



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Wednesday 22 February 2017**

**Session 5**



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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 22 February 2017

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Rural Economy and Connectivity

#### Broadband (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse)

1. **Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the roll-out of broadband in the Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse constituency. (S5O-00669)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** The £400 million investment that the Scottish Government and our partners are making through the digital Scotland superfast broadband programme will extend fibre broadband access to at least 95 per cent of premises by the end of 2017. Without that investment, only 66 per cent of premises would have been reached. To date, the programme has provided fibre broadband access to 4,215 premises in the Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse constituency, 95 per cent of which are capable of accessing superfast speeds.

**Christina McKelvie:** I welcome that answer, and I am sure that the 4,215 premises in my constituency will welcome it, too. However, constituents from the village of Stonehouse have had a very difficult time with getting access to broadband, and, when they have got access, they have experienced loss of service and slow service. That has been disruptive not only to domestic users of broadband services, but to the many businesses in the area that depend on an uninterrupted high-speed service in order to do their business. Will the cabinet secretary look into the particular problems that my constituents in Stonehouse face and reassure them that everything possible is being done to provide them with a quality service from the £400 million investment?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, I am happy to provide Ms McKelvie with that assurance, and I would be happy to receive more details from her if she wished to provide them.

Ms McKelvie will, of course, appreciate, as we all do, that telecommunications and telephony are a reserved responsibility for the United Kingdom Government. Despite that, we are committed to

providing 100 per cent superfast broadband access by 2021.

I am aware that BT handles many of these cases, but I am very happy to take up any particular case with Ms McKelvie, who is obviously working hard for her constituents on that serious matter.

#### NFU Scotland (Meetings)

2. **Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the board of NFU Scotland and what issues were discussed. (S5O-00670)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** I last met the board of the NFUS on 22 December last year, when we discussed common agricultural policy greening and the issue of linked holdings in relation to livestock movements. I will meet the new NFUS presidential team tomorrow morning.

**Douglas Ross:** I wish the new NFU Scotland board, which was announced at the recent annual general meeting, and in particular Martin Birse from Pitgaveny Farms near Elgin, who is the new regional board member for Highland, all the best.

The NFUS was very supportive of the new farm advisory service when it was launched in September last year. The scheme, which cost £20 million, will run until 2020. What has been the uptake of the scheme so far, and what feedback on the new service has there been from crofters and farmers?

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** Just this morning, I discussed with the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee some of the good work that Scotland's Rural College does. That includes arranging, facilitating and handling meetings for farmers so that they understand the opportunities that exist to avail themselves of greening measures that are good for the planet and their pockets. The SRUC undertakes a wide range of activities.

I recently had discussions on various matters with the SRUC, and I have asked for a further meeting specifically to address the issues that Mr Ross has fairly raised. If he wishes, after that meeting I would be happy to go over with him what it is doing. There is a substantial contract, and it is absolutely essential that we do all that we can to address those matters in these challenging times, with farmers facing the risk of possibly losing their common agricultural policy and Scotland rural development programme financial support as a result of the United Kingdom Government's total failure to give any details thereanent.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** What changes to the greening measures has the cabinet secretary taken forward in response to the concerns of the NFUS and farmers?

**Fergus Ewing:** I have announced three particular measures: shortening the period during which maintenance of field drains is prohibited on ecological focus areas that are EFA fallow, from 1 to 15 July; allowing hedges to count separately as EFA; and enabling agroforestry that is supported under the forestry grant scheme and located on temporary grassland to count as EFA.

The Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham, and I have also announced the establishment of a group, chaired by Professor Russel Griggs, that has been asked to undertake a forward-looking review of our approach to greening. Further, we plan to publish our analysis of the impacts of changes to rules, as requested by stakeholders. Further research will be commissioned on those matters.

It is my understanding that the twin announcements of specific measures and of on-going serious consideration of those matters have been broadly welcomed by farmers and their representatives.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I am sure that the NFUS board will wish to discuss with the cabinet secretary the progress that is being made on payments for 2017. At a recent meeting with the NFUS in Orkney, a concern was raised about uncertainty around the payments for 2016. Some farmers have yet to receive payments, and given the change in the regime, I think that there is a lack of clarity there. Would the cabinet secretary consider writing to all farmers to explain about the payments that have been made and about any outstanding payments that are still due?

**Fergus Ewing:** Mr McArthur raises a perfectly reasonable point. I can assure him and all other members that those matters occupy a great deal of my time and attention, and rightly so. My officials are working flat out to address them. I believe that substantial progress is being made. I can also say that I discussed those matters in Shetland—although not in Orkney—on Monday, with the farmers there.

In respect of the various farming payments, I should point out that, as Mr McArthur will know well, a loan scheme was brought in and implemented in the first fortnight of November. That ensured that most farmers received up to 80 per cent of their full entitlement, and they received it earlier than would normally be the case. That injected a sum—if I remember correctly—not unadjacent to £270 million into the rural

community in Scotland, including on the isles of Orkney, where farming is of such importance.

### **Scottish Roads Partnership (Meetings)**

**3. Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives from the Scottish Roads Partnership. (S5O-00671)

**The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf):** Keith Brown, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, last met with representatives of the Scottish Roads Partnership, project contractor, on 1 February 2017, when he visited the site to view progress on the Raith underpass. Transport Scotland is part of the Scottish Government, and officials meet with representatives of the Scottish Roads Partnership regularly.

**Margaret Mitchell:** I welcome the significant progress that has been made on the on-going works at the Raith interchange, including the opening of the East Kilbride underpass. However, there are problems with a general lack of appropriate signage and, in particular, of signs to make motorists aware early enough of the new East Kilbride underpass road configuration, such that many drivers are ending up on the bypass by mistake. They then have to make a detour and double back to get to the Bothwell and Glasgow turn-offs, which adds to the confusion and congestion at the Raith interchange.

Will the minister take up that issue, and can he confirm the completion date for the entire project?

**Humza Yousaf:** I thank the member for the constructive way in which she approaches the issue. Major road works will, of course, involve disruption. We do our best to advertise that disruption, as well as diversion routes, as early as we possibly can.

I take the member's point with regard to signage. I will ask the contractor and my own officials in Transport Scotland to look at the issue and see whether anything can be done.

With regard to the completion date, I will stick to what has been said about spring 2017. That is the schedule that we are working to, and that is when we expect the entire project to be complete.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** Will the minister advise why the Government chose the Scottish Roads Partnership public-private partnership model, as opposed to a traditional roads maintenance contract? Will he agree to publish the level of profits that is being delivered through that public sector contract to the private investors involved?

**Humza Yousaf:** If Neil Findlay were sitting in my role—which is a feat of imagination—I do not

think that the Labour Party would have constructed the amount of infrastructure that we have managed to construct, with projects involving the M8, M73 and M74, the Aberdeen western peripheral route and, of course, the dualling of the A9 and A96, as well as many others.

I will write to Neil Findlay to give him a little bit more information, but he will, of course, understand that commercial confidentiality is important. The Government has a great record not only in delivering infrastructure projects but in delivering them on time and on budget—and that is something that I am very proud of.

**Neil Findlay:** I simply asked the minister whether he would publish the level of profits that is being provided under that contract. Will he do that? It is a public contract.

**Humza Yousaf:** As I said, there is commercial confidentiality. I will explore what can and cannot be published—what is and is not appropriate to publish—and then I will write to the member.

### Livestock Worrying

**4. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle livestock worrying. (S5O-00672)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** We are fully supporting the campaign that was launched recently by Police Scotland to highlight the importance of dog owners keeping their pets under control when walking in rural areas. That campaign, which is being run in conjunction with the Scottish partnership against rural crime, Scottish Natural Heritage and the representative body, Scottish Land & Estates, is timed to coincide with lambing season, when the effects of livestock worrying can be devastating.

Police Scotland is committed to using the law robustly if dog owners fail to keep their dogs under control, including investigating all incidents of livestock worrying and reporting cases to the procurator fiscal with a view to securing convictions.

**Liz Smith:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that response and for the very helpful information that he has just provided. He will know about the really dreadful event that happened in Muthill, when a whole field of pedigree sheep was destroyed. According to NFU Mutual, the cost of dog attacks on livestock is estimated to be about £1.4 million right across the United Kingdom, and the costs in Scotland have more than trebled.

I appreciate what the cabinet secretary has just said about the policing of the issue, but will he also tell us what is happening to ensure that the

farmers who are affected are reporting the issue in the first instance?

**Fergus Ewing:** My attention has been drawn to that particular episode, which is absolutely devastating—for not only the financial but the emotional consequences for any farmer who sees his livestock suffer in that way. It really is appalling. It must be said that the primary responsibility must lie with the dog owner to keep his or her dog under proper control. Indeed, there is legislation that criminalises the owner of a dog that attacks livestock, chases it, or is at large, but not under close control, in a field. That legislation is in place, but of course it relies on evidence in order for there to be prosecutions. That is why, in 2015, the former Solicitor General conducted a review to ensure that the matter was taken absolutely seriously—which it is.

To respond to the second part of Liz Smith's question, I obviously encourage every person who witnesses an incident to report that to the police. The duty to report really is our civic duty. If that duty was taken seriously by most people—I am sure most people do that, and, of course, most dog owners are responsible ones—that would be of great help in being part of the solution to this serious matter.

### Food and Drinks Sector (Public Contracts)

**5. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it supports Scottish firms in the food and drink sector in accessing public sector contracts. (S5O-00673)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** Significant progress has been made in recent years, with almost half of our public sector food and drink contracts now being awarded to Scottish businesses. However, I want to see more of our schools, hospitals and public sector organisations taking advantage of the high-quality food and drink that is produced in Scotland.

That is why I convened a round-table discussion earlier this month, to bring together the supply chain for the first time, to discuss the barriers to and opportunities for increasing local sourcing in public sector contracts, and to help boost the economic potential of the food and drink sector. A range of collaborative actions is now being considered and a further round-table event will be convened later this year to review progress.

**Gillian Martin:** In my constituency, there is great concern among food producers such as Macduff Shellfish (Scotland) Ltd in Mintlaw that they will face severe difficulties if they cannot get a guarantee that workers from other European Union member states can continue to work in Scotland when we leave the EU. What

contingencies should we be suggesting to food producers as they prepare for the future—for example, as they bid for the kind of contracts that we have just discussed?

**Fergus Ewing:** The member has raised an extremely important point. I know from my visits to Peterhead and Fraserburgh—and indeed, this week, to Shetland—just how crucial the continued presence of EU nationals working in the food and drink sector, including in processing, is to Scotland. About 8,000 EU nationals work in that sector and a further 15,000 EU nationals are employed by Scotland's farmers. They are all welcome in Scotland and we want them to continue to be welcome. If, as a result of the granite-hard Brexit plans proposed by the UK Government, they are no longer welcome, we may see the horrendous human tragedy of people leaving. That is repulsive and repellent to us.

That would also have the effect of shrinking the economy. For example, if a processing factory relies on half of its workforce being of EU origin and living in Scotland, that factory cannot continue to operate if those people leave and the other half of its workforce—indigenous Scottish residents—will also risk losing their jobs. The matter could not be more serious in relation to the rural economy. Therefore, this Scottish Government believes that it is essential that everybody stands up and defends the right of EU nationals to continue to work in Scotland and to enjoy it as their home, which of course it is.

**Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):** I am glad that the Scottish Government is treating the issue of local food procurement with the importance that it deserves. There is however a real performance gap between our better-achieving rural areas and underperforming urban areas in public sector contracts. What further work will the cabinet secretary undertake to narrow the gap?

**Fergus Ewing:** In the past couple of weeks, I have convened the very first event of its sort in Scotland, bringing together those involved in procurement. I am not sure that I would necessarily accept the presentation of the situation that Mr Chapman puts forward, although if he wants to send me evidence, I will happily have a look at it.

Great progress has been made in sourcing more food and drink from Scotland and from local sources, but the issues are substantially practical and business ones. The supply of food and drink is very much a business issue. Farmers and co-operatives, for example, need to co-operate to provide food and drink to large retailers daily, 365 days a year. There are business issues here and Government should not dictate to business. However, there is a great deal of good will among

local authorities, the Scottish Government and all the businesses involved in the chain and I think that working collaboratively is by far the best way to advance these matters.

### Avian Flu

**6. Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the incidence of avian flu, and what advice and support it is giving to commercial and domestic poultry keepers. (S5O-00674)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** To date, there has been only one confirmed finding of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N8 in Scotland this winter, in a wild peregrine falcon found in the Dumfries area. There have been no confirmed cases in domestic poultry or captive birds in Scotland.

I have met key representatives of the poultry and game bird sector in the past few weeks to discuss how we can best support keepers during this unprecedented situation. In addition, we have regularly provided advice and support to poultry keepers on how best to protect their birds at this time, through digital media, news releases and emails to a wide range of stakeholder groups. We also arranged for the Animal and Plant Health Agency—APHA—to issue email and text alerts to subscribers through its notifiable diseases alerts service.

**Alison Harris:** Subject to there being no further outbreaks, when does the Government expect to be able to lift the current restrictions on the movement of live poultry?

**Fergus Ewing:** I would answer that question in this way. I am not a scientist. We act on advice from Sheila Voas, the chief veterinary officer, and her colleagues. However, my understanding is that the virus is not expected to be killed off until the warmer weather arrives, so it is not reasonable to expect an absence of problems until perhaps May or June.

A number of outbreaks and nine cases have been confirmed in England. On veterinary advice, we have taken the step of indicating that when the current prevention zone comes to an end at the end of this month, it will be renewed but it will also be amended so that birds may be let out, subject to heightened biosecurity. That will have the benefit that those who are producing free range eggs will not forfeit their free range status, provided that they maintain the other conditions apart from the birds being outdoors and free range.

The issue is extremely important to Scotland because an enormous amount of money—£46



million of business—is involved. This is not a minor issue, which is why I met many of the players who are involved, including some farmers, who are important players in the field. The problem has been receiving the utmost attention, which is, of course, quite right.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** That was a detailed answer and so, although there were a couple of supplementary questions, I am afraid that we do not have time for them.

## Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

### Opencast Site Restoration (East Ayrshire and South of Scotland)

1. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure the safe restoration of opencast coal mine sites in East Ayrshire and the south of Scotland. (S5O-00679)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Following the liquidation of Scotland's two largest coal mining companies, a cross-party Scottish opencast coal task force was established to deal with the key issues of coal sector employment, improving regulation and promoting restoration of legacy sites. Two sub-groups to the main task force were established in 2014 to look at and make recommendations on compliance monitoring and financial factors. The final report to the task force was published in October 2015 and included a comprehensive suite of 29 recommendations. In addition, a short-life coal restoration working group was established to take forward the task force's recommendations. It met between February and October 2016.

The Scottish Mine Restoration Trust was formed in May 2013 to seek innovative solutions to restoration. The SMRT, which is chaired by Professor Russel Griggs, is continuing its work and has now taken over the ownership and care of eight legacy surface mines.

The Scottish Government continues to work closely with councils, communities and industry to ensure the safe restoration of surface mines in Scotland.

**Brian Whittle:** As the cabinet secretary will be aware, the mining companies were supposed to accumulate a restoration fund to ensure that the landscape could be properly restored after mining was finished through regular surveying and cost analysis. The eye was taken off the ball and, when Scottish Coal folded, it was discovered that the funds had been grossly underestimated.

These sites scar the landscape and, at the very least, need to be made safe for local communities. However, there are some interesting and innovative alternatives to just making the sites safe, such as using them for pumped hydro storage schemes or for bike tracks and other outdoor activities that could attract visitors to the areas. Will the Scottish Government commit to at least the minimum investment that would be required to make the sites safe, and will the minister further consider looking at some of the interesting projects that might be worth further investment?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We already support such work with funding through the work of the SMRT, the group that has been working on the situation since 2013. Most of us would agree with the member's concerns about the environmental oncost of the effective closure of mines and the consequences thereof. I know that a great deal of work is being done and I hope that my initial answer will have indicated to the member that the Government takes the issue extraordinarily seriously.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** What is the Scottish Government doing to address the coal-related damage to the Muirkirk and North Lowther Uplands special protection area?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As the member might be aware, on 10 March 2016 we published details of the package of measures that are being deployed to address the ecological impacts of opencast coal mining in the Muirkirk and North Lowther Uplands special protection area. Work is on-going and includes the partial restoration of the Powharnal opencast site, the restoration of the Grievehill opencast site, the re-establishment of supportive mitigatory land management and the extension of the SPA to compensate for the permanent loss of habitat. In addition, work to remove an overland coal conveyor from the SPA was completed last year. We have made a significant financial commitment to support the completion of that work, with some £2 million being spent during the current financial year, and a commitment for a further £8 million to be spent over the next four years.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** Has the cabinet secretary or any of the organisations involved considered making clearer definitions of restoration at a Scotland-wide level? For example, East Ayrshire Council has been asked to consider three possibilities: restoration; partial restoration and reinstatement; and alternative use. A number of constituents have approached me to highlight the fact that that would help community groups and everyone else who is involved understand what the process is with regard to particular sites.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The member raises an interesting point. It might very well be that that issue is part of the discussions that are already taking place but perhaps not in as overtly defined a way as she might wish. I will ensure that her comments are drawn to the attention of the Scottish Mines Restoration Trust, in particular, to determine whether there is a way to make the process more systematic, which I suspect is what the member is looking for.

### Tree Diseases

**2. Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to prevent the spread of diseases that affect woodland and forestry. (S5O-00680)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Tackling threats to tree health is a priority for the Scottish Government, and our approach to preventing the spread of diseases that affect woodlands and forestry is set out in “The Scottish Plant Health Strategy”, which was published in March last year—I hope that the member has had an opportunity to have a look at it. The aims of the strategy are to demonstrate the importance of safeguarding Scottish plant health to protect and enhance Scotland’s economy and natural environment; to indicate how Scotland will take forward the plant biosecurity strategy for Great Britain; and to ensure that the Scottish Government and stakeholders work together to protect plant health in Scotland.

**Peter Chapman:** A few months ago, Forest Enterprise Scotland confirmed that almost 20 hectares of woodland will have to be felled as a result of the spread of larch disease to new areas in Argyll and Stirlingshire. Surely that spread of the disease into areas outside the so-called management zone means that efforts will have to be increased across the whole of Scotland to stop the spread and that the Scottish Government must act now, as the strategy for 2015 to 2017 is not effective enough.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I outlined the position of the Scottish Government on the general issue of plant health and tree health. After preparing for this question, I now know more about potential diseases in trees than I thought I would ever need to know. I am conscious of the concerns about the spread of the disease. However, if I recall correctly, there is still a view that the west coast is the biggest area of concern in respect of this issue. We are keeping the matter under close consideration.

The member will also be aware that the health of our forests is a matter for everybody who is involved. It is not just for the Scottish Government or the Forestry Commission; it is also the

responsibility of landowners and others. I do not believe that the Scottish Government’s plans on how the issue is taken forward are in any way insufficient. The draft budget has protected Forestry Commission Scotland expenditure, and we anticipate that the budget will be adequate to meet our on-going tree health requirements at similar levels to those in recent years.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** Sometimes, the only option when woodlands and forests are affected by disease is to clear the area, so I am sure that the cabinet secretary will agree that the replanting of trees is crucial. How many trees have been planted in Scotland since 2007 and how does that compare to the numbers in other United Kingdom nations?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The national statistics estimate that, since 2007, Scotland has planted 59.4 thousand hectares of new woodland, or around 119 million trees. The estimate for the same period in England is around 50 million trees for new woodland, and for Wales the figure is 9 million. The replanting of trees following felling is in addition to those numbers. Detailed estimates of replanting numbers are not available; the figures that we have are for initial planting rather than replanting.

### Devolved Management of Sea Bed Assets (Orkney and Shetland)

**3. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to piloting the devolved management of sea bed assets to the island communities in Orkney and Shetland. (S5O-00681)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The first priority for Scottish ministers is to complete the devolution of management of the Crown Estate to the Scottish Parliament and to ensure a smooth transition. The devolution of the Crown Estate takes effect on 1 April this year, and we have made a commitment that communities will benefit directly from it. After Crown Estate revenues are devolved to Scotland, coastal and island communities will receive 100 per cent of net revenues that are raised from Crown Estate marine assets out to 12 nautical miles. With the three island councils, we have been exploring the potential for piloting enhanced local accountability ahead of legislation on a new long-term framework for managing Crown Estate assets in Scotland.

**Liam McArthur:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer and for sparing the time to meet me and Tavish Scott on that very issue. From that meeting, she will understand the long-standing desire in Orkney and Shetland to take responsibility for managing the Crown Estate

assets, extending what already happens under the Orkney County Council Act 1974 and the Zetland County Council Act 1974. As she knows, the issue is not just the revenue but the opportunity to manage the sea bed resources that are so critically important to the island communities that I represent. Will she therefore agree to allow Orkney and Shetland to lead the way and take forward pilots ahead of legislation being introduced to Parliament later this year?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The member may be interested to know that I am meeting the leaders of the three island councils on 2 March, and discussions will continue between the Scottish Government and the island councils on the potential for a pilot in the islands. We have received an outline proposal from the councils, which is being considered but—as I indicated in the meeting to which the member referred—a detailed proposal is required to enable us to make a proper decision. I know that Liam McArthur and his colleague Tavish Scott will ensure that they are kept well informed on the progress of the proposal, and I look forward to further meetings with both of them, singly or together.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Does the cabinet secretary share my view that the Smith commission stressed the importance of devolving sea bed assets to local authority areas such as Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles? Is she sympathetic to, and relaxed about, further empowerment of island communities and the need to avoid centralisation in Edinburgh?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As the member knows, there is an on-going consultation on the long-term future of the Crown Estate commission. We have had to devolve functions on an interim basis initially to bring the powers to Scotland. The consultation and future legislation will determine what the long-term plans will be. As the member is aware, there are a variety of views on that, and we intend to ensure that as many communities as possible benefit directly from the devolution of the Crown Estate with regard not only to the funding but—as Liam McArthur pointed out—to the management.

#### **Environmental Standards (Towns and Cities)**

**4. George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it ensures that the environmental standards in towns and cities help promote Scotland's image. (S5O-00682)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the environment and its contribution to the quality of life of our communities and to Scotland's international image and reputation. The Scottish Government supports

the delivery of local environmental standards through its establishment of policy frameworks and supporting tools and funding for local authorities and other organisations.

**George Adam:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in these challenging economic times, it is even more important that the environment in our towns and cities is cleaned to a high standard? She may be aware that the previous Scottish National Party-led Renfrewshire Council won awards with its clean Renfrewshire campaign. Does she agree that such educational campaigns are a way to ensure that we keep our towns and cities clean and promote a positive image of Scotland?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Our national litter strategy supports higher-quality local environments. I encourage all local authorities to share best practice so that successful approaches to influencing behaviour can be replicated or adapted to suit individual councils' circumstances. Not every plan will fit every area, but where there is good practice, such as the clean Renfrewshire campaign, other councils would be advised to have a look to see whether lessons can be learned.

#### **Fly-tipping**

**5. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce the incidence of fly-tipping. (S5O-00683)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government is committed to tackling fly-tipping. We have provided the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and local authorities with the powers to fine people who are caught fly-tipping, with a minimum fixed penalty of £200 and a maximum fine of £40,000 if someone is prosecuted. Zero Waste Scotland has introduced the FlyMapper system to enable the recording, managing and reporting of fly-tipping, making it easier to catch offenders and to deal with illegal dumping sites.

**Miles Briggs:** Keep Scotland Beautiful's 2016 report "Scotland's local environmental quality in decline" painted a concerning picture of increases in littering and fly-tipping. Keep Scotland Beautiful is calling for a review of the effectiveness of the fixed penalties that the cabinet secretary outlined to see whether enforcement is actually deterring fly-tipping. Will the Scottish Government commit to a review of the current penalties?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We keep these issues constantly under review. We want to ensure the maximum environmental standards for Scotland and we work behind the scenes to ensure that those keep going forward on a regular

basis. However, the member will be aware that it is difficult to catch fly-tipping offenders. As much as I would like to argue for increasing penalties—which is what I suspect lies behind the member's question—the issue is more how one actually gets individuals to court in the first place. That is an important aspect of the assessment that needs to be done. Increasing penalties is one thing, but actually getting people into court is key. I hope that the member agrees with me that that is where we need to put our focus in the early stages. There is no reason for anyone to fly-tip material when councils are providing recycling and residual collections. I think that every member would condemn fly-tipping.

**Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is the responsibility of councils such as South Lanarkshire Council to ensure that those who are known to be guilty of fly-tipping are held to account, whenever possible, and that councils should do all that they can to encourage the responsible disposal of items of rubbish?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The member will have heard some of the comments that I made to Miles Briggs. The trick here is knowing who is responsible. We might know that, anecdotally, in some places, but knowing it in a way that allows us to take it to court—with evidence—is a different matter.

Councils play a vital role in holding fly-tipping offenders to account, and we have supported councils by increasing the level of fixed penalty that they and others with enforcement powers can impose on fly-tippers when they are identified. We encourage the use of those powers.

I should perhaps in response to Miles Briggs have mentioned that there is guidance for enforcement officers who deal with the illegal disposal of waste in Scotland, in a document called "Flytipping in Scotland: A Guide to Prevention and Enforcement". Those who are interested in the issue will perhaps want to have a look at that.

#### **Natural Environment (Economic Value)**

**6. Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what the value of Scotland's natural environment is to the economy. (S5O-00684)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Scotland's natural environment is estimated to be worth around £20 billion per annum to the economy. Many of Scotland's growth sectors, such as tourism, energy and food and drink, depend on our high-quality air, land and water. We believe that protecting and enhancing

our stock of natural capital are fundamental to a healthy and resilient economy, which is why in 2011 we became the very first country in the world to establish a natural capital asset index.

**Ivan McKee:** Does the cabinet secretary, therefore, agree that it is essential that we continue to invest in our environment and work to unlock opportunities that will not only help to protect the environment but benefit Scotland's economy?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Yes, I agree that investing in our natural environment is important in helping to grow the economy. We make that point in "Scotland's Economic Strategy", which explicitly states:

"Protecting and enhancing this stock of natural capital ... is fundamental to a healthy and resilient economy."

I draw members' attention to the fact that much of our wonderful produce is sold on an image of Scotland's environment, and I would hope that that image was always reinforced by reality. It is really important that the private sector, in particular, understands that the reality must sustain the image on the back of which it chooses to sell its premium products.

**Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con):** Scotland's prosperity is intertwined with Scotland's natural capital, which is why the Scottish Conservatives have made natural capital a key part of the new environmental policy paper that we launched today. Will the cabinet secretary explain what specific steps the Scottish National Party Government is taking to develop a holistic model to leverage finance for protecting our natural capital?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As I have indicated, this Government and this country are the very first in the world to have established a natural capital asset index, and I would have expected the member to welcome that fact. I am aware of the document that has been published today, and I reassure the member that I will be looking at it all very carefully indeed. One of the stand-out highlights so far is the Conservatives in Scotland committing to two new nuclear power plants in Scotland, with no indication whatever of where any of the money for that will come from. Indeed, that is absent from the entire document—not a single cost has been put to anything. I wonder whether the member would have regard to that aspect of things as well when he rises in the chamber.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio question time.

## Social Security

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The next item of business is a statement by Jeane Freeman on the Scottish Government's response to responses to its social security consultation. As the minister will take questions at the end of her statement, there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:42

**The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman):** Today marks the next important step in the Government's work to build a new social security system in partnership with the people of Scotland. Today, we have published a comprehensive and independent analysis of the responses to the recent consultation on social security, together with an initial response from the Scottish Government.

I thank all the people and organisations that contributed directly to the consultation and the many more who participated in engagement events across Scotland. Throughout the consultation and since, I have listened to those with direct personal experience of the current benefits system—I have heard their experiences of its impact on them and their families and I have learned a great deal. I assure the Parliament that I will continue to listen to and learn from those who use the benefits system and those who work with them to provide vital support and help.

What has emerged is a rich seam of evidence—a solid foundation on which we can continue to build as we take each step towards having this new public service for our country. What is clear is the widespread support for our intention to build a fairer and more dignified social security system that is based on the understanding that social security is an investment that we make in ourselves and in each other. From the outset, we have said that we will build our social security system in partnership with the people of Scotland and in a fair and more inclusive way, and today I will set out the specific ways in which we will achieve that.

The right to social security is established in article 9 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That is our starting point—that social security is a human right. The consultation responses backed our commitment to a rights-based approach, which is a cornerstone of our vision for the new system and on which our core principles of fairness, dignity and respect will be grounded.

