of the UK.

We need to start to address those economic activity issues at home, encourage more people to get back into the workplace and ensure that people who live in Scotland have the opportunity to be employed. That is important.

As I said at the outset, individuals who migrate to this country participate in our culture and lifestyle, and that is absolutely fantastic. I am not against any of that, but I want to ensure that our system works well. Under the Government, it is not doing so.

I want to address the SNP's ludicrous suggestion that there should be different criteria in different parts of the UK in managing the situation.

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is in his final 30 seconds.

**Alexander Stewart:** I am in my final 30 seconds and have taken interventions already.

To conclude, I am sure that everyone across the chamber welcomes the contribution that international migrants have made to Scotland and our culture. As I have said, they have made a fantastic contribution to where we are and what we are trying to achieve. However, it is important that we take into account the genuine concerns that some people in Scotland have about migration and immigration. We cannot ignore them. We have to look at how we manage the situation, and ensure that the best and the brightest from all over the world have the opportunity to come here and benefit from where we take it.

15:34

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** I point out to Alexander Stewart that, during the referendum, one of the leading leave campaigners, Mr Gove, wrote to the First Minister to suggest that Scotland could have its own migration system. I ask Alexander Stewart to pay attention to the work of the Culture, Tourism,

Europe and External Relations Committee and the comments that Lewis Macdonald made in his considered speech.

I am delighted to speak in this debate on such an important topic. International migrants day on 18 December gives us the chance to pause and reflect on what migration means to us here in Scotland and around the world. The United Nations website has a page that is devoted to international migrants day. The first paragraph begins:

“Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual’s will to overcome adversity and to live a better life.”

That is true today more than ever, and I am glad that the motion gives us the chance to celebrate the contribution of migrants who have chosen to make Scotland their home. In the wake of Brexit, it is important to counter those who for political ends stirred up fears of migration and to remember how important migration has been for Scotland.

As Lewis Macdonald said, the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee had a session at last week’s meeting that focused solely on the impact of migration from EU countries. Figures that the Scottish Parliament information centre provided ahead of the meeting told us that an estimated 181,000 EU nationals are resident in Scotland, the majority of whom are from accession nations.

Colm Wilson of Fife Migrants Forum provided the committee with compelling evidence of the importance of EU migrants to the Scottish economy. He said that many migrants to Scotland begin their stay here working in low-paid jobs but are capable of doing a lot more than that. Because they are ambitious, once they get to grips with local knowledge and put down roots, they seek to move on to higher-skilled jobs, which is a great stimulus for the economy.

Colm Wilson gave a striking example from Kirkcaldy, where he works. The High Street there faces challenges, as do high streets everywhere in Scotland and the UK, but it is on the road to recovery, with seven or eight businesses having been set up by migrants who have made their homes in Fife. Although the number of people that those small businesses employ is not huge, they are still providing employment and bringing much-needed regeneration of the town centre.

The committee also took evidence from Kirsty MacLachlan of National Records of Scotland, who warned us that, if we did not have migration, the age structure of the population would be affected. Although it is of course a good thing that people are living longer, population ageing brings with it considerable challenges, and EU migrants are

typically young and economically active, which helps us to deal with those challenges.

Ms MacLachlan’s model showed that, with no EU migration, the number of people of working age in Scotland would be expected to fall by 3 per cent between 2014 and 2039, compared with a rise of 28 per cent in the number of people of pension age. The model showed that, because the fertility rate in the rest of the UK is higher than in Scotland, zero migration would be much worse for Scotland than for the rest of the UK, although the rest of the UK would be adversely affected as well. That is a worst-case scenario, but it shows how much we need EU migration here in Scotland and how wrong the UK Government’s approach to reducing net migration, regardless of the contribution that migrants make, is.

I am pleased that the motion gives us the chance to remember the refugees and migrants who have lost their lives while trying to reach safe harbour. As the UN website says, refugees and migrants are trying to reach our shores for a better life. However, tragically, many do not make it. Remembering those who lost their lives on the journey is something that we should do every day and not just on international migrants day. Indeed, many groups across Scotland do just that.

“Massive outpouring of love” is a group in Dumfries that was set up by volunteers last year in response to the ever-growing refugee crisis, and it is still going strong. Last August, it launched an appeal for warm clothing, bedding, food and tents, all of which were and still are needed by desperate people who are fleeing wars to reach safety. The collections are still going strong, which is a testament to the fact that Scottish people have not forgotten those who lost their lives or those who still need help today. The vast majority of people empathise with the refugees as well as with other migrants. In today’s climate, it can sometimes be easy to forget that those on the far right who identify with and spread racist messages are, in fact, a minority.

I will end with a quote from Colm Wilson on EU migration that is very fitting. At last week’s committee meeting, he said:

“The beauty of the European Union is that we have stopped talking about national borders and started looking at people and that we now have an ebb and flow of migrants and people from all different cultures mixing with one another and enjoying one another’s company. That has been one of the great things about Scotland: people from the rest of Europe feel that they are accepted here.”— [Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, 8 December 2016; c 21.]

15:40

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** International migration is probably the most topical political



issue at the moment. As politicians and leaders, we have a duty to combat some of the terrible and dreadful negative rhetoric that we have heard. I whole-heartedly agree with what Alasdair Allan said. We know that we face challenging issues in the whole debate. There is no doubt that migration was the number 1 issue for people who voted for Brexit, and the danger is that the terms on which we leave the EU will leave our country more isolated than it was.

Across Europe, the rise of right-wing parties that are exploiting the negative rhetoric that I mentioned sets a dangerous precedent that has been inflamed by media reports that create myths about immigration—for example, many people believe that twice as many immigrants live here as there are. The press have a lot to answer for, and that means that strong political leadership is necessary to combat many of the myths.

We need to have a deeper analysis of the issue. It is clear that there are concerns about immigration, which it would be wrong to ignore. As well as showing leadership, we must listen and understand. I am fully behind the Government's motion.

Pope Francis said:

"Migrants are not a danger—they are in danger."

That relates to what concerns me about what Tory members have said so far. I echo what Daniel Johnson said. I do not disagree with the proposition that migrants bring many benefits to our country—of course they do—but I want to hear more about the fact that many of the refugees and migrants who come here from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan do so because they are trying to save their lives and create a life here. Our country has a moral responsibility and a moral duty to look after those people, who have chosen to make Scotland their home.

We cannot be complacent. It is not the case that attitudes here are significantly different from those in the rest of the UK—49 per cent of people in Scotland want less immigration, which is the same as the proportion across the UK as a whole. When it comes to social cohesion, it is the pace of change that concerns some communities. When we look at the Brexit results, it is striking that, in the areas with the highest immigration levels, the remain vote was strong, whereas people in areas that had experienced the fastest pace of change voted strongly to leave the EU.

Who are the refugees? The highest numbers are from Syria, the second highest are from Iraq and the third highest are from Afghanistan. As we know, most of the responsibility for dealing with them is borne by the surrounding countries. One in four of the people in Lebanon, which is a tiny country of 5 million people—the same size as

Scotland—are refugees. In fact, when I was in Lebanon recently, I was told by local people that the figure is probably closer to one in three. Jordan, whose gross domestic product is 1.2 per cent of the UK's, has 1.5 million refugees within its borders.

It is worth mentioning that the Syrian conflict is probably the most complex conflict of our time. Only today, in eastern Aleppo, where rebel areas are about to fall to Government forces, there are reports of the massacre of many unarmed civilians. Unfortunately, the people of eastern Aleppo cannot flee; they would if they could. That is a multiproxy war in which the interests of superpowers seem to be much more important than the lives of the innocent civilians who are caught up in it.

That conflict is the biggest driver of migration; 11 million Syrians are displaced. We are involved in it—we are bombing Syrians—so we must take some moral responsibility for the consequences.

One of the leadership issues for us as politicians is that we need to take that message to the public, because we are involved in Yemen and were involved in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the refugees from those countries are one of the consequences of war there.

I think that a Liberal Democrat member mentioned the very important issue of child migrants. I visited the Calais jungle shortly before it closed and found it heartbreaking to see the number of children who had fled there. We do not know what has happened to many of them since. The Home Office transferred unaccompanied minors who were registered in the Calais refugee camp, but 1,000 have been told that they will not be given sanctuary. Alf Dubs, the Labour peer who has championed the cause of the child migrants, said recently:

"I'm dismayed to learn that the ... transfer scheme is to cease having only just begun. Had the bridge been pulled up so soon after the start of the Kindertransport, through which my life was saved, many of us would never have made it to Britain."

According to the United Nations Children's Fund—UNICEF—2.6 million Syrian children are no longer in school and 2 million are living as refugees and on the run. They are not safe and are being targeted for abduction. What greater moral case can there be for doing more to ensure that child migrants have a place to go?

The Government's position is the right one and has many benefits. Interestingly, despite the myths that we hear, migrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. Migrants can help with the skills gap, the ageing population and the pension gap. There are many other positive reasons why we should welcome them. The EU nationals who

live in Scotland need answers and need to know that they are safe in their chosen home. They need that security, and we have a job to do in that regard.

15:46

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** The famous Scottish author and commentator William McIlvanney said that Scotland is “a mongrel nation”. Scotland was built on migrants, as were the rest of the UK and many other countries. As Pauline McNeill said, migration has been going on for thousands of years.

We welcome migrants to our country, which is why I welcome the opportunity to highlight the positive contribution of international migrants here, particularly in my constituency of Glasgow Kelvin. I applaud the local community and local groups for the support that they have shown to EU nationals and migrants from elsewhere who have come to live in the Glasgow Kelvin area. They are global citizens who live and work in Glasgow, and they are very much supported by the local community.

I endorse the celebration of international migrants day on 18 December and commend the International Organization for Migration for its call to the international community to come together and remember the refugees and migrants who have tragically lost their lives this year while fleeing from their homes to seek safety and protection. I commend Pauline McNeill for her speech because she is absolutely right that most of the wars that the migrants are fleeing from have been caused by the west. The wars were begun not for the sake of the people but for oil riches and similar reasons. We have a responsibility to tell the truth about that and to take the migrants and refugees into our countries.

Glasgow has a rich history of welcoming migrants, and attitudes towards immigration across Scotland are certainly more positive than—unfortunately—those in the rest of the UK, from what we have seen in the media. We have made the migrants and refugees who have arrived here feel very welcome. From giving lessons in the local Glaswegian dialect to sharing local foods, local people have done things that might seem to be small actions but which go a long way towards us having an inclusive and tolerant society.