I am pleased to announce that the forthcoming social security bill will honour this great Scottish

tradition by enshrining those core principles in the new system's founding legislative framework. That is a clear statement of intent that we will from the outset embed a rights-based approach with dignity and respect in the Scottish system. Putting that in the bill will also provide a legislative mechanism for the people who interact with the new service to know exactly what to expect from application to advice, assessments and any necessary appeals.

We are committed to ensuring that this Government and all future Governments are held to account on delivering for the people of Scotland. We will introduce the bill in Parliament before the end of June, which will start the process of parliamentary scrutiny that will support us to shape, improve and pass the legislation that we need to set up our new social security system. The legislative framework—the bill and the secondary legislation that will flow from it—is the necessary foundation that will underpin our new system. I am sure that the Parliament will want to get that right and that it will take the time that it feels is necessary for scrutiny, evidence taking and reporting.

Respondents overwhelmingly endorsed the concept of a publicly accessible charter to communicate clearly what the public are entitled to expect from the Scottish system and to frame the culture and positive ethos of the new social security agency. I can announce that the requirement to prepare a charter will be in the bill, which will introduce a legislative requirement that reflects the core principles that I outlined and will place on ministers a series of statutory duties to periodically review and report on the delivery of our aim of creating a fairer and more inclusive system.

In that way, we will guarantee that the charter goes much further than being just warm words. It will be a central part of the new system that will in effect create a binding contract between the system and the ministers who are responsible for it and the people who use it. The charter will be refined continually as we learn and grow and will create an additional device for the Parliament and the public to scrutinise ministers and hold them to account for the delivery of a fairer and more inclusive rights-based system.

Scrutiny by the Parliament is a vital component of our democracy, and I believe that our intention to secure a rights-based approach through legislation and in the practical embodiment of the charter are vital. Scotland's social security system will sit within the overarching social protections that the Parliament is responsible for. However, having learned the lessons from elsewhere, I believe that it is also important to ensure that there is independent scrutiny as we deliver a social security system for Scotland, and I confirm that we

will enlist the support of objective experts to advise us on the most appropriate arrangement for the independent scrutiny of our new system's overall performance.

I intend to further embed a rights-based approach by making good on our commitment that the people of Scotland will be our full design, development and delivery partners. To that end, in the coming weeks, I will make a detailed announcement on the launch of experience panels—an ambitious programme that will see us work in formal partnership with at least 2,000 individuals who have direct experience of the current system to design, build and refine a new and better model. The panels will build on the consultation and use that rich body of evidence while continuing and deepening engagement.

We have learned from what people have told us about how they want to be involved in helping to build a new and better system, and the panels will be involved throughout the design of the new service. I hope that the whole Parliament shares my enthusiasm for that progressive and innovative way of working and that all members will look for ways to support it in principle and in action.

The theme of collaboration with experts and with the public will be a common thread that runs through our entire programme of work, as it has been from the outset. An expert advisory group on disability and carers benefits will provide ministers with independent expert guidance in that crucial policy area, and I am delighted to announce that the group will be chaired by Dr Jim McCormick, who is an associate director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. I am sure that everyone in the Parliament will agree that his credentials for the role are impeccable, as they combine exceptional policy expertise with a genuine passion for fairness and equality. I am pleased that we will be able to reap the benefits of his advice and guidance and of the expertise and experience that the group as a whole will bring.

The consultation responses and the experience panels will play a key role in shaping the nature and structure of the new social security agency. We are paying close attention to the findings that face-to-face contact between those who are in receipt of benefits and agency employees is of key importance and that medical assessments are best done by professionals who understand the conditions of the people who they assess. Those examples demonstrate how collaboration and our core principles will meaningfully influence the delivery of services. Later in the spring, I expect to announce a preferred model that will be closely aligned to the views of the people of Scotland.

It is apparent from the consultation that advice and advocacy services will be crucial, and many respondents sensibly predicted an upsurge in

demand as we transition to the new system. Many respondents also highlighted the importance of specialist advice for people with particular needs and the necessity for equal access to advice and support.

From the consultation, I know that advice services will play an important role in ensuring that our social security system delivers on its founding principles. That is why we will build on the findings and on our wider review of advice services, and we will work directly with our experience panels to develop the high-quality support that will be necessary.

Although we will do things in a different way, it is crucial that we also do things in a careful way. Our number 1 priority remains the safe and secure transition of 11 benefits for the 1.4 million people who rely on them. Those 11 benefits are worth just over £2.7 billion, which is equivalent to the cost of building two new Forth replacement crossings every year. The scale is such that we must design from scratch new technology that each week will process roughly the same number of payments as the Scottish Government currently makes in an entire year. We must ensure that our system works alongside the United Kingdom system so that no individual in Scotland falls through the gap between the systems or suffers because of the interaction of the two parallel systems. Our ambitions are high, but so are the stakes.

Members will be aware that the Scottish and UK Governments have stated their clear shared commitment to working together to deliver the implementation of the new powers. It is true that we and the UK Government come to the exercise with different ideological and political perspectives, and it was always realistic to expect that we would disagree at times. Our starting point is the Smith agreement, which is backed by the fiscal framework and the enduring settlement, each of which is clear that any additional income that is provided to a person as a result of our exercise of the new powers must not be offset by a reduction elsewhere in the UK benefit system.

There are two current areas of difficulty. We have committed to abolishing the bedroom tax at source and using our new powers over the housing element of universal credit, which might take some individuals' benefit level over the UK-imposed benefit cap. We are clear that the individual should not be penalised in such a circumstance, and our straightforward, person-centred solution is for the benefit cap calculation not to include that element. So far, we have not been able to secure the UK Government's agreement that that is how we will proceed.

Further, although the UK Government intends to remove housing benefit from 18 to 21-year-olds, we have committed to retaining it. We believe that

there is a technical way in which both Governments can pursue their opposing commitments but, so far, the UK Government has not agreed.

Both areas matter, not only to us, as a Government that seeks to honour the commitments that we have made but, more important, to the many individuals who stand to gain or lose. We will therefore continue to pursue the issues with the UK Government, so that we can exercise our new powers to build a fairer, transparent and person-centred social security system.

There can be little doubt that the system to which we aspire can make an important difference to people's lives. Only by listening to people who have experienced the benefits system, working with experts and putting in place a legislative framework and a robust infrastructure can we ensure that the new social security system that we are building will embody the modern, inclusive and progressive Scotland that we all wish to see. I am sure that the Parliament supports that important aim.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues that were raised in her statement. I will try to get all members in and will allow 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

**Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** I welcome the minister's statement and thank her for early sight of it. I welcome the broad framework that she outlined—in particular, use of a charter to communicate clearly to the public what they are entitled to expect from our social security system. I also welcome what the minister had to say about independent scrutiny and experience panels.

The appointment of Dr Jim McCormick is good news. He will bring a wealth of experience and understanding to his new role, and the Scottish Conservatives wish him and his colleagues every success.

What was remarkable about the minister's statement, however, was what was not in it. There was nothing about the design of disability benefits. There was nothing about when carers allowance will be raised to the level of jobseekers allowance, which the Scottish Conservatives called for in our manifesto last year. There was nothing about use of the top-up power. There was nothing about substance at all. If the minister wanted to give the impression that she is proceeding as slowly as possible, she succeeded.

I will put two specific questions to the minister. First, she talked about a rights-based approach and said:

"Social security is a human right."

The right to effective judicial protection is also a human right. Will the rights-based approach that she advocates include the right of claimants to take legal action in the Scottish courts when they consider that their right to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect has not been honoured? Are they to be real rights, with sharp judicial teeth, or are they merely paper rights?

Secondly, the minister said nothing about localised delivery of social security. Will she clarify what she sees as being local authorities' role in delivery of social security? Is the new agency to be yet another example of Scottish National Party top-down centralisation?

In our manifesto, we noted that integration of health and—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** May I stop you there? I have warned members. You have asked your two questions.

**Jeane Freeman:** I thank Mr Tomkins for his positive comments but—yet again—I am disappointed by the negative ones, because he knows much better than that. If we are serious—I most definitely am—about building and designing the system from the ground up, the point of having 2,000 volunteers on experience panels, the point of having an expert advisory committee and the point of having Dr McCormick chair the committee, is to use people's information and evidence from the consultation to design the disabilities benefits, to deal with the substance of carers allowance and its criteria, and to deal with many other matters. I am serious about that; it is disappointing that the Conservatives are not.

On Mr Tomkins's specific questions, this Government has a manifesto commitment, on which we were elected, to work to make human rights real. We will do that across Government, including in my portfolio.

On the involvement of local authorities, it is disappointing that Mr Tomkins did not hear me say that we will shortly announce our model for the social security agency, and it is disappointing that he did not hear me say that we will use evidence from the consultation, the experience panels and everything else that I talked about to guide us on the design of the best possible model.

This is not a centralising Government—*[Laughter.]* Conservative members may mock, but it was this Government that brought into being the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, not the Conservatives in Scotland or their party's Government in Westminster. Conservative members should not laugh or mock; they should pay attention, open their ears and hear what I am saying.

This will not be a centralising Government—we are not one now and we will not become one. We will work with local authorities and others in the community to ensure that our system is so much better than the one that we inherit from the UK Government.

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I also thank the organisations that, crucially, contributed to the consultation. It is disappointing, however, that on the day that those organisations have said that they are, having contributed so much, fighting for survival, the minister has said nothing to advance their understanding of how the devolved benefits will support the most vulnerable people in our society.

The minister mentioned two areas of difficulty with the commitments that the Government has made, but I note that those do not cover topping up carers allowance or split payments. Can the minister say when carers can expect to receive the top-up to carers allowance that is worth £600 a year, and when the Government plans to consult on regulations to introduce flexibility in universal credit to allow payments to be made to mothers in order to prevent their potentially being financially dependent on an abusive partner?

**Jeane Freeman:** I think that Mr Griffin is conflating two issues: he is conflating issues that were raised at the gathering—a major event for our third sector partners—with what I said in my statement and what is in our consultation response.

In response to the issues that were raised by the organisations at the gathering, whose partnership and work we value greatly, I remind Mr Griffin that we have protected the equalities budget, we have introduced three-year funding and we continue to support those organisations. We value the contribution that they have made to our consultation and, indeed, the contribution that they will make to the development of Scotland's social security system. They, too, will be directly involved in the experience panels, the expert groups and the other groups to which our consultation response refers.

On the two specific issues that Mr Griffin raises, he knows as well as I do our absolute commitment to introducing the increase in carers allowance. That was in our manifesto and we intend to introduce it as quickly as we can. He also knows that we are discussing implementation of that increase with the Department for Work and Pensions and that we are considering a range of options for how we might do that as soon as possible. I hope that he is assured that we will advise the Social Security Committee and Parliament as soon as we can, and I trust that he will take my word for it that we aim to do that as

quickly as legislation and other technical matters allow.

It does not help—[*Interruption.*] Aside from sedentary comments from Conservatives, it does not help constantly to raise the issue in a manner that is designed to upset carers across Scotland and to diminish their confidence unnecessarily. Mr Griffin and his Labour Party colleagues should know much better than to do that. It is a shameful act, so they should be ashamed of themselves.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have 11 members wanting to ask questions. I will say this more in hope than in expectation. Can I have brief questions and brief answers from the minister, please, so that all members who have taken the trouble to put their names down can be called?

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I thank the minister for her statement. Social security is a human right that is based on article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—it is not something that we have made up.

The minister spoke about engagement. I know that—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry, Ms White, but I want you to set an example. I need a question, please.

**Sandra White:** Presiding Officer, I want to speak about the consultation, which set an example. It was a three-month consultation of ordinary citizens and key organisations. Can the minister indicate how the Government will continue to work with those ordinary people, who are on benefits, and with those key organisations, which will deliver what we hope will be a very good social security commitment?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms White. I am sorry that you got the rough edge there, but I want us to proceed quickly.

**Jeane Freeman:** I will bear in mind what you have said, Presiding Officer.

There are three specific ways to answer Ms White's question. The 2,000 volunteers on our experience panels are individuals who have direct personal experience of the benefits system—specifically, the 11 benefits that we will be responsible for. The advisory organisations and groups that I have mentioned, not the least of which is the expert advisory group—we also have a carers group, a group on funeral benefits and groups on many other matters—will directly involve the organisations that represent those individuals. I have also committed to another round of personal meetings—as I did in the consultation exercise—with as many individuals as possible, as well as with the organisations that will facilitate the meetings.



**Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** Having listened to the minister's statement, there is not much that I disagree with on creating a social security system that is based on fairness and inclusivity. However, when it came to the detail on new social welfare powers—namely, the personal independence payment and the disability living allowance—it is fair to say that the statement was fairly unsubstantial—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No. I want to question. I just want a question.

**Annie Wells:** Will the minister indicate when we will hear more about those benefits and what they will look like?

**Jeane Freeman:** I have already answered that in response to Mr Tomkins's question, but I say again that how we design and deliver the benefits will be worked through with the experience panels and the expert group. I hope to be able to provide a little bit more information on how that will work when I appear at next week's Social Security Committee meeting. I will continue to keep Parliament up to date.

I emphasise that I am serious about designing the system with the people of Scotland. I do not intend to do that in a darkened room, at speed, just in order to satisfy the political whims and opportunism of either the Conservative or the Labour Party Opposition.

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** I am sure that all fair-minded members will welcome today's statement.

Could the minister—*[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Sorry, Ms Maguire, but I cannot hear the question.

**Ruth Maguire:** Could the minister set out whether analysis of the responses to the social security consultation puts the Scottish Government in a position where it is able to consider progressing the other universal credit flexibilities in the future, namely the use of individual payments—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We do not need examples.

**Jeane Freeman:** The specific additional flexibility to which the member refers is, of course, the idea of split household payments. That issue was raised with us in the consultation not only by women's organisations, including Engender, but by a number of organisations representing disabled people. We are considering the technical means by which we might do that in consultation with the DWP—it, too, is looking at a comparable payment—to see how we might be able to offer that flexibility in the current arrangements through the reserved benefit, which is universal credit.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** The minister outlined two areas of difficulty in her statement. Will she give us an insight into exactly what the difficulties are? Are they technical or are they political? Why has she not been able to secure an agreement?

The minister will be aware that some claimants will be affected in April 2017. Given that she has chosen to come to the chamber with the information, rather than write to the committee, I think that we are entitled to know how the difficulties can be fixed, whether they are technical or political.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. You have made your point.

**Jeane Freeman:** I raised the issue today in the chamber because on Monday, we had a meeting of the joint ministerial working group on welfare and it seemed appropriate to me to raise the two areas of difficulty at the earliest possible opportunity. I will, of course, go into more detail with the committee next week.

On housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds, the disagreement is about the technical means by which two Governments achieve their different objectives. We believe that there is a technical solution; the UK Government does not agree with us. We continue to pursue the matter. In fact, officials from both Governments are meeting today to look at whether we can reach agreement on the technical solution. If we cannot, we have proffered an alternative solution to the problem, because we are determined that 18 to 21-year-olds in Scotland will retain the right to housing benefit.

On the benefit cap and the abolition of the bedroom tax, what exactly the difficulty is—it lies with the UK Government—is not clear to us. The Smith commission, the fiscal framework and the enduring settlement were all crystal clear that when an individual receives additional income as a consequence of us exercising our devolved powers, that additional income should not count in the calculation of whether to impose the benefit cap determined by the UK Government. The simple, straightforward, person-centred way of dealing with that is to flag that individual's case inside the payment system.

The UK Government appears to believe that that is not possible, but it has not yet explained to us why that is the case. Therefore, when we met on Monday we asked for a clear explanation—we have followed up that request in writing—so that we can determine what we might do next. The Parliament should be in no doubt that we are determined on two matters: we will abolish the bedroom tax at source; and we will ensure that not only the spirit, but the letter, of the agreements is honoured and upheld by the UK Government.

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** Billions of pounds' worth of benefits go unclaimed every year because the excessively complicated system is, in many cases, simply too difficult to understand. Does the minister think that automatically considering an applicant for everything that they might be eligible for once they approach the system for help would be a way of combating that? How will the minister guarantee that those who require advocacy will receive it and, indeed, that they are even aware of the existence of that important service?

**Jeane Freeman:** I agree with Ms Johnstone that, in a system that works well, an individual who, for whatever reason, knocks on its door should be counselled and advised on everything else that they might be entitled to. We have some good smaller-scale examples of that across the country, in areas where local authorities operate that practice. It is my intention that that is how our social security agency will work, which is why I have said that I believe it is important to put certain matters on the face of the bill to create the culture and the ethos of how our agency will work. The member is absolutely correct, and we will consider that issue in some detail.

On the question of advocacy, we have recently completed a review of Scottish Government-funded advice and support services across the country as a necessary first step in identifying what we need to do to ensure that comprehensive advice and information services—and, where necessary, advocacy support services—are available for individuals who seek to access their entitlement through our agency. We will take forward that work and will report back to the Social Security Committee and the Parliament in due course as we begin to put the system in place.

The experience panels and the experience of individuals, some of whom will have used advocacy services and some of whom will not have been able to access them, will be important to us as we seek to make sure that we design a comprehensive system.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that I will just manage to squeeze in Fulton MacGregor, Dean Lockhart and Alex Cole-Hamilton. I am sorry, but I will not be able to reach the other three members on the list.

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** How will the minister ensure that benefit claimants with mental health issues will be fully supported?

**Jeane Freeman:** There are two important points to make. The first relates to the culture of the social security agency and the system that are set up. The second relates to the carrying out of assessments, where assessments are necessary:

they must be conducted by people who have professional clinical expertise in the condition from which the individual concerned suffers. I think that that will result in a major step forward from the current experience of people in the UK system.

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Our policy is to raise the carers allowance to the level of jobseekers allowance to support more than 60,000 carers in Scotland. We understand that the Scottish Government will follow our lead on that policy.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question, please.

**Dean Lockhart:** Can the minister therefore explain why that important change was not mentioned in a statement that was otherwise devoid of any substance?

**Jeane Freeman:** I think that the member will find that it is mentioned in the consultation response that I referred to, which is being published even as we speak. This Government was elected on a manifesto that included a commitment to raise the carers allowance to the level of jobseekers allowance. I have already covered exactly what we are doing about that and how quickly I intend to pursue all the various options, which I intend to do before—where at all possible—our agency is up and running. I will advise the Social Security Committee of how we are proceeding with that in due course, as soon as I have that answer.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I welcome the remarks that the minister made in response to Ruth Maguire about the splitting of payments to protect families in which abusive relationships occur. What plans does her Government have to use its new powers to create a benefit that might help people with mental health problems to get back into employment?

**Jeane Freeman:** I am sure that Mr Cole-Hamilton will have read the disability delivery plan, in which we made very clear the specific actions that we are taking, in conjunction with Mr Hepburn as Minister for Employability and Training in relation to employability. Those include actions that relate to the new employability programmes to assist individuals with a range of conditions to access not only employment but the UK access to work fund, which is little used. That route will help individuals secure employment and will help employers. I am happy to discuss that with Mr Cole-Hamilton further. That is the route by which we are undertaking that work.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I apologise to the three members who were not called. For the avoidance of doubt, I called three Government back-bench members and seven from the

Opposition. I know that it is disappointing not to be called, but we have overruled.

## **Motor Neurone Disease (Gordon's Fightback Campaign)**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-04122, in the name of Shona Robison, on motor neurone disease and Gordon's fightback campaign.

15:16

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison):** I welcome the opportunity to open this debate on celebrating the life and work of Gordon Aikman and the Gordon's fightback campaign. I start by offering my and the Parliament's condolences on their loss to Gordon's husband, Joe Pike, and his friends and family who are present today. I welcome them to the gallery.

I met Gordon on a number of occasions and was always struck by his determination to make things better for not himself, but others. I am aware that many members across the chamber attended Gordon's memorial service on Saturday and that the First Minister and Kezia Dugdale paid their tributes then. Although I recognise that the debate might at times be a sombre occasion, particularly for members who knew Gordon very well, I hope that members will take this opportunity to pay their own tributes to Gordon and, importantly, to celebrate his life and achievements. I am, of course, happy to accept Kezia Dugdale's amendment.

Gordon was born in Kirkcaldy in 1985 and attended Kirkcaldy high school, where he was head boy. He went on to graduate from the University of Edinburgh in 2007. In the next year, he started work in the Parliament as a researcher for the Labour Party. He quickly established himself in the Parliament and gathered respect across parties as someone with an eye for detail who had huge passion for his work. He went on to earn the nickname "Mr Fourteen Percent" after it was revealed that 14 per cent of all freedom of information requests that the Government had dealt with had come from him. I am sure that members would agree that a debate in Parliament is a fitting tribute to him. When I met Gordon's husband, Joe, earlier today, he told me that Gordon's inbox is still receiving email responses to his recent FOI inquiries.

Sadly, we know that Gordon's career in politics was eventually and inevitably cut short, but he did not accept that his contribution to public life was over; in fact, quite the opposite was the case. He galvanised efforts and went on to lead the incredibly successful Gordon's fightback campaign with MND Scotland. Many of us across the

chamber took part in the ice bucket challenge, which helped to raise in excess of £550,000 for MND Scotland. That is an exceptional sum, which has been invested in research that is aimed at finding a cure for MND.

In the time that followed his diagnosis, Gordon achieved a huge amount; in fact, it could be said that he achieved more in those years than most people would achieve in a whole lifetime. As he said in one of his newspaper columns:

“Let’s celebrate the rich, diverse and complicated world we live in. Let’s savour each day. Let’s measure life not by length but by depth.”

The Gordon’s fightback campaign initially had five pledges, which grew to a total of seven as his campaign expanded. One of the most important aspects of that campaign was his call for action on MND specialist nurses. He wanted the number of nurses in Scotland doubled and for those nurses to be paid from the public purse. Gordon was very persuasive and the Government listened to him. We invested £2.5 million of additional recurring funding, enabling us to more than double the number of MND specialist nurses in Scotland, while ensuring that they are indeed paid from NHS Scotland funds.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government, MND Scotland and the University of Edinburgh jointly developed and funded a new national lead/consultant nurse for MND, who will develop a strategic approach to delivering services for people with the condition. That will be a lasting legacy of Gordon—improved care and, ultimately, a better quality of life for people who are diagnosed with MND and other long-term conditions.

We know that research was also a hugely important aspect of Gordon’s campaign. The desire to find a cure for MND was, of course, significant for Gordon. He said:

“It’ll be too late for me, but we can and we must find a cure for the next generation.”

In our 2016 manifesto, we committed to funding three research PhDs in MND and a further three in multiple sclerosis. As such, we are funding a bid from the University of Edinburgh that involves the universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and St Andrews. Our total investment is in the region of £575,000 over the five-year duration of the programme. The bid combines MND and MS PhD studentships in an integrated training programme. The universities involved agreed to a matched funding arrangement, meaning that overall, a cohort of 16 PhDs will be created for work in neurodegenerative disease research.

Bringing MND clinical trials to Scotland was an important aspect of the improvements in research that Gordon wanted. Our Chief Scientist Office

funds NHS Research Scotland’s dementia and neuroprogressive disease network. The role of the network is to support the delivery of clinical research in neurodegenerative conditions, including MND, so I have asked the Chief Scientist Office to request that the network organise a research event to discuss how best to respond to the challenge of bringing such clinical trials to Scotland.

I hope that those commitments and the research that is being undertaken around Scotland will help us to work towards the day when Gordon’s dream of a cure for MND is realised.

One of the worst aspects of MND is that up to 95 per cent of patients eventually lose their voice. Gordon called on us to guarantee MND patients a voice by changing the law around access to augmentative and alternative communication equipment. He was instrumental and played a leading role in driving forward improvements to the lives of people who use and need alternative and augmentative communication.

An outcome of the dedicated efforts and commitment of Gordon and all those whom he worked alongside—especially members of the augmentative and alternative communication collaborative—was this Parliament passing part 4 of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016, in March of last year. For the first time, ministers in Scotland have a legal duty, which gives people a statutory right, to provide communication equipment and support for all children and adults who have lost their voice, are at risk of losing their voice, or have difficulty speaking.

We have reconvened the AAC advisory group, which is formed of people who use AAC equipment and people from a wide range of backgrounds who have expertise in this area. Gordon was a much-valued member of the advisory group and he will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues in it.

As part of our on-going work, we recognise that voice banking—the recording and storing of people’s voices—could be a valuable additional service, especially as people who use augmentative and alternative communication tell us that it is vital that patients get back not just a voice, but their own voice. As such, we have awarded £200,000 of funding to the Euan MacDonald centre research project Speak:Unique to pilot voice banking at sites in the NHS. That work began last year. Preserving one’s own unique voice is invaluable in enabling people to retain their personal identity, as well as enabling family and friends to continue to develop lasting memories of their loved one and their voice.

Gordon valued the relationships that he formed with all those involved in his care, including professionals. He was constantly striving to seek out treatments and approaches that would improve the quality of his own and other people's lives. That is why I am delighted to announce today that I have established a scholarship programme in honour of Gordon. The Gordon Aikman scholarship will fund professionals or individuals with knowledge of MND to take forward research into new and better ways of caring for people with the condition. It will provide £25,000 a year to support individuals and professionals to develop practical improvements in the way in which people with MND are cared for, such as sharing best practice, specialised physiotherapy or developing a better understanding of carers' educational and support needs. The scholarship scheme will accept applications from people who work in health care, from those affected by MND and from their carers, whose experience and expertise are invaluable in helping continually to improve care. I very much hope that the programme will continue to drive forward the improvements in MND care that Gordon has kick-started in Scotland, and will be a fitting tribute to his memory.

Gordon was also passionate about the social and economic impacts of MND. He campaigned for changes to the living wage for carers, to have care charges outlawed for those with terminal illnesses and for benefit applications and assessments to be fast tracked. Gordon has made a difference in all those areas.

The living wage will be paid to all adult social care workers in Scotland. That will mean a pay rise to £8.45 per hour from May this year, which will benefit up to 40,000 care workers.

In 2015, we agreed, in partnership with COSLA, that no one under the age of 65 in the last six months of a terminal illness should be charged for the care that they receive at home. That was a step towards the vision that Gordon campaigned for.

I have committed to working with councils to ensure that there is a fairer system of charging by local authorities. On 6 December 2016, I committed to conducting a feasibility study and to extending free personal care to all those who require care and who are under the age of 65. I expect the study to report to me in the summer.

Finally, on social security and the disability benefits to be devolved to Scotland, I confirm that, when the powers for disability benefits transfer to this Parliament, we will ensure that a fast-track system is in place for people who are terminally ill, so that payments can get to those people as soon as possible.

In closing, it is absolutely clear to me that Gordon Aikman's campaign has transformed care for people with MND. His huge achievements will have a practical, everyday impact on the lives of people with the condition and, indeed, other conditions. The credit for that lies absolutely with the tireless, selfless efforts of Gordon and everyone who worked with him.

It gives me great pleasure to move the motion in my name, and also to say that the work is not over. The commitment that I want to give to Gordon's family, to his friends and to the chamber, is that we will strive to continue to make the lives of people with MND better and, importantly, to make sure that we keep his family informed of the progress being made.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the outstanding contribution of Gordon Aikman in improving care, services and research in Motor Neurone Disease (MND); pays tribute to his work to raise awareness of MND and the challenges faced by those who live with debilitating neurological conditions; recognises the many committed individuals who continue to work on improving quality of life for people who live with MND, and believes that the legacy of Gordon's Fightback campaign will bring benefit and comfort to the lives of people with MND, and their loved ones, for many years to come.

15:28

**Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the Government and the cabinet secretary for using the debate time this afternoon to talk about Gordon's life and work. I know that that is very much appreciated by his family, who sit in the public gallery behind the cabinet secretary, and, indeed, many of his friends, who I can see across the length and breadth of the gallery. I genuinely thank the cabinet secretary for that.

I paid a very personal tribute to my very close friend, Gordon Aikman, at his funeral and memorial on Saturday. I am not going to do that again today. He would not want me to. He would think that if he had the whole Parliament at his disposal, and the ears of all these politicians, I should talk about what he did, but, perhaps most importantly, about what he might have liked to see happen next. I intend to talk a little bit about two of his campaign achievements and then about what else the Government could do to support people with MND. If I have any time left after that, I would like to say a little bit about what he taught me in general about living with a disability in Scotland today.