We have a wide and varied mix of migrants across my constituency, who add to the cultural, social and economic fabric of the community. I will give members some examples, but I apologise to those who I will not be able to mention. We have in my constituency the award-winning North Star cafe, which is owned by Mr and Mrs Rossini, who are originally from Italy and are now business owners on Queen Margaret Drive. Many migrants

from Italy have made their homes here in the past 100 years. We also have the excellent Little Café in Kelvingrove, which is owned by Ersan Sherifi, who made Scotland his home after fleeing Kosovo. His mother won an *Evening Times* woman of the year award. They are from a fantastic family who have made Glasgow their home and have contributed greatly. We also have the Grunting Growler, which is owned by Jihad Hatu, who has made Scotland his home and contributes greatly to our community.

We need to remember that migration is crucial to Scotland thriving. That was indicated in the recent research that the minister mentioned, which shows that our migrant workforce makes a positive contribution to local economies and that many sectors rely on migrant labour.

We must look to have a more flexible approach to immigration. The Tories seem to think that we cannot do that, but Scotland is different—we need migration. One size does not fit all and we need to look for a different approach to immigration for our country. The UK Government’s strategy to reduce net migration will have a lasting and damaging effect on Scotland by severely reducing our ability to have economic growth, in addition to the cultural and social impacts that I and others have mentioned.

My constituency is home to all the Glasgow universities and is therefore also home to many EU national students. I am pleased that the Scottish Government has confirmed that all those who are currently studying will continue to receive free tuition for the duration of their studies, but these are uncertain times, and both students and people who work in our universities are worried. The continuing Brexit shambles does not instil any confidence in those people.

Our higher education system is home to 13,450 EU-domiciled undergraduate students. It also has 5,390 EU postgraduate students, who pay fees, and they represent 16.7 per cent of postgraduate research students. There are 4,600 EU staff working in and contributing to our 19 higher education institutions, and 23 per cent of Scotland’s research-only staff are from the EU. I echo Lewis Macdonald’s concerns about that important area of education.

Knowledge knows no bounds and research crosses borders. Freedom of movement is essential to students and migrants, and we need to ensure that everyone can benefit from greater learning experiences.

15:52

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** I welcome this opportunity to celebrate the contributions of everyone who has made their

home here, whether they have come through their own choice from elsewhere in Europe or around the world, or are refugees seeking sanctuary in our country.

Scotland's internationalist tradition has long made us a welcoming home for people who have come here. During the second world war, many Polish servicemen came to Scotland to help to defend our coastline after their country had fallen to the Nazis. Many of those servicemen stayed and raised families here and contributed to their communities, and are firmly a part of Scotland's history and our community today. Indeed, almost half the EU nationals who live in this country are from Poland and have, largely, arrived since Poland's accession to the European Union.

It was only a few weeks ago that Parliament celebrated the arrival of the 1,000th Syrian refugee in Scotland, which has led the way in these islands in responding to the crisis of human misery that the conflict in Syria has unleashed.

However, we should not for a second pretend that Scotland is a utopia of multiculturalism, or a society that is free of bigotry in which everyone is guaranteed a warm welcome. We do not have to look too far into our past to see, for example, the discrimination that the Irish community faced, and although Scotland did not, after the Brexit vote, have the surge in hate crime that we saw elsewhere in the UK—it looks as though there was actually a bit of a decrease—more than 120 hate crimes were still reported to police in the week after the vote.

It is clear that there is still work to be done to ensure that every new arrival in Scotland—everyone who has chosen to make their home here or whose circumstances have brought them here out of necessity—is welcomed, valued and respected.

I am glad that, in my region, East Dunbartonshire Council recently agreed to open its doors to refugees from Syria and is working on resettling its first four Syrian refugee families. I and the community hope that they are the first of many. I pay tribute to my colleague Rona Mackay. She and I between us have spent considerable time pressuring the council to join the 29 others that have already taken in Syrian refugees.

Organisations the length and breadth of Scotland are making progress. For example, the Scottish Refugee Council has published a guide for housing professionals in order to help to ensure that those who arrive in this country can rest with a safe roof over their heads and begin to build their lives here. There are also concerted efforts from third sector and voluntary organisations to help new arrivals to access the

range of services that we all need, from healthcare to financial advice.

Unfortunately, the immigration and asylum systems under which we currently operate—those of the UK Government—do not offer the safety, security or dignity that we want for people who arrive in our country. With accommodation and support services being provided by heartless multinational providers including Serco and their subcontractors, we have seen decisions being taken that prioritise cost savings over providing decent shelter or even basic human dignity to the people who most need it. In Glasgow, we have heard of atrocious living conditions in substandard housing being provided by the firm Orchard & Shipman (Glasgow) Ltd. That company has been the subject of numerous allegations of putting vulnerable people in slum-like accommodation. Health professionals and charities say that the health of refugees, especially children, has suffered by living in such straitened conditions.

The UK system does not respect the basic human dignity of people who come here seeking refuge and who have fled war, persecution or disaster. Devolving provision of asylum accommodation and services to the Scottish Government would allow for public sector bids to provide decent services in a compassionate way. I am keen to hear what steps the Scottish Government has taken to press the UK Government to devolve those responsibilities, since the Scottish Parliament agreed to the Green Party's amendment on the matter during our debate on Syrian refugee resettlement scheme.

As recent weeks have also shown, the UK immigration system also fails to recognise the absolute economic necessity of inward migration to Scotland as a country that has an ageing population and significant skills gaps. Projections from National Records of Scotland estimate that halting future immigration from the EU would see a 12 per cent drop in the number of 16 to 29-year-olds. That would be double the decline that would be seen in the UK as a whole and would be a significant blow to our working-age population. Under that Brexit scenario, the total working-age population in Scotland is projected to decline by 3 per cent, which is a drop that would not be experienced in any other part of the UK. We benefit far more from the opportunities that freedom of movement has given us.

We must value the contribution that EU migrants bring to our economy and appreciate how their skills enrich our workplaces, public services and communities. I am sure that all of us in Parliament are familiar with cases of constituents from elsewhere in the world coming to us because of bizarre, unfair or downright cruel decisions that have been taken by the Home Office about their

and their families' right to stay here. That is why I read the Conservative's amendment with some confusion. Taking on board that the UK operates a thoroughly broken, discredited and unfair immigration system for non-EU citizens, I am still confused by what they mean by a "future, fairer immigration system". Surely Conservative members are not suggesting that bringing EU citizens into the fold of the current broken system for the rest of the world is in any way "fairer"? It might be equally unfair: that is about as generous as we can be.

In the past few days, we have heard about proposals to halve the number of international student visas. Nothing says that we have taken back control like a body blow to our universities. I suppose that we are sick of experts, anyway. Why would we want more of them?

We must continue to welcome those who have chosen to make Scotland their home and we must continue to guarantee the rights of our fellow EU citizens who already call Scotland their home. This Parliament—and the people of Scotland—would benefit greatly from the power to do just that. I hope that we will have it soon.

15:58

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** A very good friend of 30 years who is working in Uganda in the aid world emailed me last night to say that, at this time, hundreds of thousands of people are refugees on the Ugandan border. The situation is getting absolutely no news coverage at all here, or in the west more broadly, yet such situations are the reality in various parts of Africa. I highlight that because we, or some people in our politics and society, occasionally get very exercised by a small number of people when mass movements of refugees are happening on an incredible scale in other parts of the world, and we know little or nothing of them.

The other aspect that I cannot fail to stress this afternoon is that the UN is today describing what can appropriately be called

"a complete meltdown of humanity".

Children are trapped in buildings that are under attack in Aleppo right now. It is important to remember occasionally that we are pretty fortunate to live in a pretty stable, grown up and mature democracy while other people are losing their lives.

There will be many more incidents such as the ones that James Dornan described earlier: there will be many more people lost in the Mediterranean next year. As the President-elect of the United States appoints Rex Tillerson, the boss of ExxonMobil and a close personal friend of

Putin, as Secretary of State, we all, in our politics, need to be alive to the reality of a very different and changing world order.

Pauline McNeill rightly mentioned the vibrancy of the language on immigration that is used in different parts of the European Union. There are candidates for the presidency of the French Republic who are now openly describing immigration controls and look as though they are rather for such controls. The world in relation to refugees and immigration is changing around us.

I agree with much of what Alasdair Allan said in his opening statement—he got his tone absolutely right. Lewis Macdonald also made remarks that I entirely endorse. Much of what we achieved with the fresh talent initiative is obliterated as time goes on, but it was a good programme and, in fairness, I say that many friends and colleagues from across the parties in Parliament at the time acknowledged that.

My most difficult conversation—straight up; my most difficult conversation—in the run-up to the Scottish elections back in May was not about domestic politics. It was with two young working guys who took me to task on immigration when I was—supposedly—cheerfully canvassing on a building site. I was not very cheerful after I had had that conversation. There is no easy way to have the immigration discussion. We cannot hide from it, but must tackle it head-on. The only way that I got those men to at least move their thinking was by describing a discussion that I had about five years ago—or less, possibly. Pauline McNeill mentioned Jordan: in the previous parliamentary session, I met a Jordanian minister who was here meeting people from across the political parties. The minister graphically illustrated to me the challenges that his country faced in dealing with a million and a half refugees from different parts of the middle east, in particular Syria—that war has now been going on for that long—and what that meant for his country and the demands that were placed on it. I explained all that to the two young working men in Shetland and they conceded that our perspective on such things is, if nothing else, limited by the reality of what happens in Shetland when compared with the enormous challenge of coping with such an influx into Jordan of people fleeing war.

A member of my staff is an EU national; I know that colleagues across politics also have EU nationals working for them here in Edinburgh. I am very strong in my commitment to ensuring—as others including the minister are—that in this mess that is Brexit, the position of EU citizens is guaranteed for the future.

I disagree profoundly with Alexander Stewart's comments. It is not good enough simply to say that the UK Government cannot do anything

because the EU will not let it until article 50 is triggered. That is absolute rubbish. The Prime Minister could stand up and make a very clear statement about the position of those people in our country. She should do so. *[Interruption.]* Alexander Stewart may have watched a different referendum to the one that I remember seeing back in the summer.

The one thing on which I absolutely agree with Liam Kerr is that language matters. Language has been debased by what has gone on of late, so we need to get back to a position in which language matters and in which how we conduct ourselves on this issue above all else is profoundly important.

I will finish with a plea to the minister. I was not trying to crack a joke about the Brexit options paper; I genuinely believe that the Government has made a commitment to bringing the matter back before Parliament before the end of the year. I hope that the minister will confirm that that will happen—not least because it will be an important chance to make the point again about the importance of EU nationals in Scotland and across the UK, and their right to be here.