The first thing that is worth recognising—the cabinet secretary referred to this—is the work that Gordon did to guarantee people a right to communication aids. In particular, the cabinet secretary referenced the use of voice-banking

technology. She might not be aware, though, that every single party leader in the chamber actually went and recorded their voices at the Anne Rowling clinic in Edinburgh, for an hour. Just speaking and reading excerpts from the *Herald* for an hour can allow the results to be synthesised to give people their voices back. The more voices that the clinic has—especially with particular accents or dialects—the more realistic those voices can be when they are given back. It does, however, mean that it is possible for the voices of all the party leaders to be merged into one voice and to be given to an individual. [*Laughter.*] Think about the power or indeed the trouble that could be caused with that capacity; I know that Gordon certainly contemplated the benefits if that could have been put to use in his time.

The second most significant of his campaign achievements was around doubling the number of MND nurses in Scotland. Until I spoke to Gordon about his campaign, I did not fully understand what MND nurses actually do. It is worth taking a moment to reflect on that. I thought that they were just really good at cleaning feeding tubes or really good at fixing ventilators. No, no, no—it is much bigger and much more thorough than that. I have an example to share with members in the chamber.

In Edinburgh, in NHS Lothian, just a few months ago, it was possible that somebody who had MND and required a feeding tube—because quite often MND takes away someone's muscle capacity to chew food or it attacks their stomach and they need to have a feeding tube inserted—might have to wait 22 weeks for that procedure. Very often, in the passage of that 22 weeks, an individual's ability to be well enough to undergo that procedure would deteriorate. They would be too sick for the anaesthetic. They therefore could not get the feeding tube that they needed to extend their life.

An MND specialist nurse studied the whole process of trying to access that healthcare and realised that the blockage that led to that 22 week wait was because of the wait to see a nutritionist; that was the only problem. The waiting time did not need to be 22 weeks. If the wait for the nutritionist could be speeded up, the total waiting time could be crunched right down to two or three weeks.

Rather than speeding up the time to see a nutritionist, the MND specialist nurse said, "Why don't we just train all the MND specialist nurses to give that nutritional information?" That way, the individual would not have to see a nutritionist at all. As a consequence, people no longer need to wait 22 weeks to get a feeding tube—they wait two weeks. That is a material difference that having more MND specialist nurses has made. It is important to recognise that not only is that

increasing and improving the care for people living with MND, it is saving the NHS a tremendous amount of money. If we think about how many other conditions there are in Scotland where we argue the case for specialist nurses, what a difference it could make if we applied that preventative approach across the board.

Gordon gave me a passionate interest in MND and in trying to understand it, although very few people do understand it because we do not know why people get it and we do not know how to cure it. Wherever I travelled during the last Scottish Parliament election campaign, I tried to seek out MND sufferers. I met one woman when I was in the Western Isles, who was called Margie MacLeod. I do not know whether Alasdair Allan is in the chamber, but he may be familiar with her. She has sadly passed away since I met her during the election campaign last year. The Western Isles have a close affiliation with MND—in fact, the MND association in Scotland was founded by a guy called John Macleod, who was a Strathclyde police officer. He founded it in 1981 after becoming ill with the disease and it is much to his credit that that work continues to this day. Margie would tell me about how difficult it was to live with MND in the Western Isles. She would often have to travel to Glasgow to get treatment. Whether she could get that treatment or that service depended on how well she was that day.

Now, people see their MND nurse in the Western Isles far more regularly. There is an MND nurse in Orkney; there is an MND nurse in Shetland. There are 10 people in Shetland with MND and they have a nurse who is able to help them live their lives because Gordon argued for that, this Parliament listened to him, and those roles are now in place.

I will say to the cabinet secretary, however, that there are still problems in the islands in relation to MND patients being able to access services around ventilation. They still have to travel to the mainland to be assessed for their ventilators and if they are not well enough to do that, they cannot get that help. If the cabinet secretary could ask her civil servants to examine other means by which people could get that help, that would be greatly appreciated.

In the time that I have, I will put two more challenges to the Scottish Government. I became very aware, following Gordon's campaign, that we have a big problem with the information technology system in the NHS. Primary care does not talk to secondary care, which is a real problem, because an MND nurse who is with a patient cannot update the patient's medical file. The nurse has to write up whatever the latest developments are and send the information to the patient's general practitioner. Only the GP can put

the information on the computer. If that does not happen fast enough and that MND patient gets ill, they can end up in hospital but the latest information is not on those computer systems for the doctors to respond to. Surely in an age when we can get a man on the moon, we can have a care system where one IT system can speak to the other IT system. I know that the Government is looking at that issue but perhaps it needs to increase pressure around it.

The worst scenario in that particular situation, cabinet secretary, is that people can put together palliative care plans—plans on how they would like to die—with their MND nurse but the plans do not get to the GP. Suddenly there is a crisis, an ambulance is called, and a patient ends up in the intensive care unit and dies in a hospital bed when there is a palliative care plan that allows them to die at home, the way that they want to. That is all because the computer says no. Surely we can do better than that?

The final challenge that I would put to the Scottish Government is about ambulances. Currently not every ambulance in Scotland has a key information summary, or KIS, system built in, so not every ambulance driver can look up a patient's name and see the information that is available about their medical history. I know that the Government has plans to increase that scheme, but could the cabinet secretary tell us today by what date the Government would like to ensure that every single ambulance has that KIS system?

Finally, I have one thing to say about disability. Gordon taught me a lot during the time that he was ill, and I reflected on much of that in the speech that I gave at his funeral on Saturday. However, one thing that I did not manage to get in was about his attitude to disability and how politicians talk about disability. Rather than paraphrase what he said, I will just read it out. I will end after this direct quote of an article from *The Sunday Times*, which Gordon wrote in the context of the Paralympics:

“And while branding Paralympians as ‘superhuman’ might seem positive, it unhelpfully suggests success equals beating disability. It paints a partial, rose-tinted picture of what it really means to be disabled. The reality is all disabled people are forced to be superhuman—Paralympian or not—because of the inaccessible world and anti-disabled attitudes we must battle every day simply to exist. The taxi driver who refuses to pick you up because you are in a wheelchair. The restaurant up a flight of stairs. The pub with no accessible loo. Day after day, that takes record-breaking resilience.

It is time for a new narrative. We get the body we are given and no amount of positive thinking or screaming “Yes I can” will change that—boy, I wish it could.

Let's stop portraying disability as something that has to be conquered. Let's remember that it takes superhuman levels of strength to accept what you cannot do. And let's

start a new story where success comes in many shapes and forms, and where the onus is on society to tear down the barriers that disable us.”

What a great challenge for the Parliament.

I move amendment S5M-04122.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises that MND is a terminal illness for which there is no cure, and believes that there is every possibility that a cure could be found by ground-breaking clinicians and researchers in Scotland, working collaboratively with experts across the globe.”

[*Applause.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am not allowed to clap, but I am clapping.

15:36

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands (Con):** It is a special honour to take part in this debate and, at the outset, I inform members that the Scottish Conservatives will support the Government motion and the Labour amendment.

I start in the same vein as Shona Robison and Kezia Dugdale by paying tribute to Gordon Aikman, and offering my sincere condolences to his family. I should say early on that, regretfully, I never had the opportunity to meet Gordon, either during his time working in Parliament, on the better together campaign, or in more recent years when he worked for MND Scotland. I know that my colleague Miles Briggs knew Gordon and will offer more personal reflections on him as an individual.

Unlike other colleagues across the chamber, who I am sure will share wonderful memories of Gordon today, I do not have any such tales to tell. I am very sorry that I never met him, because he was clearly a quite remarkable person. However, those of us who did not know him in person knew him in other ways. First, we knew him in terms of the incredible work that he carried out for motor neurone disease. Secondly, we knew him through his writing, notably his column in *The Sunday Times*.

As many have noted, after his diagnosis, Gordon Aikman channelled his energy into an astonishing and dynamic campaign. His work for MND is well known but it bears repeating. His fundraising to support research, his raising awareness of the condition and his influencing the direction of Government policy were all major achievements.

Gordon raised more than £500,000 to support research into the condition. Let us think about that. He raised half a million pounds single-handedly. He effected real change and did so in a powerful and inspirational manner. We are lucky to be able to serve our constituents and be in a position to influence change, but when all is said and done,

when we are long gone from this place and our contributions are measured and weighed up, I doubt whether any of us will achieve so much in such a short space of time as he did.

Just as striking were Gordon Aikman's monthly columns for *The Sunday Times*, in which he documented his life with MND with searing honesty. He was never sentimental and he showed an endearing good humour. That was where many of us saw at first hand a quality of his that perhaps underscored much of his work—his courage, which shone through every word, phrase, and sentence.

Notwithstanding his terminal diagnosis, Gordon wrote freely of his fears and his feelings. He wrote of his fierce sense of independence and how he mourned its loss. He wrote of his everyday trials and the challenges that were thrown up by the decline in his faculties. Most powerfully of all, he wrote of his impending death, how often he thought about it, and how it might affect his loved ones. He wrote that death was no longer something that he feared and that death was what gives life meaning—it gave him a chance to “conclude” his life. I know that his husband, Joe Pike, said at Gordon's funeral that Gordon taught him and others how to live. However, in his graceful writing, and in the example he set to strangers like me, I would venture that Gordon Aikman also taught us how to die.

I want to focus momentarily on motor neurone disease itself, and to highlight the challenges that are faced by people with MND and what needs to be done by the Scottish Government to ensure that everyone in Scotland who lives with the condition gets the right support, regardless of circumstance or location.

We know that there are more than 450 people in Scotland living with the disease and that, typically, there are more than 160 new cases of MND each year. What more can be done? Gordon's fightback campaign has commendably stated that it will continue in Gordon's memory, with the purpose of trying to transform care for people with MND and of funding a cure.

In its briefing for this debate, MND Scotland identifies two immediate areas of focus. It talks about the need for a fast-track benefits system, which I note that the cabinet secretary has accepted; and about the need for clinical trials to be brought to Scotland so that we can initiate a research revolution in MND here, bringing together academia, pharmaceutical companies and Government in order to realise that.

There are other points that the Government could consider. I ask the Scottish Government to see what it can do to move neurological conditions higher up the list of priorities of the new integration

joint boards—recently, the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on MS learned that neurological conditions are some way down the pecking order for IJBs. In my view, they deserve to have greater prominence.

In closing, it is right to return to the man himself. Gordon wrote that, when our physical existence is over, we need not be, and that we can live on in the minds of those we love. In a similar vein, I can do no better than to end with the words of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who wrote:

“Some are bound to die young. By dying young a person stays young in people's memory. If he burns brightly before he dies, his brightness shines for all time.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. We are a little tight for time, so I ask for speeches of up to five minutes.

15:42

**Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** I offer my sincerest condolences to Joe and the family and friends of Gordon Aikman. I offer these mere words as a comfort to them as a daughter who has loved and lost someone dear to me to motor neurone disease. No words can ever express enough the depth of our grief, but please know that these words are filled with the experience of a family who face every day with the knowledge that this terrible disease has taken our loved one. My family share our grief with Gordon's family and friends.

Many in this chamber are familiar with my MND story. At the age of nine, I was faced with the reality that my big, strong, funny, talented singer of a dad—an iron moulder to trade—had a terminal illness. He was 45 years old, my mum was 37 and there were four of us kids in the house. The immediate impact was drastic. After a short period, my dad had to give up work. He was the breadwinner in our house, as my mum had had to give up her job when she had her kids—those were the days when that was what people did. My family went through a range of emotions: loss, anger, fear, anxiety and heartbreak.

The benefits system then—as now—was almost impenetrable. With our family losing a significant amount of income, my mum went to work at night and we looked after my dad when she was out. What a huge difference a fast-track benefits system would have made to my family at that very difficult time. I have campaigned along with Gordon and MND Scotland for such a system, so it was amazing to hear the cabinet secretary's words today.

In difficult times such as the ones that we are discussing, the last thing that a family needs is to spend those last precious days fighting for the



dignity of having enough to live on. Automatic lifelong awards can make a huge difference to those families, and I urge the Scottish Government to ensure that that is realised when the benefits that will be devolved to this place come here.

The amazing work of Professor Chandran and his inspiring team at the Euan MacDonald research centre brings us new and exciting breakthroughs, not just in the scientific field but in improved care for people with MND. That better care needs to be delivered by MND-qualified nurses, and the Scottish Government's commitment to funding those nurses is welcome. However, I ask the Government not to stop at a doubling of the numbers and to think about training more. I urge it to listen to what Kezia Dugdale said about the value of an MND-qualified nurse.

Another aspect of MND is losing your voice, which is a huge part of your personality—that is a huge blow. I have never been prouder of this place than when we enabled the voice bank to be housed here. It was supposed to be here for only a month, but so many names came forward that it was here for four months. There are many different voices in this place, and we all like to hear the sound of our own voice, but the benefit that it can give to someone who is losing their voice is immeasurable.

When it comes to scientific research, we need to have the best and most creative minds working together to advance understanding and eventually find a cure for this horrible disease. That is why the Scottish Government-funded PhD places and the fellowship programme are so important. The more minds that there are working on the research, the bigger chance there is of finding a cure. The Gordon Aikman scholarship adds brilliantly to that aim.

Finally, I will say a bit more about Gordon and the many inspiring people I know who campaign every day for MND Scotland. Gordon brought us hope, which is a very powerful motivator. It can move mountains, but more importantly it can move hearts. It moved my family, and many members in the chamber, to walk on fire, abseil off buildings and take the ice-bucket challenge, and it can move other people to do amazing things in order to raise funds.

Hope can always push people that wee bit harder, and I believe that we have moved the Government to make some changes. Transformational changes to people's lives after their diagnosis with MND—some of which are very short, maybe only 14 months—will ensure that the last precious days they have with their families are filled with love and quality time rather than worry and despair.

That is Gordon Aikman's legacy: hope. It is hope for the people with MND, for the families that are supporting them and for my family, and for Joe and Gordon's family, who are left behind to carry on the fight to find a cure, make nursing care better and ensure that people have financial dignity.

Hope can move mountains: all we have to do is move a Government, and we have pushed it in the right direction. I ask the Government, in memory of Gordon Aikman and all our loved ones whom we have lost to MND, to be moved to take those actions.

15:47

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I am glad to have the opportunity to speak today, and I commend the Government for changing the subject of today's debate. It is a privilege to be involved in some small way in recognising the incredible achievements of Gordon Aikman, and I am pleased to speak about the drive to defeat the disease that took him from his friends and family all too soon. In a few short years, Gordon Aikman achieved more meaningful change in Scotland than perhaps most of us are likely to do during our entire careers in the chamber.