16:04

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** The UN's international migrants day on 18 December is observed to recognise the efforts, contributions and rights of migrants worldwide.

However, as the migration observatory of the University of Oxford pointed out in its briefing, there is no single definition of what type of person is a migrant. To a researcher, a migrant might be one type of person; to a lawyer, another; and clearly to a politician, another. That is why, in debates such as this one, we must be very careful not to throw terms around such as immigrant, refugee, migrant or asylum seeker, as if each term is entirely interchangeable.

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** I do not recognise that mix-up—or distinction, if you like—in the contributions that I have heard today from SNP members, or from Labour members.

**Jamie Greene:** My point is entirely proved by the wording of the Government's motion. I will be honest: there is very little in it to disagree with but it is jumbled in the way in which it interchanges talk of migrants, immigrants, economic migration and refugees. I will talk about that in more detail, if the member will let me.

What is a migrant? A migrant can be someone who is displaced from their home country due to poverty and conflict. James Dornan painted a very eloquent picture of that tragic circumstance.

However, there are also migrants who choose to move from one country to another to create a better life for their families. Generations of my family left Scotland and moved to Canada to seek a better life and the majority of them are still there. They were not escaping or fleeing war, but they wanted a better economic life for their children. When we discuss migration in Scotland and, indeed, the UK, we must first agree upon some common principles.

Scotland is a welcoming country. I am proud of the welcome that we have given migrants who arrive here in crisis—no one disputes what we have done. There is no doubt that there is also a need for economic migration into Scotland at all skill levels—no one on the Conservative benches disputes that either. However, more important, let us not confuse the challenges of welcoming refugees into society with the genuine need to recruit the best talent from anywhere in the globe.

By way of example, I spoke to a tech business in Edinburgh recently who was struggling to recruit software engineers and developers—most of them from India—under the current visa system. In the absence of enough suitably skilled workers here, the managing director was forced to recruit from afar if he wanted his business to grow.

From personal experience, I know what it feels like to have to leave behind your home, job, friends and partner when a visa runs out. After I spent a year in Australia, the Government there decided that I did not have the skill set that it needed at the time to allow me to stay in the country. It was tough to leave but, with the passage of time, I have come to respect the decision and the system. I am not here to discuss the merits of one immigration system over another, but I make the point to demonstrate that we as a Parliament should be having a grown-up debate about the skills that we need as a country and how we manage inward migration.

Pauline McNeill made a very valid contribution about social cohesion, which is a problem that is not unique to Scotland.

The Government motion also talks about refugees, who are a very different type of migrant. When it comes to forced migration, conflict, climate change and poverty have led to mobility in unprecedented numbers over the last decade. While there is always more that we can do, I am proud that, as a wealthy country, the UK is the world's second-largest bilateral aid donor after the USA. I am also very proud that British taxpayers' money is providing vital food, shelter, water and medicine for many hundreds of thousands of people the world over. Our amendment today—

**Ross Greer:** Is the member proud that his party last week hosted a reception in the Parliament for

the manufacturers of the bombs that are being dropped on those countries that force people into seeking refuge here in Europe?

**Jamie Greene:** That question has nothing to do with today's debate, and I am pretty sure that it was not only Conservative MSPs who attended the event. The member is welcome to make political points of his own if he wants to.

I am proud of the contribution that the UK makes to looking after people from around the world. Our amendment notes that, and I would like to think that other members across the chamber accept that as well. In Scotland, it is important that we note that charities, voluntary organisations and faith groups, in particular, are playing a vital role in helping migrants as they arrive in Scotland. In Inverurie, the Amal group brings together refugees with local people. They sit over traditional Arabic food and coffee and chat. In Pitlochry, local people are raising money for Médecins Sans Frontières and the Red Cross. The Church of Scotland is giving backpacks to refugee schoolchildren. In Glasgow, volunteers are delivering refuweegeee welcome packs throughout December and January; their motto is "We're all fae somewhere."

We all wish to achieve migration policies that are fair and effective and protect those in need but ensure that Scotland is a prosperous place to live. Some people simply choose to make a better life for themselves in Britain, just as many Brits move abroad to do the same. Whether you agree or disagree with the decision to leave the EU, we should be using the opportunity of this debate to set the tone with pragmatic ideas.

We face demographic challenges in this country, such as an ageing population, and skills shortages. We should work towards a migration system that attracts the skills we need, from every part of the world, on our terms. Wanting more control does not make us less humanitarian or any less outward looking.

I give my humble thanks to the migrants who have given so much to Scotland, while also thanking the many countries that have given Scottish migrants a home over the years.

After all, we are all fae somewhere.

16:10

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** I am glad to have the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon to recognise UN international migrants day. It gives us an opportunity collectively to participate in recognising around the globe the contribution that migrants make to our culture, our economies, our universities and society.

It also gives us an opportunity to reflect upon those migrants who have been lost in transit. It gives us an opportunity to reflect on the impact in the countries not just where migrants end up but that they transit through and that they come from. It gives us an opportunity to reflect on those who do not leave: the families who are left behind. That is something that we in Scotland have a lot of rich historical experience of—all the blood that flowed away.

Sandra White touched on the International Organization for Migration, which is celebrating its 65th anniversary this year. It is worth recounting the organisation's original name: the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, which grew out of the ashes of the second world war and whose purpose was to help and assist displaced people. It is worth remembering that, as it is such a vivid illustration of the potential consequences of a fractured Europe.

In one of the last debates that we will have in Parliament before the Christmas recess, it is worth noting that 2016 has been a year of seismic political events. The global liberal order, which Tavish Scott alluded to, has been shaken to its foundations and, on every occasion, migration has been at the heart of the debate.

In the UK, we had Brexit. The campaign was originally predicated on the notion of sovereignty but quickly degraded into the demonisation of migrants. *The Spectator's* Brexit butterfly did a first: it transmogrified back into a slug.

In the United States, we saw a president elected in a campaign the central planks of which were the deportation of millions of migrants, the building of a wall to keep migrants out and a commitment to ban celebrants of the world's second-largest faith from entering the United States.

That underlines the point about the importance of language, because we see the consequences that language can have. I say very gently to Liam Kerr that he should reflect on the rhetoric of his party—which is calling for companies to be named and shamed for their foreign workers, treating people as bargaining chips and failing to guarantee the rights of EU nationals here in the UK—before he comes to the chamber, lecturing people in dog-whistle politics.

Ross Greer spoke about right-wing tabloids, and 2016 has also been the year of "post-truth" politics, which is an interesting expression: in the past, we would just have called it a lie. I will entertain the notion for a moment and use some of the philosophical training I got at university to tie it in with some postmodernism.

"Post truth" is about a dogmatic relativism in which everything is accorded equal status and

facts and evidence disappear. We are seeing that in debates in the United States on creationism and intelligent design; in debates about climate change; and in debates about migration. How often do we hear the concrete, rational, empirical case for migration? It is heard rarely—we hear it only in this chamber. Instead, we see the headlines and the scare stories.

We must bring some clarity to the issue and consider the impact of migration in Scotland. Most of Scotland's 369,000 migrants from outside the UK are young, economically active and highly qualified. As the minister highlighted, migrants are more likely to be in work than people who were born in Scotland. Further, migrants are not responsible for wage suppression—that myth must be debunked once and for all. Globalisation and automation have a role to play in wage suppression, but globalisation—freedom of movement—is also part of the solution.

When Alexander Stewart touched on the opportunities of Brexit, I recalled what Michael Russell said in the chamber about that issue a few weeks ago. He referred to an article by Mihir Sharma, who says that the economies of the future are based on people and ideas, and how the UK cannot become that kind of economy because of its obsession with migration.

Another point that has been made concerns the important role that migrants play in our health and social care sector. The Health and Sport Committee has heard evidence that that sector would collapse without migrants in the roles that they play.

We know that one of the key challenges that we face is an ageing population. It is worth remembering that one in five UK-born people living in Scotland is retired, but only 1 per cent of migrants are.

There is much more that I could say in this debate, but I will end by joining others in showing solidarity with EU citizens living in Scotland and across the UK. To them, and to other migrants coming to Scotland to call it home, I say ceud mìle fàilte.

16:16

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):**

I thank the Government for lodging this motion celebrating the UN international migrants day, because migration is important for two reasons: first, in relation to protecting people fleeing war and persecution and, secondly, in relation to developing our economy. Tom Arthur did a good job describing the international situation that we face and the issues around Brexit. When we consider those issues, we recognise the jeopardy around the issue of migration.

My views on migration are very much shaped by my family's history. My mother's maiden name was Berkeley, but that is not what it should have been. Her family name had been Berckefeldt, a German name, but my great-great-grandparents were interned during the first world war because they had German passports, spoke German and had a German name. Living in British India, that was enough for them to be deprived of their liberty. That created a stigma that meant that my great-grandfather changed his surname and never used his real first name. That shame and stigma was passed on to my grandfather who proudly wore a kilt, although the reality was that he had far more in common with the people of Hanover than the people of the Highlands. It is easy to assume that that kind of institutionalised xenophobia, intolerance and stigmatisation of people from elsewhere happens only in other countries, but it has happened in this country, too.

Migration is essential to human beings. We are notable as a species for our adaptability and also for the fact that we move. We are a people that has moved from Africa to Asia and across the Bering strait to populate the Americas, and we have gone on down to Australia. Our ability to do that is quite remarkable. Scotland has a particular status in that regard. Sandra White mentioned the fact that we are a country of mongrels. I would go further and say that Scotland is named after migrants because, as the Venerable Bede chronicled, the Scots moved from Spain and through Ireland before eventually settling in Scotland.

The issue of migration was one of the first that was raised with me by a constituent, when I was contacted by a French woman who was worried about her ability to stay in this country following the Brexit vote. That is perhaps not surprising, given that as many as 10 per cent of my constituents are from the EU. We have a strong base in education, professional services, tourism and technology, and Brexit has created real worries. However, that is happening against a backdrop of migration on a scale that we have never seen before. Some people have talked about numbers but, according to the UN, 232 million people move between countries every year; if we include internal migration, that increases to 740 million. That is a huge proportion of the world's population moving every year, and a sign of our increasingly globalised culture and economy—a sign of strife and poverty, with 19 million of those people being refugees, 4 million of whom are from Syria. Others including James Dornan, Tavish Scott and Pauline McNeill have highlighted those issues well, so I will not do that again.

On top of safeguarding the protections that we afford refugees, we need to celebrate the benefits

of immigration to our economy. Migration allows our economy to adapt, grow and innovate. It adapts by filling the needs that are created in our economy, not least as a result of an ageing population. We know what a valuable contribution foreign workers make in our health service, in nursing and medicine. However, we must be careful not to describe those with certificates and degrees as good migrants and those with lesser skills as less welcome. We need skills and people throughout our economy because our population has gone from a pyramid to a column to an inverted pyramid. We have an ageing population that needs support. Alexander Stewart contrasted growth in Scotland with that of the rest of the UK. There are many reasons for the difference, one of which is uncertainty. However, another is that we have attracted fewer migrants into our economy. That is a well-established economic fact.

In innovation, as many as 15 per cent of people who work in growing occupations are from other countries. Edinburgh has become a high-tech hub for technology companies and those companies welcome people from other countries. They do so for two reasons. One is because it allows them to cluster skills here in Edinburgh—people who are specialists and experts in their area. Secondly, by employing people from other parts of the world such companies are able to face the world. They are globalised, despite the fact that they are based in Edinburgh.

I want to mention our universities. I am lucky to have the King's Buildings—one of the campuses of the University of Edinburgh—in my constituency. Universities are perhaps our longest lived, most enduring global institutions. They are historically international; indeed, at Edinburgh university 17 per cent of staff are EU nationals, 25 per cent of academics and 14 per cent of students. The impact of Brexit is that the university has seen a fall-off in applications for vacancies from other parts of the world. Apparently, it is being encouraged not to be part of joint funding applications with other international universities. The reality is that our knowledge relies on the international exchange of understanding.

It is important that we celebrate immigration in its fullest sense and that we do not try to claim that there is good and bad immigration.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** Time is getting really tight, so I ask for speeches of less than six minutes, please.

16:22

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** My colleague Sandra White stole my introduction, but I think that it is worth repeating. The late William McIlvanney famously said,

“Scotland's not full”, and that we are “a mongrel nation”. Both statements are true. Scotland was founded by immigrants and we all have immigrant ancestors somewhere down the line in our family tree. However, as well as being a mongrel nation, Scotland is a welcoming nation. It is in our DNA to welcome people, particularly those who are in crisis or distress. It is anathema to us to turn away people in need if we can help them when they are seeking refuge.

As has been said in the chamber many times, the current situation in Aleppo, the Yemen and other parts of the world ravaged by war and terrorism is a humanitarian crisis. Scotland has proportionately punched way above its weight when it comes to taking in refugees, with the numbers we have welcomed topping more than 1,200. As Ross Greer said, East Dunbartonshire—my local authority—has at long last agreed to take four families and four unaccompanied children. I look forward to being part of the welcoming committee to help them to integrate when they arrive early next year.

Of course, welcoming immigrants does not just mean providing refuge; it means welcoming people from any part of the world who want to work here and contribute to Scotland's economy and culture. There is no reason to differentiate between immigrants and refugees. Who would want to start a new life in a country and get a pittance to live on, with the most basic accommodation and second-hand furniture and hand-outs? Immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers want to work and should be encouraged to work for their own dignity and wellbeing. These are families who deserve no less than us. They have pride and want the best for their children. Why would they not?

When it comes to welcoming migrant workers, why would we not do so with open arms? As has been said many times during the debate, migrant workers contribute immensely to the Scottish economy and culture. In fact, without them we would face a serious shortfall in skilled—and unskilled—workers.

**Liam Kerr:** Did Rona Mackay disagree with Nicola Sturgeon when she said that an independent Scotland would not have unmanaged immigration and that

“nobody's suggesting uncontrolled and unmanaged immigration”?

**Rona Mackay:** I did not allude to that, and Liam Kerr is in no position of strength to talk about our immigration policy.

Why does the Tory Westminster Government make it so difficult for migrants to come and work here? Since Brexit, the Tories have given workers and EU citizens no security, preferring instead to



adopt an I-will-if-you-will mentality and to insist that workers from this country are given security in other EU countries. What utter hypocrisy and arrogance. The Tory Government gambled with our European identity and lost, and now it thinks that it can set the rules.

The fact is that Brexit is a no-win situation. We are all losers, and that is why our First Minister and excellent European cabinet team are working so hard to give Scotland access to the single market, which is vital to our economy and cultural wellbeing. Why would we want to be an insular country, cutting ourselves off from trading and interacting at all levels with our European neighbours? That is the path that that right-wing Government is going down, but we will never follow it. Europe is too important to us, for all the reasons that members have mentioned in this passionate debate.

On 23 June on the steps of Bute house, the First Minister said that all our EU citizens were welcome in Scotland. She said what we were all thinking—what all right-minded people were thinking—in the depths of our shock and despair at the news that we were to be dragged out of Europe.

The indisputable facts are that international migrants make important economic, social and cultural contributions to our communities, and the UK Government's focus on arbitrarily reducing net migration is wrong for Scotland. I certainly would not want to live in a country that has put up the shutters and in which we were unable to benefit from international migrants culturally and economically, just as much as I would not want to live in a country that did not welcome with open arms families who are fleeing from war and persecution.

I have every confidence that the Scottish Government will never allow that. Scotland will always be open for business and open for refuge. I support the motion.

16:27

**Rachael Hamilton (South Scotland) (Con):** I acknowledge the UN international migrants day and I remember the refugees and migrants who lost their lives while trying to reach safe harbour.

I will focus on the part of the Conservative amendment that says:

“the Scottish Government has significant powers to create incentives to live and work in Scotland.”

National identity is a hotly discussed topic in Scotland. The 2014 referendum challenged national identity. If Scotland were to separate, could those who identify as British-Scottish still claim to be so? As members may not know, I grew

up in Wales, and as members will have heard, I have an English accent. I have been asked how the combination is received in the Scottish Parliament. Let me say this: I have been in Scotland for 26 years. Prior to coming to the Parliament, I helped to run a business with my husband in the Scottish Borders. My three children are Scottish and I feel as much Scottish as they do. If such questions—of how I am welcomed—are asked of me, the same questions will have been directed to others from further afield. I will develop that opinion later.

We must in this Parliament echo the words of Ruth Davidson and say we want the values, the brains and the culture of all those who come to Scotland, and who call Scotland their home. We must work harder to encourage new talent to Scotland if we are to achieve what we need to do in terms of population growth, labour shortages and cultural diversity.

As members have mentioned, EU migrants make a valuable contribution and help labour shortages: 80 per cent of EU nationals are working age, compared to 65 per cent of the Scottish population as a whole, and as such they are more likely to be economically active. Migrants and the benefits that they bring to Scotland should not be underestimated. They plug shortages in unskilled and skilled labour, enrich our lives with diversity and help grow our population.

I am aware of the importance of EU migrants to the hospitality industry from my experience in the sector. Almost a third of EU nationals are employed in jobs that are linked to distribution, hotels and restaurants. Of those, 20,000 work in the accommodation and food sectors, typically carrying out roles in bar work, waiting and housekeeping. Indeed, the Scottish Food and Drink Federation says that the industry could not function without EU migrants.

Workforce planning is crucial. Every week we hear of impending shortages to key services—

**Daniel Johnson:** Will the member give way?

**Rachael Hamilton:** I will finish my sentence and then give way. As our constituents tell us and we already know, shortages are present in the health and social care sector, too.

**Daniel Johnson:** I thank Rachael Hamilton for highlighting the case of people working in the hospitality sector, but that is also where workers often find themselves being exploited. Will she support the Labour amendment, which looks for protection of the rights of workers who migrate from other countries?

**Rachael Hamilton:** Currently, the protection of workers' rights is higher in some circumstances

than the EU requirements and regulations set out. In particular, we have the working time directive.

Should the Scottish Government be doing more to focus on workforce planning, to help alleviate the current shortages and focus on skilling up our young workforce? EU migrant labour is key to the agriculture and horticulture sector. The crux of the problem in rural areas is a shortage of local seasonal labourers to pick the product at its freshest. In that regard, migrant labour is essential. I met an East Lothian mushroom grower who employs 283 people, mainly from Poland and Bulgaria. Without those labourers, the business would struggle to harvest in time.

Last week in the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee we heard evidence from Professor Rebecca Kay. Her paper described a project on social support and migration in Scotland, which is exploring the experiences of migration and settlement among migrants from central and eastern Europe who are living in Scotland. We talk much about welcoming migrants, but the project report found that there are issues around settling in, loneliness and isolation. Migrants from eastern European countries are clustered in low-skilled and low-paid employment. Career progression is difficult, especially in rural areas. Those aspects need to improve if we really want to make Scotland a place that welcomes all.

**Pauline McNeill:** I do not disagree with a single word of Rachael Hamilton's speech so far. However, no Conservative member has mentioned in their contribution the moral responsibility that we have, not just to migrants who have something to offer, but to those who flee for safety. Will the member address that?

**Rachael Hamilton:** I have mentioned the social and cultural diversity that migrants bring to our country. I have defined the skills shortage as an issue, and the population growth within Scotland, but I am not in any way, shape or form saying that I do not value migrants in other senses.

I do not know where I am now.

The Scottish Government must set out its requirements in a rational immigration system in which people are matched to skills. Gathering sectoral data is essential for workforce planning. The Scottish Government must concentrate on growing the economy. There will not be jobs to fill if our economy does not grow, and productivity will stay static.

I believe that a solution to that is the skilling up of our workforce. That is investing in the future of this country. It is ensuring that measures are in place that will guarantee that all sectors and industries will not suffer from labour shortages. It is promoting what Scotland has to offer and giving

those opportunities to make life better. To do that, the SNP Government first has to acknowledge the issues that are prevalent in Scotland's workforce and seek to resolve them, and not, as is all too often the case, claim that the Scottish Government is powerless to do anything.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now move to the last of the open speeches from Clare Adamson.

16:33

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** I want to talk about some of the Syrian refugees who have come to my own area, but before I do that I will touch on some of the things that have come up in the debate.

I thank Jamie Greene for taking my intervention. From my own point of view, I can see very different reasons for people coming to live and work in this country, but in Scotland we embrace them. When they come here they are all new Scots. Once they are here we do not make the distinction, because they are our friends and neighbours and they are welcome in our country.

Rachel Hamilton touched on skills shortages, and earlier in the debate, members on the Tory benches were talking about migrants who make a contribution being welcome. I do not know where the migrants who do not make a contribution are; they are not visible to me in Scotland.

Mr Greene mentioned the software industry. That is my background, and I know that the sector has great skill shortages. However, I also know from speaking to NFU Scotland farmers last week that there are shortages of soft fruit pickers and workers more widely on our farms. All workers make a contribution; one should not be valued any more than another. Whether we are talking about software or soft fruit, migrants should be welcome when they come to work here.