Gordon Aikman's legacy is not only the vastly improved support for other MND sufferers throughout Scotland; the more than £0.5 million that he raised; or even the knowledge that, thanks to his tireless campaigning for greater access to voice equipment, MND patients are no longer faced with becoming trapped inside their own bodies, unable to communicate with those closest to them. Gordon did all that, but he did something else too. He made us ask ourselves whether we were doing enough for people with MND and, in comparison to a man who chose to lead a campaign for a cure knowing that it would come too late for him, we found ourselves wanting.

People around the world associate MND with the ice-bucket challenge. It is hard to believe that the act of pouring buckets of freezing-cold water over each other could change the world, but it has. In excess of \$100 million was raised, and already that money has been turned into results. Scientists recently discovered a gene that is linked to MND, which takes us one step closer to a cure—maybe not today, but, I hope, not too far in the future.

In Scotland, however, a bucket of freezing water was not the only thing that woke us up to the damage that MND does. We had Gordon Aikman. There are very few people in this world who can change the dynamic and feeling of a room when they come into it. It is a rare gift, and it is one that Gordon Aikman definitely had. He had the ability to make politicians and Governments listen and

take heed—one of his many talents that, I have to say, I rather envy.

I was not fortunate enough to know Gordon personally, although many in the chamber did. Despite never having met him, I, like so many, admired him greatly. Anyone who can be given the news that his lifespan can most probably be measured in months and who chooses not only to fight the condition but to fight for his fellow MND sufferers deserves our admiration and respect.

My knowledge of Gordon comes mostly from reading his straight-talking *Sunday Times* column chronicling his disease and from the testimonials written in the past few days by those nearest to him. I might be wrong but I imagine that, if Gordon, who himself confessed to being “ruthlessly rational”, were still with us, he would be demanding that we stop talking about how we admire and respect him and his achievements and instead start talking about how we can carry on what he started.

One thing that always struck me about Gordon's campaign was the name that he chose—Gordon's fightback. There are many other names that he could have chosen, such as Gordon's appeal or Gordon's MND campaign, but he chose the word “fightback”. It was a good choice. He did not just fight back against his own disease; he fought back against a lack of support, against a lack of public knowledge and against anyone who told him that something could not be done. Gordon began this fightback, but it is ours to finish.

Motor neurone disease and a whole host of other genetic neurodegenerative conditions such as Huntington's disease have blighted lives for too long. Now, for the first time, our science and technology have reached a point where the possibility of defeating those diseases is within our grasp. Professor Colin Blakemore from the University of Oxford has said:

“The vision of a world free from MND is hugely ambitious, but I agree with the MND Association that the skill and dedication of scientists make this goal achievable in our lifetime.”

I believe that we in the Parliament have a responsibility to do whatever we can to support that goal, not only for the end result but for the potential discoveries and knowledge that we will accrue along the way.

In this chamber, there will be days when we agree on nothing, but today is not one of those days. Gordon Aikman's greatest legacy is the commitment and determination that we are hearing in the chamber to defeat MND once and for all. Gordon Aikman's resolute determination has brought the cure for MND that much closer and I have no doubt that we in the Parliament and others across Scotland and globally will continue

the fightback. One day, I hope within my lifetime, we will not be talking about Gordon's fightback any more; we will be talking about his victory.

15:52

**Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I offer my deepest condolences to Gordon Aikman's family and friends. The debate is an opportunity to reflect on Gordon's inspiring and selfless campaign. He generated unprecedented awareness of the challenges that are faced by those who live with debilitating neurological conditions, and he kept motor neurone disease in the public eye. For people living with the condition, that has surely helped to challenge the isolation of MND. The legacy of his campaign will make a huge difference to generations to come by transforming the way in which people are treated.

I know that the debate is a tribute to Gordon Aikman and the legacy that he left but, as a keen rugby fan, I must also pay tribute to South African scrum half Joost van der Westhuizen, who died this month of motor neurone disease, aged just 45. The 1995 world cup final was the most momentous game in the history of rugby union. It was the match that helped to unite Nelson Mandela's South Africa, and at the heart of the Springboks' victory was the scrum half Joost van der Westhuizen, who not only tackled Jonah Lomu in full flight—not many people have done that and survived—but gave the pass for the winning drop goal. As a player, he was supremely physical, and his diagnosis in 2011 absolutely shocked the rugby world and showed yet again just how indiscriminate the illness is.

We know that MND is a rapidly progressive and debilitating disease. It is cruel, relentless and indiscriminate, and currently there is no cure. Because it is rare and progresses so quickly, it has been difficult to raise awareness. In contrast, our progress in understanding the disease has been painfully slow. At least there is now one drug with a modest effect that slows progression and we have a better understanding of the multiple underlying genetic and environmental triggers. Many of the symptoms of MND can be helped with the proper combination of medical treatment, specialised equipment and nursing and psychological support.

As others have done, I want to highlight some of the really positive steps that the Scottish Government has taken, thanks to Gordon's tireless campaigning. The first of those steps is the right to a voice. As others have pointed out, one of the worst aspects of MND is that patients lose their voice, and the statutory duty on ministers to secure communication equipment as well as funding for research into voice banking is helping to tackle that.

The second step is a living wage for carers. Tomorrow's budget sets out an investment of £107 million to continue to support the delivery of the living wage for social care workers, in recognition of the invaluable contribution that they make.

The third step relates to specialist nurses. Thanks to Gordon's campaign highlighting the lack of MND nurses, the Scottish Government funded the national health service to replace charity funding for MND nurses and to increase their number from six to 12.

Finally, on research funding, Gordon raised almost £0.5 million to help find a cure for MND, and the Scottish Government is also providing funding to deliver PhDs in neurological conditions. The PhDs offer a unique opportunity to develop an integrated national PhD training programme that recognises the shared underlying biological mechanisms in MND and multiple sclerosis, and they demonstrate that Scotland continues to lead the way in clinical research and innovation.

Medical science has long been dumbfounded by MND. Its cause is not known, but a huge amount of research is being carried out, and advances are being made in understanding the disease process and the way in which motor neurons function.

Gordon's legacy will be long and lasting. He is no longer with us, but his campaign shows no signs of slowing. That, indeed, is a lasting tribute to him.

15:56

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** I rise with a heavy heart to speak in the debate, which, with its many beautiful contributions from so many members, reflects the Parliament at its best. This is a proud moment; Gordon Aikman would have been proud, and I am sure that his family are.

As Kez Dugdale said, Gordon would not have wanted us to talk about him; he would have wanted us to talk about the issues. He would not have wanted us to talk about what we have done; he would have wanted us to talk about what we should do for the future. He would not have wanted us to focus on the past; he would very much have wanted us to focus on delivering for future generations.

I will touch on the future for a second. One of the most amazing things about Gordon was that, when he got the most tragic news, he did not focus on himself or on the past. Instead, he dedicated every moment of what remained of his life to campaigning for the future of others who would follow him.

On that note, we should say to his husband, Joe, and his wonderful family that we share their loss. Gordon was a loving man, a caring man, a

happy man, a positive man and a man who—every single time I saw him, whether in person or in a picture—was always smiling. That is the way that we would all like to remember him.

Gordon was a fantastic colleague to have in the Labour Party—we were proud to say that he was one of us. I have often reflected on what a phenomenal parliamentarian—an MP or an MSP—he would have been and how much more he would have achieved, speaking up for people across the country.

The ice bucket challenge has been mentioned. One of my claims to fame will always be that I was one of the four people whom Gordon nominated to take the challenge, and my kids took great pleasure in pouring the bucket of ice over my head. Gordon and all the campaigners alongside him have helped to increase knowledge of MND and have put on record all the challenges that we continue to face in palliative care and the need for a greater focus on such care for the future.

We have already heard about some of the things that Gordon achieved in his all-too-short but absolutely remarkable life—a very full life, in which he delivered more than many people deliver in a lifetime. We have heard about Gordon's fightback campaign, through which he raised £500,000 for MND Scotland; about the doubling of MND nurses, as well as the funding for them coming directly from the NHS; and about the securing of the legislation that guarantees people a right to a voice if they lose their own.

However, as many others have said, Gordon would have wanted us to focus on the future, which is why we should look at how we can continue to invest properly in new models of MND care, how we can bring clinical trials to Scotland, how we deal with MND and how we can have the fast tracking in the benefits system that the cabinet secretary outlined. On that point, I thank her for the tribute to Gordon that she said will exist in the form of further research in the years to follow. That is a fitting tribute to and legacy for a truly amazing man.

I will reflect for a moment on Kez Dugdale's comments at the end of her speech about those who live with a disability. It is important that we all reflect on the basic, everyday things that we take for granted, such as stepping out of our homes; dropping our kids off at school; being able to walk, cycle or run; and accessing restaurants or bars. Many people with a disability have to plan for days ahead to be able to sit in a restaurant and have a meal with their family. If we can take one fundamental thing from today, it is that we must consider how we can support all those superhumans in their daily lives. Every single person with a disability is a superhuman, as Gordon Aikman said.

The reality is that the world is a poorer place without Gordon Aikman, but it is also a better place because of him.

16:02

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I thank the Government for scheduling the debate to allow Parliament to acknowledge the transformative and truly effective campaigning work of Gordon Aikman. The thoughts of the Scottish Greens are with Joe and Gordon's family and friends, and we are pleased to support the motion and the amendment.

In the chamber, there can be a tendency to use—indeed, to overuse—hyperbolic positive language, sometimes inappropriately, but that is not a concern this afternoon, because Gordon Aikman deserves the fullest praise not just for what he achieved but for the way in which he went about it.

I most recently met Gordon in the Parliament's garden lobby, where he was in his extremely well-used wheelchair, and we enjoyed a lively chat. It struck me that that was incredible, given that motor neurone disease progresses so quickly. As we have heard, more than half the people with that neurological condition die within 14 months of diagnosis. I cannot imagine how cruel and shocking that diagnosis must feel. Gordon spoke publicly and bravely about that aspect of the experience. In one article that I read, he commented on how innocuous his first symptoms seemed and how confusing it was to receive the initial diagnosis.

In her contribution at Gordon's memorial service, the First Minister described an exhausting set of achievements and his contribution to public life, and today the cabinet secretary has left us in no doubt about his impact, which is rightly and deservedly to be marked with the creation of a new scholarship. What energy, what purpose and what strength of mind it must have taken to use his precious time to lead such a successful campaign. Kezia Dugdale's eulogy was a beautiful tribute to Gordon as a person—to his joy, his energy and his tenacity.

The results of Gordon's dedicated campaigning are tremendous—not least the funds that he raised to tackle the disease and lead research into it. He raised some £500,000 for MND Scotland, which will fund essential work towards finding a cure. As Kezia Dugdale's amendment rightly points out, investing in scientific research is essential. I am glad that the Scottish Government has committed funding to at least 16 PhD studentships in neurological research, because training and developing future scientists is vital to

our medical research landscape, and I welcome all such steps.

Although research into a cure for this life-limiting illness should give us all hope, we must ensure that those who are living with MND are supported well and enabled to make the most of the irreplaceable time that they have with their families and friends. As we have heard, securing the living wage for carers was one of the aims of Gordon's fightback. Sadly, our society often places too little value on the incredible work that carers do day in, day out, but Gordon's fightback made the value of that caring very clear. Gordon said:

"My carers not only make my life liveable, but make my life worth living. They are: my arms, my legs, my independence. It is only right that carers get paid a Living Wage for the life-changing work they do".

I am glad that the Government has introduced funding to support the living wage for carers. Gordon played no small part in the success of that campaign. It is now incumbent on all of us in the Parliament to take the most care to ensure that the living wage is implemented fully and fairly, that it benefits all care workers and that we do not stop fighting for better working conditions, professional opportunities and recognition for carers.

Gordon's campaign also focused on the need for better specialist medical support for people with MND and for improved palliative care. One of his most outstanding achievements was to secure the Scottish Government's commitment to double the number of motor neurone disease nurses and to fund them through the NHS, which means that patients will be able to see a specialist nurse more often.

Kezia Dugdale and Christina McKelvie spoke about the difference that MND nurses make, as did many other colleagues. Specialist nurses help to plan essential care as, sadly, the symptoms of the neurological disease become severe all too quickly and palliative care can become important very soon. Introducing appropriate palliative care early, which means leading meaningful and difficult conversations about people's true preferences for treatment almost from the day of diagnosis, can do much to support people throughout their illness.

We need not only to fund medical research and social care workers but to build a culture that is more understanding and is more open and willing to discuss death and dying. Gordon's campaign was a great step forward in that regard. The success of his fightback can be measured not only in the funds that he raised and in the huge changes to policy that he helped to lead but in his reflective words and honesty about his condition and experiences.

Gordon's fightback has a lasting legacy. Let us ensure that we build on Gordon's incredible work with urgency and commitment. That is the least that we can do to properly honour the memory of that unique young man.

16:07

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** It is my great privilege to offer the Liberal Democrats' support for the Government motion and the Labour amendment. We offer our condolences to Gordon's family and to everyone who is in the public gallery to pay their respects to that fine man.

I did not know Gordon very well and I met him only a few times. The time that I remember most was when I was wearing a ridiculous string vest and inappropriate footwear because I was about to run 2 miles on a treadmill, through the fog of a festive hangover, to build publicity for a Christmas day marathon that our mutual friend Rob Shorthouse was running in aid of MND Scotland. That one encounter sums up Gordon's impact on Scottish society: he had an uncanny ability to talk people into things that they would not have otherwise done voluntarily. He was also able to pull off events and stunts at every level of Scottish society to raise awareness about his condition and the needs of those who suffered with him.

While Gordon's body was failing him, he displayed a strength of character that represents the finest qualities of our people and, by so doing, he put motor neurone disease and the tragedy that it inflicts on more than 400 Scots each year on to household agendas and ensured that the subject was rarely out of the headlines.

Gordon revealed his diagnosis around the time of the international ice bucket challenge and, almost overnight, he took that as his own. Around Scotland, people took up the challenge for MND, such was their affection for Gordon, who had—rightly—become the poster boy for the campaign. The campaign and his personal journey raised more than £500,000 and touched the lives and hearts of millions of people—not solely through his crusade to raise awareness and bring resources to bear in the fight against motor neurone disease but through his dignified acceptance of the course that his illness took and its ultimate destination. He owned that reality, but he never let it define him.