There are reasons for people seeking new lives. I am sure that, like me, many people have families who have gone elsewhere. I have Irish heritage. I am sure that a few generations back people from my family had to flee the potato famine. I am also sure that people had to flee Scotland because of the Highland clearances. We know that there are many reasons why people choose to move and work in other areas, including war.

Just over a year ago, my good friend, Bushra Iqbal—she is no stranger to the Parliament, having delivered time for reflection in the previous parliamentary session—invited me to Airdrie mosque for a celebration to welcome the first Syrian refugees to come to North Lanarkshire. I was delighted to attend. It was a truly uplifting experience, with the community represented by

local schools, the police and fire services, local churches and mosques, those of faith and of no faith, and North Lanarkshire Council officers and elected members. All had gathered to offer friendship and support to the families who had sought refuge in this country.

It was no surprise that North Lanarkshire Council's Syrian resettlement project was awarded team of the year for excellence in housing by the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland. The project was established in preparation for the Syrians' arrival and involved housing, social work and other council services, together with NHS Lanarkshire, local voluntary organisations, housing associations and the police and fire services. The award was made in recognition of the continuing support that the team provides to give the families confidence and promote their independence in the community.

North Lanarkshire has a great history of welcoming refugees. The community's welcoming of Congolese refugees in 2007 has been a great success. Of course, success does not mean that there have not been problems. As can be imagined, there are always those who are uneducated and stupid enough not to welcome people. Thankfully, in both situations, those people have very much been a minority.

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** I welcome my colleague taking the time to highlight the refugees who have settled in North Lanarkshire. She may be aware that, just a couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of welcoming refugees from Coatbridge to the Parliament for a tour. Does she agree that, now that the refugees have been in Scotland for about a year, the priority for the UK Government, the Scottish Parliament and the local authorities is to continue to help them to settle and deal with the trauma that many of them have faced?

**Clare Adamson:** I agree with the member's points. Many of the people who have come here have suffered violence and torture, and have required additional help from specialist services because of post-traumatic stress disorder. The Syrian families, who were brought from the refugee camps, are some of those who are most in need. Some of the children have really difficult conditions, including medical conditions, to deal with. I am glad that North Lanarkshire Council continues to offer support.

Last week, I had my very own visitor to the Parliament. My local general practitioner practice undertakes an exchange with the American University of Beirut, offering a four-week placement for people who are studying family health and will become the equivalent of our GPs. The exchange has been going on for a number of years, but this year there was a problem. Ghaith,

who had applied and been successfully accepted on to the programme, was denied a visa by the UK Government because he is a Syrian national. With the help of my colleague and friend, Marion Fellows, who asked questions about the case in the House of Commons and pursued the matter, he was eventually given his visa and could attend. That is an example of how UK immigration stands in the way of, rather than facilitates, the cultural and knowledge exchange that is so vital.

It was heartening to see Ghaith, but also sad to know that he had not been able to return home for three years to visit his parents in Aleppo.

We should all remember that we are Jock Tamson's bairns, but we should aspire to be Glasgow girls, too.

16:40

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank the Government and the minister, Alasdair Allan, for lodging the motion for today's debate. It has been a fantastic debate with some really strong contributions from members of all parties. I welcome the UN's international migrants day, which will take place on Sunday, and I echo the comments made by Alasdair Allan and by many other members that the Parliament should put on record its thanks to all who have chosen to make Scotland their home, no matter where they come from.

As Daniel Johnson and Clare Adamson said, we all have personal stories to tell about how a migrant or migration has impacted on our lives, whether those stories are about relatives, or about people who have treated us in the NHS or who work in other public services.

I am a third generation migrant. My grandfather came here in the 1940s, fleeing the poverty of pre-partition India and looking to make a better life for himself and his family. He arrived in the south of England and, looking for a place to settle, travelled north. Of all the places he could pick, he set up home in sunny Lossiemouth, which became home for my mother and my family. His intention was always to return home but, like so many others, he fell in love with Scotland and chose to bring his family here. That story is probably replicated by many families—families from Ireland and from other parts of the world—and we should pay tribute to all the people who helped to make the tapestry of Scotland what it is today.

Sandra White—rightly—mentioned Glasgow, which is a shining example of how to create a diverse and open community that welcomes people. It is a community that says that, when people arrive there—no matter their background, race or religion—they are part of the "one Glasgow" approach. We have seen that in the

leadership that Glasgow has shown in its support for migrants and refugees, particularly Kosovan refugees and those from Syria, whom we also now support.

I echo Tom Arthur's comments that we should not use the EU citizens who live here as bargaining chips. We should send a strong message to the UK Government and to Prime Minister Theresa May that we expect the rights of every single EU national who is already here in the United Kingdom to be protected and guaranteed. That should be done without delay. [*Applause.*]

**Jamie Greene:** I am sure that members are not clapping me.

What is the Scottish Labour position on our amendment, which asks that the EU should protect the interests of the UK nationals, including many Scots, who currently live in the EU? If Labour members will not support the amendment, why not?

**Anas Sarwar:** I think that the UK should protect the rights of every EU national and that the EU should protect the rights of UK nationals. That is a pretty simple concept to understand.

I agree with what Jamie Greene said about the conflation of refugees and migrants. I am not for a second criticising anybody or implying any ill intent on anyone's part, but we should be careful not to mix up refugees and migrants as there are clear differences and challenges. A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster, and a migrant is a person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions. We need to be careful about the two terms.

James Dornan, Pauline McNeill and Tavish Scott talked about the sacrifices that many refugees have made in trying to flee conflict and war. We see that at present in Syria, but we have seen it before in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia. As a country that is not slow to get involved with war, we should not be slow to support people who are the victims of war. That is why we should welcome refugees to this country with open arms.

Lewis Macdonald talked about economic interests and pointed out that migrants can be exploited by being underpaid by employers, ripped off by landlords or trafficked. We have many of those problems—for example, some are being investigated currently in Govanhill in Glasgow. We need to reflect on those problems.

Joan McAlpine, Rona Mackay and Rachael Hamilton quite rightly spoke about the economic benefits of migrants, and Joan McAlpine in particular spoke about the ageing population and the requirement for migrants to come to the

country. I think that all members can support that—particularly the economic benefits, but also the support that people from other parts of the world give our NHS.

Lewis Macdonald mentioned powers. If the two Governments are willing to work together, we can find a model that supports our needs, as we did with the fresh talent initiative.

In closing, I want to talk a bit about the challenges. It is not right for us to talk just about the rosy picture of migration. There are also challenges. One is the need to tackle the myths about benefit scroungers. The reality is that migrants contribute more to the economy than they take, and we should say that loudly.

We should openly challenge the right-wing media, which would happily let us believe that only benefit scroungers come here, not people who help to drive our economy. We should take on the far right head on. It tries to foster prejudice, racism and Islamophobia in our country. We should let it know that it and its views—not the migrants who choose to come here—are not welcome here.

We can proactively work together to expose the failures of the Tory immigration system, which is heartless and treats people unfairly, as Ross Greer quite rightly said. Instead, we should say that we can build an immigration system that welcomes people, whether they come here to build the economy or to flee conflict and make a better life for themselves.

16:46

**Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con):** I declare an interest as an Aberdeen City Council councillor.

I acknowledge the comments of my colleague Liam Kerr in his opening speech. We welcome the Parliament's acknowledging the UN's international migrants day on 18 December because as it is important that we recognise the tragic loss of the lives of people who have tried to reach our shores and other places in order to secure freedom, finally.

It is really important that we take on head-on some of the arguments that have been made during the debate—in particular about the rhetoric and stirring up of emotions during the EU referendum campaign by the leave campaign and people who voted for Brexit, which Joan McAlpine and Tom Arthur have mentioned. We need to be absolutely clear that the SNP Government has consistently and unashamedly attempted to paint a false image of leave voters—including 400,000 of its own voters—as anti-immigration and anti-globalisation nativists. Believe me, leave voters

noticed when the First Minister declared that Scotland voted to remain in order to be

“an open, inclusive and outward-looking society”.—[*Official Report*, 28 June 2016; c 5.]

Therefore, all those who voted to leave automatically represented the opposite. In her rhetoric, the First Minister has painted leave voters as “the other”. In fact, following Mike Russell’s comments in Brussels, it is clear that the SNP is trying to airbrush the 1 million Scottish leave voters from history.

To address the point that Pauline McNeill made, I say that people in Scotland who voted to leave the EU did so for a variety of reasons—not just because of migration. One of those reasons was to create a fairer immigration system that is fit for purpose, in the age of globalisation.

**Clare Adamson:** I hear what Ross Thomson says, but can he explain why he is not asking his Tory colleagues to reinstate the post-study work visa, which worked well and was a fair system?

**Ross Thomson:** If Clare Adamson had paid attention to my remarks and those of my colleague Liz Smith, she would know about the work that we have been doing in lobbying the UK Government. We have been very active on that front—probably more so than some of Clare Adamson’s SNP colleagues.

In his opening remarks, Lewis Macdonald spoke about the devastating impact of Brexit on migration and our need to reject the Tory fallacy of caps on migration. I want to address those points head-on. The EU rules on free movement are inherently unfair at their core. It is a ridiculous notion that, by the simple fact of a person’s birth in an EU member state, they have the right to move without restriction throughout the EU regardless of their skills or their capability to contribute to their chosen state’s society and economy. Meanwhile, highly skilled workers from other parts of the world have to jump through hoops to get in. The burden that is imposed on our economy and public services by uncontrolled free movement and large pockets of unskilled labour from Europe has meant that we have had to turn away people from other parts of the world who have had vital skills that could have contributed enormously to our society.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Does Ross Thomson not appreciate that the point and purpose of free movement among neighbouring countries is to increase the solidarity and community among those countries? Does he apply that principle to the United Kingdom? If he does, why does he not apply it to the European Union?

**Ross Thomson:** In the north-east of Scotland, which Mr Macdonald and I both represent, we are

unable to access the necessary levels of skilled labour from outside the EU to populate our undermanned fishing vessels, fill teacher vacancies in our schools and support the renaissance in our oil and gas industry because of EU free movement, which is inherently unfair and inward looking. The UK has decided to take a path that allows skilled migrants from across the world to come to the UK to fill our skills gaps and help to take our economy forward.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Will Mr Thomson take an intervention?

**Ross Thomson:** I would like to make some progress, please. I am four minutes into my speech.

As Liam Kerr said, the UK Government has committed to resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020, of which I am really proud. The UK Government has played a leading role in ensuring that refugees from Syria are resettled here with the housing, healthcare and infrastructure that they need. I am proud to have played a role in that, as an Aberdeen city councillor. The community planning partnership in Aberdeen has worked to ensure that Syrian refugee families are supported in our communities to adjust to their new life in Scotland.

Since those people have settled in the city—this touches on a point that was raised by James Dornan—we have heard the horror stories of beheadings and crucifixion at the hands of Isis, of families starving to death with no food or electricity, and of the devastation that is being caused by the war that has driven the refugees to leave their homes. I am proud that Aberdeen is playing a vital role in making our multicultural city home to 100 Syrian refugees.

Sandra White said that Scotland is different and that we need a much more flexible approach to immigration. It is worth making the point to her that Scotland is not so different. According to the migration observatory at the University of Oxford, 58 per cent of Scots support reduced immigration to Scotland. In 2015, a YouGov poll found that 49 per cent of Scots—exactly the same percentage of people as across Britain—want less immigration. If Sandra White will not take my word for it, perhaps she will take the word of the First Minister, who said that

“there are not ‘radically different’ views on immigration between Scotland and the rest of the UK.”

Tavish Scott mentioned the situation in Aleppo, which we all know remains dire and desperate. In relation to the status of EU migrants, let us be clear that, as the Law Society of Scotland has reiterated, the UK Government has stated:

“EU nationals who have lived continuously and lawfully in the UK for at least 5 years automatically have a permanent right to reside.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close now, Mr Thomson.

**Ross Thomson:** In relation to those who have not lived here for five years, I am sure we all agree. EU nationals who are living, working and contributing in Scotland should be able to stay, just as those Scots who are living and working in the rest of Europe should be able to stay.

So, Presiding Officer—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No. I think that you are finished now, Mr Thomson.

**Ross Thomson:** Even with all those interventions?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are rather pushed for time.

16:53

**Dr Allan:** This has been an important and largely rational debate. It is worth saying that in the current political climate. I hope that the points that have been raised have set a precedent across the UK and will encourage politicians to approach immigration in a constructive and sensible manner. Indeed, members from across the chamber generally struck a thoughtful and well-judged tone—Mr Kerr’s efforts notwithstanding.

Lewis Macdonald rightly pointed out that Scots have form, as it were, on being migrants over the past 200 years, with Scots now found the world over. Other members also pointed to the history that we share, and Daniel Johnson, Rachael Hamilton, Clare Adamson, Anas Sarwar and others pointed to their own family histories.

We are here because it is international migrants day on 18 December. The day was established in 2000 and, since 2000, there has been a 41 per cent increase in the number of migrants around the world. That figure underlines the significant responsibility that we share in working to protect the rights of all migrants in Scotland and across the globe.

Members have joined me in expressing sincere sadness for those who lost their lives while searching for peace and an improved standard of living. It is vital that we never forget what has happened—and continues to happen—in the Mediterranean, as Pauline McNeill and many others have said. We will continue to do all that we can to address that devastating humanitarian crisis. That includes continuing to play our part in the refugee resettlement programme.

**Pauline McNeill:** I would like to put on record the fact that the Scottish Government has

announced that it will give £0.25 million to the Disasters Emergency Committee for the people of Yemen where, we believe, almost 10 million people are starving because of the war there.

**Dr Allan:** The Scottish Government has been pleased to assist in Yemen, and we are very proud of the modest role that we can play in helping to alleviate some of that suffering. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I ask members who are coming into the chamber not to have private conversations as they do, so that we can hear the minister.

**Dr Allan:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

We will continue to urge the UK Government to do more to increase the number of refugees that it will take. It is our belief that the UK Government should be willing to take refugees from among those who have fled to Europe, as well as from the camps in Syria’s neighbouring countries. To pick up on the specific issue that Mr Greer raised, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities continues to urge the UK Government to improve the accommodation that is provided to asylum seekers. The UK Parliament’s Home Affairs Committee recently raised that issue.

Today, we have recognised the hugely valuable contribution that is made by those who come to Scotland more generally. We are grateful to be able to welcome those people, who enrich our culture, our economy and our traditions. It is very positive that so many new Scots want to learn about Scotland’s culture and to be a distinctive part of it. Following a year in which so much anti-immigrant rhetoric has been doing the rounds, it is extremely important that the Scottish Parliament has ended the year with such a positive debate that shows our firm commitment to welcoming and valuing all people who choose to make Scotland their home. In particular, I am proud that the Scottish Parliament has today acknowledged the impact of the EU referendum on the whole debate. I hope that the UK Government will finally take note and give the EU citizens in Scotland the reassurances about their future that they need.

We are proud that others have chosen to make Scotland the place that they call home, and we appreciate the benefits of freedom of movement that are enjoyed by our own citizens, such as the right to free movement to live, study and work in all EU countries and to benefit from their public services. It is therefore imperative that the Scottish Government be treated as an equal partner and be centrally involved in developing the UK Government’s negotiating position on Europe. Any move seriously to restrict freedom of movement will be opposed by me and by other Scottish

Government ministers, as Mr Russell and I indicated to UK ministers in London last week.

Currently, Scotland's population is projected to grow by 7 per cent between 2014 and 2039, but if EU migration to Scotland were to stop completely, it is projected that it would grow by only 3 per cent. That scenario, hypothetical though it may be, illustrates why—among many other reasons—Scotland must welcome people from other countries who choose to live here.

There are many other points that I could cover, but I want to touch on the post-study work visa. I agree with what many members said about the importance of creating such an arrangement for Scotland. I have raised that point with the UK Government's Minister of State for Immigration, Robert Goodwill, in the past few days. In response to what Tory members have said, I must say that this Government is working very hard to resolve the issue; I hope that the UK Government is doing likewise.

To return to the refugee issue, although we welcome UK support for humanitarian actions in Greece and in the wider Mediterranean, we urge the Prime Minister to reconsider her position and to participate in EU-led relocation for the many people who are in need of protection. It is hugely disappointing and a matter of regret that the UK Government has chosen not to participate fully in the EU's collective efforts.

The debate has been a great chance to reflect on the contribution of people from other countries who have chosen to make Scotland their home. It is imperative that the UK Government stops treating EU nationals as human bargaining chips and, instead, acknowledges their highly valuable contribution to our nation. For those and many other reasons, I urge all members to support the motion.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Liam Kerr is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Lewis Macdonald will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-03049.2, in the name of Liam Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03049, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on welcoming international migrants in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)

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

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 27, Against 85, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-03049.1, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03049, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on welcoming international migrants in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)



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

#### Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 84, Against 27, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S5M-03049, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on welcoming international migrants in Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)

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

#### **Against**

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)  
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 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 84, Against 27, Abstentions 0.

#### *Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament acknowledges the UN's International Migrants Day on 18 December 2016; remembers the refugees and migrants who have lost their lives while trying to reach safe harbour; welcomes the opportunity to celebrate the contribution of those who have chosen to make Scotland their home; embraces a culturally diverse community that enriches Scotland's intellectual, social and cultural life; acknowledges the impact that the result of the EU Referendum has had on many of Scotland's friends and neighbours and seeks to reassure all that they are welcome

in Scotland; urges the UK Government to guarantee the rights of fellow EU nationals to live and work here; calls on it to deliver a fair and sensible immigration system that meets Scotland's needs, based on a recognition of the country's demographic deficit and economic requirements, noting in particular the importance of students and graduates from both other EU countries and other parts of the world, and calls on the Scottish Government to co-operate with devolved and city administrations seeking to address similar concerns in other parts of the UK.

## Walking

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-02930, in the name of Fulton MacGregor, entitled "Walk This Way at Dunbeth Park". I am intrigued. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the 20th anniversary of Paths for All, which is a charity that is dedicated to encouraging walking in Scotland; values and appreciates the work of Paths for All in supporting communities; congratulates the staff and students at the Coatbridge campus of New College Lanarkshire on the recent unveiling of their Walk This Way walking routes at Dunbeth Park in Coatbridge, which was supported by Paths for All; notes that this project was undertaken to encourage locals to use the park to walk, offering half-mile, three-quarter-mile and one-mile walking routes to cater for everyone regardless of fitness, health or time constraints; welcomes this project and others like it in Scotland, and notes the calls on the Scottish Government to consider a Year of Walking to encourage people to do more walking in the interests of fitness and health.

17:05

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** First, I thank colleagues who supported the motion and those who have decided to stay and speak in the debate. For the Scottish National Party, Ruth Maguire will mention initiatives on the topic in her constituency, and for the Tories, Graham Simpson took time out to speak to me about the debate. I am also delighted that, as is fitting, Elaine Smith, who is a fellow Coatbridger, has decided to speak. Dunbeth park is to the east of Coatbridge, towards the area's border. I grew up in an area that is on one side of the park and Elaine Smith is from an area that is on the other side, so it is fitting that she will speak in the debate. That sums up what such debates should be all about.

I am pleased to bring the subject to the chamber, especially as Paths for All has its 20th anniversary this year. I know that the minister will say more about the charity but, for those who are not familiar with it, I note that it is devoted to encouraging and promoting walking in all communities across Scotland.

I take the opportunity to congratulate the staff and students at the Coatbridge campus of New College Lanarkshire on the recent student association unveiling of their walk this way walking routes at Dunbeth park in my constituency, and I welcome them to the chamber. I hope that the creation of the paths will encourage even more people in Coatbridge and the wider community to enjoy the park. As I said, it was my local park

when I was growing up, and I still use it regularly. Normally, the distance round it is just over 1km, but I used the mile routes that the students have put in, and it was more challenging to go that way.

Although the motion mentions Dunbeth park, it would be unfair of me not to mention other great places to walk in my constituency, which is a mainly post-industrial heartland. People from outwith the area are often surprised to learn about the stunning walks at places such as Drumpellier country park, which is known locally as the lochs, and Gartcosh nature reserve. People can also walk along the old Monkland canal through Summerlee heritage park. I encourage anyone who is listening to come and visit the area, and I am sure that Elaine Smith will back me up on that. I am happy to do a wee tourist information advert.

The positive impact that walking can have on health—both physical and mental—is undeniable. It is something that a lot of people—although, it is important to remember, not everyone—can take part in as it is free and accessible for all ages. People can go walking by themselves, with the dog or with the family. Walking has major health benefits. Studies have shown that regular walking alone can reduce the risk of chronic illnesses including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers.

A community group in my constituency that has taken all that on board is Muirhead and district seniors forum. In addition to keeping local residents in the 55-plus age bracket up to date with community, local authority and national information, the forum set up a walking group in July this year. Age Scotland provided financial assistance to allow the group to get started, and it now has an average of 15 people with three trained group leaders heading out twice a month along routes of various levels of difficulty. The group leaders explore the suitability of potential routes, and I am told that a cafe is an essential requirement, as a main purpose of the group is to combat loneliness in the community.