It shows the measure of the man that, at the age of 29, he wrote:

"I don't want pity ... It'll be too late for me, but we must—and with your help we will—find a cure for the next generation."

That speaks volumes about his character and his uncommon grace in the face of his own mortality. His example is a continuing comfort, not just to

people in the MND community but to many people who are confronted with the reality of a diagnosis of a terminal illness of any kind.

As well as showing the bravery that is reflected in those words, Gordon showed a steely determination to deliver on the commitment to leave a legacy that would ensure that, when someone receives a diagnosis of motor neurone disease in the future, they might expect to beat the disease. To that end, beyond the colossal impact of his fundraising achievements, he captured the Scottish Government's attention. To its credit, the Government has delivered a range of measures—particularly on MND nurses, as we have heard. I thank the cabinet secretary for the additional commitments that she made in opening the debate.

Motor neurone disease is classless and indiscriminate. It shreds function in the brain and spinal cord, and it does so with voracious and horrific speed. Until Gordon launched his fightback campaign, there was fairly low awareness of the condition in Scottish culture. His legacy is to have helped to reverse that deficit in public knowledge and to ensure that—again thanks to the good offices of the Scottish Government—research will take place to close the gaps in our clinical and scientific understanding of the condition. We heard about the PhDs and scholarships that will do that.

When I think of all that Gordon achieved, prior to and in the months following his diagnosis, I am reminded of the words of Bobby Kennedy, who said:

"Few will have the greatness to bend history; but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events ... It is from numberless diverse acts of courage ... that human history is thus shaped."

Although his physical capacity was diminished, Gordon's strength shaped events and will help to bring hope to and shape the futures of MND sufferers everywhere. Gordon's life was all too short, but it was utterly inspiring, and he leaves the world and the cause for which he fought in better shape than he found them.

My thoughts and those of my party are with the people whom he leaves behind, some of whom are gathered here to celebrate his life. In particular, my thoughts are with his husband, Joe, and with my friends and colleagues in the Labour Party.

16:12

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** Unlike many previous speakers, I cannot talk about Gordon Aikman from a personal point of view. We met only once, and that was in a taxi queue after an event—hardly the best circumstances in which to meet someone for the first time. However, I can

talk about the impact of his campaigning during his final years.

We were all aware of motor neurone disease, but it was not part of the public consciousness. Unless a friend or family member had been diagnosed with MND, people had little involvement. My involvement came because of two friends of mine from the political world. One encouraged me to run the Paisley 10k for MND Scotland—well, to say that I ran might be a slight exaggeration, but I briskly completed the course. It was Christina McKelvie, who campaigned about MND after the death of her dad, and Councillor Lorraine Cameron in Paisley who made the condition real for me. Lorraine's mother, Eileen Clark, was diagnosed with MND and went from being a very active woman to death within a couple of years. The illness took its toll on mother and daughter, as Lorraine struggled with her own health issues during that period.

That is what MND can do to families. From diagnosis, the clock is ticking, but what people do and how they are supported during their limited time is important. Some people who are faced with adversity take on superhuman qualities and strength. Gordon Aikman did that as he set up his fightback campaign, campaigned for MND Scotland and pursued the case for having more specialist nurses for all neurological conditions.

A knock-on effect of Gordon's fightback campaign was investment in other neurological conditions, as the cabinet secretary said. Members will be aware of how close I am to multiple sclerosis—we could say that I am married to it, because my wife, Stacey, was diagnosed with MS when she was 16. She has the same quality of never giving up. She does not allow herself to be defined by her long-term neurological condition. She is a woman of strong ideals and an extremely positive outlook on life, and she believes that we must live every day as if it were our last.

Stacey's mum tells the story of one time when Stacey, in her late teens, was feeling sorry for herself. Her mum brutally asked her, "Who would want to know you with an attitude like that?" Those were harsh words, but they were spoken out of love for her daughter, who would have to live for the rest of her life with MS—because, as with MND, there is no cure.

MS is a highly individual, often fluctuating and always progressive condition that affects more than 11,000 people in Scotland, and people need specialist support to manage it appropriately. In 2015, thanks to Gordon Aikman and campaigning groups, additional funding was found for MS specialist nurses in the NHS. However, because of factors such as the increased availability of treatments and the consensus about the need for

early treatment and continued condition monitoring, the workload of MS specialist nurses continues to increase. Research from the MS Society suggests that MS nurses are the most common key contact for people with MS and that the role of the MS nurse increasingly extends far beyond a clinical role into areas such as employment, welfare and whole-life support.

Further investment is needed in neurological nursing, particularly for those who are living with MS. That will be the focus of this year's MS awareness week, which is the last week in April. If we want to honour Gordon's memory—if we want to say all these good things and leave a legacy—the best way to do that is to continue his campaign. We must ensure that those who have neurological conditions continue to get the support that they require.

16:16

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** I have been moved by the debate so far. I did not know Gordon personally but, from hearing the words of his colleagues and other members in the chamber, I would say that he was a remarkable individual. In particular, I commend Kezia Dugdale for her speech and for quoting Gordon's comments at the end of it. As someone who is now obviously "superhuman", I expect the chamber to listen even more carefully.

MND is devastating not only for the person who is diagnosed with it but for the husband, the wife, the mum, the dad, the son, the friend and the good neighbour—people who do not recognise themselves as carers but who look after someone in their family or a friend who has that disability.

Without the right support, the personal cost of caring can be high, with many carers experiencing poor health and disadvantage. That was brought into stark reality for me when I was waiting to collect a prescription at a local chemist's just a few weeks ago. I overheard an MND nurse explaining to the pharmacist that, normally, the patient's wife would collect his prescription but she was having a crisis that day, so the nurse had stepped in to offer some practical support. I often think about that lady and try to imagine what her life is like as her husband's prognosis gets worse, as the number of activities that they would normally share starts to decrease and as she has to take on additional responsibility for his care and help him with the most basic things such as dressing, feeding and drinking. I imagine that, at times, the stress must be unbearable for that individual.

Gordon spoke of carers making his life not only liveable but worth living. In his articles, he referred to carers as his arms and legs—his independence. I am pleased that, as a result of his campaign,

carers are now paid a living wage. In the past, the Scottish Conservatives argued for a national carers break guarantee to be introduced, which would guarantee a fully funded flexible week of respite for any carer who cared for more than 50 hours a week. Previously, there was no provision in place for local authorities to provide time away for unpaid carers, although respite is consistently identified by carers themselves as the most helpful form of support.

In early February 2016, the Parliament passed the landmark Carers (Scotland) Bill. As a consequence of a former colleague's amendment to the bill, local authorities will provide short breaks for those who look after others. The new legislation will see unpaid carers given much-needed time away, bringing benefits for quality of life, wellbeing and family relationships. As someone who has a carer who looks after them—and who could not be here without her care—I know how important that will be for all those with such a disability.

A person's care plan needs to be agreed as soon as possible. It will involve all parts of local services, including the NHS. Even with council cuts, we must seek to protect services and to make sure that they work for each family and each individual.

Gordon's life was taken far too soon by this cruel, horrible disease. His drive to fight for the rights of others will be a lasting legacy that is felt across not only this nation, but the whole of the UK and much further afield. As sufferers and carers, we thank Gordon for what he has done, and we pass on our deepest sympathy to his husband and family.

16:21

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** I extend my condolences to Gordon's husband, Joe, and to his friends and family. I was not Gordon's friend. That was not by choice, and it is to my regret that I am also one of the people who did not know him when he was alive. However, I have heard the remarkable stories of this young man who was taken so tragically at the age of only 31.

As Gordon's body failed him and his disease progressed, he never failed in his determination to leave a legacy that would improve the lives of other MND sufferers. His fightback was an incredible, selfless achievement.

Alex Cole-Hamilton and others have talked about the cruel, indiscriminate nature of the disease. Maree Todd mentioned Joost van der Westhuizen, who died so suddenly. Such deaths raise awareness of MND. I know that one of Gordon's wishes was for people to understand the

disease better, and it is important that we develop that understanding.

MND can strike anyone. In the United Kingdom, six people a day are diagnosed with motor neurone disease, but the rates of MND in the rest of the world are not readily understood. If we struggle here to cope with the rapidity of the disease's progress and to care for people, we can only imagine how it must be for people in third world countries who are diagnosed. The lack of understanding, and the lack of palliative care, should concern us all.

Of course, there are remarkable people whose journey has not been representative of people with motor neurone disease, such as Stephen Hawking, who is a hero to many of us. The biopic film, "The Theory of Everything", in which Eddie Redmayne documents Stephen Hawking's early struggles and MND diagnosis, is particularly moving. I hope that the film has contributed to raising awareness of the disease.

As the rugby world was rocked by the death of Joost van der Westhuizen so, too, the football world was rocked by Fernando Ricksen's diagnosis of MND. No one who saw the interview in which he revealed his diagnosis could fail to be moved. Like Gordon, he turned that diagnosis into something positive by founding a foundation to raise awareness and funding.

Euan MacDonald, another motor neurone disease sufferer, has turned his time to developing, with his sister, Kiki, Euan's Guide, a website that addresses some of the issues related to living with disability that were important to Gordon. Euan's Guide seeks to give advice to people about visiting attractions and areas in Scotland, removing some of people's worries about not knowing what to expect, such as how accessible a venue will be and whether there will be accessible toilets. Euan's Guide takes away some of the difficulties faced by people suffering illness and disability.

We all took part in the ice bucket challenge; although we lived to regret it, we raised lots of money, which is commendable. I draw attention to the work of my friend and colleague Christina McKelvie in this area. A few years ago, I sponsored her to do a fire walk to raise money for motor neurone disease; I am sure that there are many who would like to have held her feet to the fire more than I did—I suspect that Gordon might have been one of them.

No one who is close to me suffers from MND, but my sister Eileen suffers from multiple sclerosis. She is 10 years older than me and she still works as a GP. I thank Kezia Dugdale for making the point that the superheroes are not the people who climb Kilimanjaro, but those who every day cope

with and accept the diseases that life has thrown at them. That is why I am particularly pleased that the Scottish Government is providing funding for additional PhDs on MND and MS—which are strongly linked—at Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and St Andrews universities. I am very grateful to the Government for that. Dedicated funding is also being provided at the University of the West of Scotland. I am sure that that will show that Scotland is leading the way in finding a cure.

I was not Gordon's friend, but Gordon is my friend. He is a friend to everyone who has been touched by MND, MS or other neurological conditions, because his work will work towards finding a cure. What a wonderful legacy to have left to Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** We move to the closing speeches.

16:26

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** Today's motion reflects on an extraordinary life and an extraordinary campaign that achieved so much for people with motor neurone disease. Gordon Aikman's response to his crushing diagnosis has resulted in better services for people who face that terrible illness.

Today we are discussing all that Gordon has achieved and the on-going legacy of his campaign—on which we have had many excellent and very considered speeches—but in these early days since losing him, all of us who knew him are still hurting at seeing someone with such ability, commitment, passion and warmth being lost to us at so young an age.

If members have read Gordon's moving article about his experience of receiving the news of his diagnosis or spoke to him while he was waiting for confirmation of it, they will know just how devastated he was to get the news just as he was starting a new relationship with his husband Joe. For someone to receive that diagnosis and choose not to retreat into themselves and not to curl up and pretend that the nightmare was not happening was a huge achievement. Such a response would have been understandable, but that was not Gordon's choice—that was not who he was—which is why people and families who are affected by MND are benefiting from his strong legacy today.

On Saturday at Gordon's funeral, I sat next to one of the MND nurses. We had met before. She was one of the nurses who helped to care for my mum when she was diagnosed with MND. It had taken more than a year for us to get the diagnosis. It is a complex disease and, for many families, the road to diagnosis can be confusing and frustrating. Perhaps that is also the case for members of the

medical profession, but it seemed that there needed to be a greater level of knowledge and awareness of the indicators of the condition. My mum was diagnosed not long after Gordon and, at the time, that nurse spoke to me about how stretched the service was and the importance of the work that Gordon was doing.

Gordon's response tells us so much about the man he was, but it is important that, while we recognise what he did on MND, we do not lose sight of how talented and brilliant a person he was before his diagnosis. From being head boy at Kirkcaldy high school, he went on to the University of Edinburgh, where he was an activist who was committed to playing his part in fighting for a better society. That took him into student representation and, from there, to working here in the Parliament for my husband Richard Baker MSP. That was when I first met Gordon, and I often talked to him more than I did to Richard in the Parliament—he was a more reliable source of information on Richard's diary than Richard was.

Gordon was a positive, funny and charming man. He had many friends in Parliament, and he was a good matchmaker. We all enjoyed his and Joe's wedding, and seeing him as happy as he had made other people.

In his work for Richard, Gordon quickly established himself as intelligent, resourceful and tenacious. He was then poached away to work for the Labour group. He was happy to work late nights and for long hours, and he could achieve more in one day than many of us could achieve in a week. Every task was done efficiently, effectively and inventively. If some piece of research needed to be done or some important fact needed to be found out, he would find a way to get that information—as the Scottish Government well knows.

Gordon was a great communicator, writing speeches, columns or news releases. While everyone else was throwing out ideas haphazardly, he would put together a focused and effective campaign plan. Before his diagnosis, he was already one of the best political operatives of his generation. It was no surprise that he was promoted to such a senior position as director of policy in the better together campaign. It was a huge blow to the campaign when he could not continue in the role.

Gordon used all his experience, talent and skills to amazing effect in his fightback campaign but, if he had not developed MND, he would still have achieved great things in his life. He had a passion for life. Although the disease must have brought him pain and heartache, he took lots of pleasure, excitement and love from his life. I enjoyed seeing the many pictures on social media of his travel adventures—and woe betide the airline that stood



in their way. Gordon turned on his campaigning skills and exposed an airline for its treatment of wheelchair users, showing that his commitment to positive change reached beyond specific MND issues to equality for all people with a disability.

This afternoon, we are celebrating a great campaigner, but we mourn the loss of a talented young man and a wonderful person; a great friend full of humour, fun and warmth; and a cherished husband, son, brother and uncle full of love for his family. He was also a political animal. He was part of the Labour family, and I know that he would have loved Kezia Dugdale's speech this afternoon, which reflected much of who he was.