Another local group that is based in my constituency is St Monica's ramblers. Since the club was formed 25 years ago, it has dedicated itself to organising walks every fortnight. Its members are primarily from Coatbridge, but there are members from across Lanarkshire and of all ages. I had some contact with the ramblers this week and I know that there is truly something for everyone. The fact that they get involved in everything from scaling Munros to undertaking more local walks shows how inclusive the group is. When I spoke to the group, I agreed to go on a walk with it at some point in the next year. However, having looked at its website and seen some of the walks that it undertakes, I think that I had better get into training fast.

There is somebody who, if I do not mention them when I am talking about walking, it will not go down well in the MacGregor family home—I might even get de-invited from Christmas dinner. My dad and mum are avid walkers. My dad is a self-proclaimed Munro bagger and has many under his belt. I do not remember exactly how many he has, but I know that he is down to the more difficult ones. He will be quite pleased that I have mentioned him. He has taken on some quite challenging summits, usually to my mum's horror. He will say, "Ah, this is an easy one," before starting off. I might try to follow in his footsteps but, so far, I have managed only a handful of the walks.

There is no doubt that, as a society, we have become much more reliant on cars in recent years, even for short distances such as those for taking our children to primary school or going to the local shops. A well-publicised year of walking would encourage more people to walk short distances as well as raising awareness of how enjoyable walking one of Scotland's hills, Munros or any of our great walks can be.

I hope that this will be a consensual debate and that we can get behind it. It is clear that organisations and initiatives such as those that I have mentioned will play a vital role in helping us to achieve the goal and get everyone to enjoy walking who can do so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. I think that, having mentioned your father, you will be guaranteed trifle.

17:11

**Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to Paths for All for the excellent work that it has done over 20 years, which is indeed a real milestone.

I congratulate Fulton MacGregor on lodging his motion and, in doing so, highlighting the work of staff and students at the Coatbridge campus of New College Lanarkshire. The campus successfully merged into New College Lanarkshire in 2014, joining the other main campuses of Cumbernauld, Motherwell and Kirkintilloch. As I learned earlier this year on a visit to the new Coatbridge campus, New College Lanarkshire now provides almost two thirds of the further and higher education provision in Lanarkshire and delivers qualifications to almost 27,000 students.

As the motion states, the Coatbridge campus, working in partnership with Paths for All, has unveiled the new walk this way walking routes in Dunbeth park in Coatbridge. The newly designed walks in the park are graded and colour coded. For example, the blue route is 0.5 miles in length;

the yellow route increases to 0.75 miles; and the red route increases to 1 mile. People can start on a shorter walk and gradually increase the distance while enjoying different aspects of the park.

The three walks in Dunbeth park are included in the generic name of the coal route, to reflect Coatbridge's coal-mining history. In two of NCL's other campus areas, a steel route will be located in Motherwell and an iron route in Cumbernauld. All three routes have been designed by creative arts students for Paths for All's walking for fitness programme.

That Paths for All has reached its 20th anniversary is testament to the impact that the charity is having on the everyday lives of people across Scotland, in encouraging them to get out and get walking in the interests of fitness and health. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that Ramblers Scotland was one of the founding partners of the Paths for All partnership and it has maintained a close relationship with the organisation for the past 20 years.

The advantages of walking include physical and mental health benefits; it is also free and accessible. In turn, walking helps to counter loneliness, especially when people undertake it as part of a walking group.

I want to concentrate the remainder of my comments on Dunbeth park itself. As a native of Coatbridge, from the Cliftonville area where the park is located, I fully appreciate the pivotal role that it plays in providing leisure pursuits in the area. The park, which dates back to the Victorian era, was gifted to the local community by the Baird family in 1887. At that time, the park as we know it was surrounded by fields and partial marshland. By 1940, the area—which covers just over 11 hectares—was surrounded by housing on three sides as a result of the industrialisation of Coatbridge.

Dunbeth park has five entrances, one of which provided a shortcut for me as I walked home from Coatbridge high, where I was a pupil—I thought that members would want to know that. Perhaps more important, today the park includes bowling greens, an all-weather football pitch, three rugby pitches and a fenced children's playground.

There is absolutely no doubt that Dunbeth park is a well-loved and well-utilised green space, which now has the welcome addition of the coal route to encourage people of all ages to engage in a healthier lifestyle without a financial cost.

17:15

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I congratulate Fulton MacGregor on securing this debate on the importance of walking for health,

which is an issue that I am sure we can all agree on.

Dunbeth park is a place that I am very fond of. As Fulton MacGregor pointed out, I lived nearby as a child. I lived in a tenement with an outside toilet. My husband and I bought our first flat close to the park—happily with an inside toilet, but with no heating. I currently live in the area—happily with an inside toilet and heating.

I appreciate the park, having had a history with it. I am also a member of Dunbeth bowling club, which—as Margaret Mitchell pointed out—is based in the park. Sadly, I do not walk in the park often enough. Having signed the motion, I intend to make a new year resolution to try to walk in the park at least once a week.

It is a great idea to have walking targets in the park and I congratulate the students from New College Lanarkshire who have been working with Paths for All to provide that incentive to aid health, wellbeing and fitness. By making exercise part of our daily routine, we can increase learning capacity, metabolism and overall feelings of wellbeing as well as helping with weight loss.

Recent research has shown that the built environment or the urban landscape around schools and colleges can actively deter younger people from walking anywhere. It is worse in areas that already suffer from deprivation. We also know that those who come from a poorer background are more likely to be in worse health. That makes it vital to tackle the root causes of inequality in our communities. It also means that it is extremely important to properly maintain attractive public areas.

Providing information on the best walking routes can help to change habits for the better and encourage walking as well as other exercise. That is all the more important because a recent report by NHS Scotland said that physical inactivity costs us around £94 million a year.

Obesity has been in the news recently. The Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee has been looking into the issue. At last week's committee meeting, the Minister for Public Health and Sport noted that it is a "significant problem". Obviously, walking and other exercise will help people to reduce weight but with regard to fitness and health, an obesity plan for Scotland must also look at how people are exposed to sugar and fatty foods and the cost of healthy, nutritious food.

As this is a debate on wellness and fitness, I want to mention the benefits of increasing breastfeeding. We know that young adults who were exclusively breastfed for three months or more are significantly leaner and have less body fat than those who were not breastfed so increasing breastfeeding, along with other life

habit changes such as encouraging walking and things such as free, nutritious school meals, can have a massive effect on the general health of young people and can last throughout their lifetime.

What would not be helpful is a punitive approach, which is the opposite to what is being proposed at the park with the walking routes and so on that we have been talking about. The United Kingdom Government recently dropped controversial proposals to withdraw benefits from people who refuse treatment for obesity, but the fact that that was considered is deeply worrying. We should concentrate on positive ways to help people and to encourage them to improve their fitness and to lose weight.

A year of walking, as suggested in the motion, would be a way of positively encouraging everyone—particularly our children and young people—to concentrate on their health and fitness. That is a really good idea. The approach should include encouraging all our schools to use their own outdoor space as well as local parks such as Dunbeth.

I hope that, in the future, the initiative at Dunbeth park will be extended to parks in Cumbernauld and Motherwell, as mentioned by Margaret Mitchell and as planned by the local college.

Once again, I congratulate Fulton MacGregor on securing this important debate.

17:20

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** I congratulate my colleague Fulton MacGregor on securing the debate and welcome the highly deserved parliamentary recognition that it accords to Paths for All on its 20th anniversary. As the time for new year's resolutions approaches, I am sure that many of us will be thinking about how we can be fitter and more healthy in 2017. This debate is implicit recognition of the benefits to us all of good physical and mental health, given the positive impact of physical wellbeing on our mental wellbeing.

It is for that reason that walking groups such as Paths for All are so important. As we have heard in contributions across the chamber this evening, the charity does excellent work in encouraging walking and good health throughout Scotland. My constituency is no exception. The KA walk, which takes place across North Ayrshire, welcomes walkers of all ages and abilities, and provides a supportive and welcoming environment for anyone who is keen to start walking. It allows people to reap the benefits of being physically active, and emphasises the social aspect of group walking. Families and friends are encouraged to attend

together and people have the opportunity to meet others from the local community.

The Cunninghame Ramblers is another group that does excellent work in my constituency. As the local branch of the UK-wide Ramblers Association, it organises weekly walks in the Ayrshire area at various levels of difficulty. As with Paths for All groups, the ramblers group is open and welcoming to all, and the focus is, likewise, as much on making new friends as it is on the health benefits of walking.

I could not be more sure of the positive impact that good health and good relationships have on our wellbeing and happiness. A landmark study entitled the “Origins of happiness”, which was published this week by a team of researchers at the London School of Economics, is the latest contribution to decades of research indicating that social and psychological factors are more important than income levels to the wellbeing of individuals. Indeed, as well we know, although average incomes have more than doubled over the last 50 years, we are by no means happier on average. Although issues of income inequality and poverty are of huge importance and must be tackled, it is becoming ever clearer that our happiness is ultimately rooted in our physical and mental wellbeing, and that that in turn relies on regular exercise, healthy eating and positive, respectful and fulfilling relationships.

In this wider picture of working towards wholesome and sustainable wellbeing and happiness, and better physical and mental health, walking groups have a hugely important role to play. I welcome this debate in marking their role, and look forward to supporting their work—locally, to me—in the future, maybe even getting the chance to join them out in the fresh air in the lovely Ayrshire countryside.

17:23

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I, too, congratulate Fulton MacGregor on bringing this debate to the chamber. It is an important debate because it gives members a chance to highlight local walking routes, as Fulton MacGregor has done, and the importance of walking in general and getting out and about.

I have to confess that I am not familiar with the park that Fulton MacGregor mentioned, but the wealth of countryside that North Lanarkshire offers has been an eye-opener for me, as a new member for Central Scotland. I am more familiar with South Lanarkshire, but North Lanarkshire has a great deal to offer. A couple of times recently, I have visited Baron’s Haugh in Motherwell, which offers people a great chance to walk for miles. There are plenty of other places as well.

Last week I became the vice-convenor of the cycling, walking and buses cross-party group. Alison Johnstone, who is sitting just behind Fulton MacGregor, is one of the conveners. We formed that group because it is really important to put the issue on the map. It is not just about walking; it is about getting out and about and becoming fit. Most of us do not get enough exercise. Before coming to the Parliament, I used my bike quite a lot and I walked as much as I could, but I find that I am getting far more exercise since I have been spending more time in Edinburgh. It is a very friendly city for walking and cycling.

I first got into walking at school. I went to school in Carlisle and we had a base in Little Langdale in the Lake District to which we used to have school trips. I met my first form teacher from high school recently, and she recalled how she had an absolute nightmare of a trip to Little Langdale. It was her first outdoor trip and it was horrendous for her but lovely for us pupils, even though it poured down. I have loved walking and the outdoors ever since.

I tried to get my own children into walking, without much success—until they left home and suddenly became fitness freaks, which I am very glad about. Anyone who looks me up on Google will find that I am a keen hillwalker: somebody did that, because the other week they asked me to become the species champion for the bilberry bumblebee, which is found on Scotland’s hills. I am very pleased to accept that accolade and promote the bilberry bumblebee. There—I have mentioned it twice.

People do not need special facilities to walk. We all know that. It is one of the easiest forms of exercise and beats the gym.

I am also keen on cycling. A few weeks ago, I was very pleased to open, with Humza Yousaf, the missing link of national cycle route 74, which runs from Glasgow to Carlisle. We opened the last part together—it was a very proud moment. At some point, I want to cycle that whole route.

I have cycled the route from Glasgow to Edinburgh as part of the annual event, and invite MSPs to join me sometime. If Fulton MacGregor fancies bagging a Munro or two, I will happily join him.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The things that I learn from the chair about inside toilets, bumblebees and hills—my goodness, is there no end to it?

17:27

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I thank Fulton MacGregor for ensuring that we debate this important issue this evening, and for giving us the

opportunity to congratulate Paths for All on a very important anniversary.

The consequences of not moving give us all the proof we need that the human body is designed to move. Our health depends on movement, yet in recent decades physical activity rates have dropped off markedly. In recent evidence to the Health and Sport Committee, Ian Findlay from Paths for All said:

“Over the past 50 to 60 years, we have done extremely well in designing physical activity out of our lifestyles.”

He is quite right. The cost burden and the life-limiting impact of the increasing incidence of non-communicable disease mean that it is essential that we make movement a priority.

I was introduced today to the concept of movement snacks: do not have a biscuit—get up and take a few steps. We only get one body for life. We need to nourish it and not just feed it. We have to move it too. There is a growing body of evidence that physical activity is a key component in a healthy life.

When it comes to physical activity, walking has so much to commend it. It helps our pocket; it helps our paunch, if we have one; it helps our mind; and it helps our heart. We do not need special gear. Walking can actually save us money.

Can members believe that two thirds of all journeys in Scotland under 3 km are taken by car? That is the distance from the Parliament to Edinburgh castle and back. For most people, that is perfectly walkable. We can see how much potential we have to save money, cut pollution, get fit and get happier. A 2-mile walk has the potential to change how we feel about our day. I live in Lothian, which has an excellent bus service, but it is fair to say that on many occasions I beat the number 35 bus up the hill and beyond. That is largely because it is stuck in traffic, which mostly consists of single-occupant cars travelling less than 2 miles, causing gridlock, costing business billions and contributing to air pollution, which is responsible for the deaths of 2,500 Scots each year—the same number as those who die prematurely from a lack of physical activity. Ian Findlay also told the committee that that

“physical inactivity costs the Scottish health service £94 million per annum.”—[*Official Report, Health and Sport Committee*, 6 December 2016; c 4.]

We can do better.

I ask the minister to address the issue of funding in her closing speech. Only 1.9 per cent of the large transport budget is spent on active travel.

If we get more people walking those manageable distances, we will cut air pollution and reduce the incidence of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, falls, depression,

dementia, joint and back pain and much more. Walking is part of the solution. It has the potential to reduce loneliness and isolation.

At a recent meeting of the cross-party group on sport, Dave Caesar, the chief medical officer's clinical adviser, told us that, on average, adults in Scotland sit for 5.4 hours a day in their leisure time. If we in Parliament add that to the time that we spend sitting in committees and in the chamber, we have quite a statistic. However, if I invited everyone in the chamber to stand up now, we would not be abiding by standing orders, and the Presiding Officer might have something to say about it. That said, we can make walking meetings more routine. A culture change is required, but it will be worth it. As we heard from a learned professor at the Paths for All lecture, walking is good for us, but there is evidence that walking in a green space is even better. The journal *Environmental Science & Technology* confirms that green spaces have a sustained positive effect on mental wellbeing, and that those accessing those spaces display fewer signs of depression and anxiety.

Scotland's chief medical officer tells us that doing something is better than doing nothing, that just 10 minutes exercise at a time provides benefit, and that it is never too late. Let us show our appreciation of the excellent work of Paths for All by using those paths, expanding those paths and joining up those paths.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you very much, Ms Johnstone. You have made me feel suitably guilty, and I feel a new year's resolution coming on.

I call the minister to close for the Government. You have seven minutes, minister. Please do not tell me that you do lots of exercise as well. I am sure that some porkies are being told today.

17:32

**The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell):** Okay—I will just start my speech. I thank Fulton MacGregor for lodging the motion and for the outline that he gave of the beautiful walks across his part of Lanarkshire. My part of Lanarkshire has lots of good walks, too.

I am immensely grateful to everyone who has been involved in Paths for All for their dedication, hard work and support for the people of Scotland over the past 20 years. I am delighted that some people from Paths for All are in the public gallery to hear us talk about how the organisation has positively impacted on many of our communities and about the transformative work that it does in relation to the power of walking.

As we know, Paths for All was formed in 1996 as a partnership of organisations including Scottish Enterprise, NHS Health Scotland, VisitScotland and sportscotland, with the late and much-missed broadcaster Magnus Magnusson as its chair. The organisation has grown over the past 20 years and now consists of 28 partnership organisations with interests in our health, environment, infrastructure and economy. It has worked with those partners with one unified purpose: to use Scotland's countryside, our paths and roads and our people to get everybody, regardless of their age, background or lifestyle, out walking.

The four strands of the Paths for All strategy are walking for health, active environments, active travel and communications and policy. That indicates the scope of its agenda and the impact that it can have on our country. As the many testimonies that we have heard today indicate, it and the local organisations and dedicated volunteers that it works with have had a hugely positive impact on our communities. I have enjoyed hearing about the work at Dunbeth park and the supportive role of Paths for All in that development, about the walks in Ayrshire, which Ruth Maguire mentioned, and about walks in areas that other speakers have mentioned.

Many members have discussed the benefits of walking for our population's health. Medical evidence shows us that regular involvement in physical activity reduces the risk that someone will develop type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and dementia, as well as a host of other conditions.

Walking has a number of other benefits. It gets us away from our TV screens and computers, it gets us out in the open air and it provides us with opportunities to socialise with family and friends. As Ruth Maguire said, it has the potential to increase our happiness. Physical activity is also good for our mental wellbeing. I like to go out and reset my appreciation of the seasons. All too often, when we are cooped up indoors, we miss that.

I take on board Elaine Smith's point about obesity. We will launch our obesity strategy consultation next year, and I hope that she will take part in that and raise the issue of breastfeeding, which she mentioned today.

The Scottish Government's active Scotland outcomes framework sets out our ambitions for a country where more people are more active, more often, through a range of opportunities and incentives for involvement in sport and physical activity. We see walking as a key part of that vision. It is free and accessible and everyone can do it, pretty much anywhere—Margaret Mitchell and others made that point. I am pleased that

Elaine Smith has resolved to use the outdoor space that is on her doorstep.

Paths for All's active travel programme provides financial support and training to enable enthusiastic volunteers around the country to set up walking groups. The walks touch on people from all walks of life and I have heard some truly inspiring stories about how transformative they are. That shows what happens when we proactively work with communities, build on their assets and empower people to take control of their lives.

Health walks are just one example of the services that Paths for All helps to deliver to our communities. It is also supporting the development of a nationwide walking football network, which provides an opportunity for people of all ages and fitness levels to be involved in the beautiful game. Among a myriad of other activities, it promotes—through Macmillan Cancer Support—walking for people who are affected by cancer, and it provides strength and balance training to allow staff in care homes to support patients in that area.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the step count challenge, Paths for All's biannual workplace walking challenge, which is a fantastic means of encouraging Scotland's workforce to incorporate walking into their day-to-day routines. Alison Johnstone touched on that. In this year's recently finished autumn challenge, more than 995 million steps were walked by a total of 716 teams. My work to persuade my ministerial colleagues to enter a team for the next challenge is still ongoing, but if Fulton MacGregor, Elaine Smith, Ruth Maguire, Margaret Mitchell, Graham Simpson and you, Presiding Officer, would like to set a good example by using the space outside Parliament, perhaps next year we can all sign up and show leadership to our parliamentary colleagues. I see that you are smiling, Presiding Officer. Perhaps there will be a nod of agreement. However, I will continue with my remarks.

Paths for All is also helping the Scottish Government to deliver its active travel vision, which is that, by 2030, walking and cycling will be the most popular choice for short journeys. I understand that there are challenges, which Alison Johnstone legitimately raised, but we have a record of investing heavily in active travel.

Paths for All has brought its dedication, expertise and skill with partnership working to bear with its support for developing and taking forward Scotland's national walking strategy and our wider ambitions for activating the entire Scottish population. The progress of that strategy is overseen by a national delivery forum, and Paths for All's leadership has been crucial in driving forward the forum's work.



The proof has been there for us to see in recent years. The number of people in Scotland who walk for recreation is on the increase. The 2015 Scottish household survey shows that 69 per cent of adults walk for leisure, which is an increase of 5 per cent from the previous year's survey. To put that another way, in one year we have seen a significant increase of around 250,000 people in Scotland walking for recreation. That did not happen by accident. It is leadership, the role of Paths for All and our focus as a Government on walking that has enabled that progress to be made.

There are challenges ahead. More than a third of adults do not take part in moderate to vigorous physical activity to the recommended level per week.

What about the next 20 years? I think that we would all like Paths for All to continue on the journey that it has taken so far, with its innovative thinking and collaborative work. We would like it to continue to work in partnership with like-minded organisations to seize the opportunity that we have now, which has been created by its enthusiasm and its focus on targeting hard-to-reach areas of the population.

I add my sincere thanks and appreciation to everybody at Paths for All and the many volunteers and partner organisations that are out working locally to make walking and activity possible in communities across our country. Across the chamber, we unite in wishing Paths for All a happy 20th anniversary and raising a toast to the next 20 years, which I know will ensure that Scotland's population gets more active and will reverse some of the health challenges that we face as a nation.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I thank members for an interesting debate.

*Meeting closed at 17:40.*



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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