MND is a brutal and cruel disease that takes lives all too soon and leaves behind devastated families. Let us pay tribute to Gordon's bravery and brilliance not only by improving services and support for people with MND, vital as those things are; let us also work together to ensure that there is far more research in the future to find a cure for the disease. Gordon also felt passionately about that. He raised significant sums of money to help with research for future generations.

With the scientific excellence that we have in Scotland and our world-leading research in life sciences, we should aspire to be the country that finds the cure for motor neurone disease. We should seek to lead in research to provide effective treatment. Scotland should be the place where we finally beat the disease. That would be a fitting tribute to Gordon. It would be fitting recognition of someone who achieved so much in such a short life.

For all of us who hold his memory dear and miss him so much, let us all pledge to work together in the Parliament to ensure that his campaign does not stop today, but goes on until we have realised the future that he fought so hard for.

16:33

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** I, too, thank the Government for bringing forward this debate and for giving Parliament the opportunity to mark Gordon Aikman's truly outstanding contribution. I send our love and thoughts to his husband, Joe, and his friends and family who are with us in the chamber.

I became friends with Gordon over 12 years ago when I started to work for a fellow North East Scotland MSP to Claire Baker's husband, Richard. Gordon's charisma and loving, cheeky and vibrant personality were infectious to anyone who met him. From listening to Claire's moving tribute and speaking to many of Gordon's other friends and political acquaintances at his funeral on Saturday,

I know that it was that joie de vivre that made him such a wonderful person to know and be around.

The last time I met up with Gordon was at a silent auction in Stockbridge to raise funds for MND Scotland. Apart from trying to force me to bid for a hideous orange finger-knitted hat—luckily, I was outbid on that—he told his personal story to around 200 people who had gathered there, most of whom he did not know.

Gordon began his speech with just four words: "I'm dying—and fast." There was not a dry eye in the room after he told his personal story, and it left everyone with the will to support Gordon and his campaigns. As with every time Gordon spoke about his MND, he was an inspiration to everyone who met him that evening.

As has been mentioned, Gordon knew how political decisions and the prioritisation by Government ministers of issues can transform people's lives. Perhaps it is because MND came to take away Gordon's life that so many people in Scotland with MND today, and for as long as there is no cure, will owe the advancement in research and improvement in services and care for MND to Gordon's passionate and determined campaigning.

When I met Gordon in Parliament after the election to discuss some of his concerns surrounding the changes to home ventilation services in NHS Lothian, it was clear just how passionate he was to see and support improvements to care and nursing teams across Scotland for all life-limiting conditions. I had hoped to meet Gordon to discuss the Frank's law campaign—sadly that meeting will not take place.

However, as Kezia Dugdale and Anas Sarwar have said, I know Gordon would not forgive me for letting the opportunity of this debate to pass without raising the plight of those individuals in our country who are under the age of 65 and require personal care for MND, dementia, Parkinson's disease, MS and cancer.

Shockingly, in some parts of Scotland, terminally ill patients under the age of 65 are being charged for the help that they need with basic things such as washing, dressing and feeding themselves. That is despite clear guidance to local authorities that terminally ill patients should not be charged for personal care. As Christina McKelvie has mentioned, when a person is on their deathbed, worries about where they will find the money to pay for the vital care that they need are the last thing that they or their loved ones should have on their minds.

I very much welcome the fact that the cabinet secretary has agreed that the feasibility study on extending free personal care to people under 65 who have been diagnosed with dementia will be

widened to include all medical conditions. I look forward to the study being completed and published in the summer. We on the Conservative benches will work positively with ministers, as I know will other parties in the chamber, to take forward the policies that we need to end the current unacceptable situation.

The previous session of Parliament was dominated by the debate over the constitution—a campaign that Gordon was at the heart of before he was diagnosed with MND. That campaign and debate not only divided our country but saw a huge amount of political time and political energy used on both sides of the argument. This fifth session of Parliament can and should be about progressing policies together to improve the lives of the people whom we serve, such as Frank's law and other policies that can transform people's lives.

Like members, I feel privileged to have known Gordon. I will never quite comprehend how, at the age of just 31 and after receiving what amounted to a death sentence, he managed to be the amazing person that he was right to the end of his life. He undertook his three-year battle with MND and, at the same time, focused his energy and efforts on raising funds and awareness for MND Scotland. For those who have not already donated to Gordon's fightback, I hope that they visit the website and encourage others to do so. His mission statement is what should inspire all of our work in the Parliament—Alex Cole-Hamilton has already mentioned some of it:

"I don't want pity. All I want is for you to take action to help fund a cure and fight for better care for people with MND.

It'll be too late for me, but we must—and with your help we will—find a cure for the next generation.

With your help I can turn a negative into a positive."

Gordon's legacy is one that he will never truly know. For me as a friend, and I know for colleagues across the Parliament, he will go on inspiring the work that we do as MSPs for the rest of our own lives.

16:39

**The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell):** It is an honour to be part of today's debate to recognise Gordon Aikman's work and achievements. Based on the contributions from members that we have listened to this afternoon, it is clear how much of an inspiration he was.

Like some of the speakers today, I never met Gordon, but I was privileged to meet his family and husband today. I pay tribute to their courage and strength in being here today, at a time that must still be incredibly raw for them, as it is for all who

knew and loved Gordon and continue to miss him terribly.

Today's debate has seen the Parliament at its strongest—when we put to the side the baggage of party politics and unite with a voice determined to do what motivated us all to get involved in politics and what inspired Gordon to do so: to make life better, to make our country better and to make a difference. In each and every contribution, from across each and every party, we have heard passion, commitment and powerful personal testimonies.

Gordon made a huge difference. In her beautiful article about him, Kezia Dugdale wrote that, when he was first diagnosed with MND, he was clear that he could respond in one of two ways: to sit down or to stand up and fight. For Gordon, she wrote, there was only ever one option. That spirit—that tenacity and strength—was truly inspirational.

That is why the Scottish Government is proud to have worked with Gordon and his fellow campaigners to deliver the pledges that he set out in his campaign to improve MND services and research. We are honoured to have played our part in helping to achieve some of the goals that he set—not for his own sake but to make life better for others. We have invested an extra £2.5 million annually in specialist nursing. We have doubled the number of MND specialist nurses across the country and ensured that all of them are now funded by the NHS. We have legislated to give a statutory right to communication equipment and support to give a voice to people who do not have a voice or are at risk of losing it. We are paying a real living wage to social care workers, and we are investing in MND research. Over the next three years, there will be six new MND-dedicated PhD posts in our universities.

Although it is always good for a Government to have a list of actions that are being delivered, and that is always useful for a debate, the contributions by Kezia Dugdale, Christina McKelvie and Claire Baker brought to life what those improvements mean—whether that is the tangible and material difference of what specialist nurses have brought to the speed of accessing feeding tubes, which Kezia Dugdale described, or being able to go back to the nine-year-old Christina McKelvie and say to her mum and her family that we will fast-track the help that they need, and we will do it as quickly as we can. We cannot go back in time for Christina—or for too many others—but today's debate and the Government's actions show our resolve to do our very best to make improvements.

I also want to thank Claire Baker for her bravery in describing so fully what her family are coming to terms with. I have worked with Claire for a number of years through education committees and we

have shared stories about what our wee kids are up to and what they are doing at school. I thank her very much for being so brave in disclosing so much about what she is going through at this time.

However, we will not stop with the actions that we are taking forward. We cannot be content with the progress that is being made. That is why we are creating the scholarship programme—to commemorate Gordon's contribution to improving the provision of specialist care and research for those with MND. We will provide £25,000 a year to support individuals and professionals to develop, implement and evaluate practical interventions to improve the quality of life of people who are affected by the condition. The scholarship programme will be administered by the nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals research unit at the University of Stirling. Those who are awarded a scholarship will be hosted in the Euan MacDonald centre at the University of Edinburgh. Euan MacDonald was another inspirational figure who did so much to improve the lives of people living with MND and to improve research.

Of course, Gordon was an advocate for people with MND, but his impact went far beyond MND and spread into creating improvements for other neurological conditions. As George Adam has made clear in his comments, and from what I know Stacey, his wife, would demand of us, we need to continue to work on a number of fronts to make things better for people with all neurological conditions, including MS. I also thank Clare Adamson for bringing her personal experience of MS to the chamber and the debate today.

We have also provided funding to and worked with the Scottish Huntington's Association to develop a national framework for the care of those who are diagnosed with Huntington's disease. While that work is still being developed, there has been much positive feedback, particularly from other third sector organisations that represent people with a range of neurological conditions. I look forward to receiving updates on the progress of that work.

**Kezia Dugdale:** The minister will know that Gordon would encourage me to push her just a little further on some of the issues that I mentioned in my speech. Perhaps she is coming to this but, if she is not able to address it today, will she write to me specifically about the information technology problems that I raised in my speech and, separately, about ensuring that we have the KIS service in all ambulances?

**Aileen Campbell:** I was coming to that. I was also going to say that I will come back to the member with further clarity on that. I will perhaps jump ahead and say that we are making progress on IT systems and on e-records. I understand that KIS and the emergency care summary—ECS—

system have been available in all ambulances since last year. I will confirm that to her in writing, but I hope that it gives some reassurance that significant progress has been made on the points that she raised.

I recently had a meeting with Epilepsy Scotland in the Parliament at which we discussed access to social security for people with epilepsy. Since the meeting, we have awarded funding to Epilepsy Scotland to support the development of a benefits advice service that is specifically designed to support people who live with epilepsy. It is hoped that the service will be operational later this year.

Our national advisory committee for neurological conditions is looking at models of care that incorporate all the aims of Gordon's campaign—person-centred care and support, specialist care provided by skilled nurses, therapists, doctors and care teams, access to specialist services, and opportunities to participate in research into new treatments. I have asked the committee to report to me on progress in all those areas.

Maree Todd and Clare Adamson also mentioned how MND has robbed the world of sport, with the tragic loss of Joost van der Westhuizen, and I understand that Rangers fans have raised funds to help with a movie about the football star Fernando Ricksen's current battle with MND. They hope to show it in Scotland. I hope that all the work that Fernando Ricksen is carrying out will continue to raise the profile of the condition.

I offer my thanks to members for their contributions to the debate and I again offer condolences to Gordon's husband, Joe, and his family, friends and supporters who are in the public gallery. We will remain resolute in our commitment to make good on achieving Gordon's aim of finding a cure and we will continue to look at what we can do better—how we should transform and improve care and how we can equip ourselves to deliver even better health and social care services in the future for those who live with MND and other neurological conditions.

Finally, I just want to say—rest in peace, Gordon, but please know that you are remembered in all our hearts and that you have made Scotland a better place. [*Applause.*]

## Digital Economy Bill

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of legislative consent motion S5M-03925, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on the Digital Economy Bill. I call Fergus Ewing to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Digital Economy Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 5 July 2016, relating to the Scottish Ministers laying down fees and rules for the Lands Tribunal for Scotland in cases concerning the Electronic Communications Code and Part 5 (Digital government), so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, or alter the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Fergus Ewing*]

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Edward Mountain to speak on behalf of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee.

16:48

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** As convener of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, I will make the following comments on the United Kingdom Parliament's Digital Economy Bill legislative consent memorandum. The committee was concerned about the extremely tight timeframe that it was given for consideration of the memorandum. I say for the record that the committee received no advance notice from the Scottish Government that the memorandum was likely to be laid before the Scottish Parliament.

It appears that there are two areas of the bill for which the consent of the Scottish Parliament is required. The committee is satisfied with the first provision, which will allow Scottish ministers to lay down fees for the Lands Tribunal for Scotland to charge for hearing disputes under the electronic communications code.

However, in relation to the provisions in part 5 of the bill, on data sharing across public bodies, the committee was unable to examine the policy implications of the concerns that were raised by the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee. Furthermore, it believes that the data-sharing provisions would fall within the remit of other committees that have had no opportunity to consider them during the process.

The passage of this memorandum demonstrates, I believe, the limitations of the Scottish Parliament in respect of scrutinising LCMs within the very tight timescales with which committees are often presented. For that reason, the committee chose to note the memorandum rather than to pass comment on it. I will make no

further comment, but I welcome the discussion that will be had on the subject.

16:50

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I echo the concern about the timescale that has been allowed for scrutiny of the memorandum, which makes it especially difficult for committees to do their job and to ensure that legislation that comes to Parliament is fit for purpose.

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee's concerns about the memorandum echoed the concerns that the House of Lords expressed. We want adequate scrutiny of any proposals to share data between Government agencies to ensure that the powers are required and that the correct checks and balances are in place. We also seek assurance that such proposals would not breach human rights. On the other hand, I can understand how the powers could be used to improve services to individuals and wider society, and could be a useful tool for combating fraud.

I ask for confirmation that any such proposals will be subject to scrutiny in this Parliament, and that statutory instruments will be closely drafted, taking into account individuals' human rights.

We welcome the parts of the legislation that deal with the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. Anything that helps to take technology into our communities is a good thing. I hope that having the Lands Tribunal settle disputes between digital communication companies and landowners will speed up dispute resolution. That will be welcome, especially in cases in which the landowner has no personal interest in improved communication and seeks to hold to ransom a communications company, and thereby the communities that it seeks to serve, through unrealistic prices for access to land.

Therefore, on the whole, the legislation will provide benefits, but as with all Government powers, we must have checks and balances in place. We look for reassurance from the Government that they will be in place when the subordinate legislation comes to Parliament.

16:52

**Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD):** The Liberal Democrats will vote against the legislative consent motion at decision time. I find it astonishing that the Scottish Government has brought it before us today. The legislative consent process was designed as a simple means to allow smooth passage of non-controversial legislation on devolved matters that could be dealt with by Westminster as a matter of convenience, with the consent of the Scottish Parliament.

Part 5 of Westminster's Digital Economy Bill is highly controversial. For the benefit of members of the Scottish Parliament who have not been made aware of its contents, let me oblige. As the bill proceeds through the House of Lords, its Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee report said:

"we do not consider it appropriate for Ministers to have the power to decide by delegated legislation which authorities should be entitled to disclose or receive information under this potentially far-reaching and broadly drafted gateway".

We should make no mistake—the powers will entitle Scottish ministers to decide who can receive and transfer information that is protected under data protection legislation. The bill that is going through Westminster has been described by that same committee as giving ministers Henry VIII powers of the Crown.

Is this the new Scotland of the 21st century that we all want? Scottish ministers should be embarrassed and Scottish National Party MSPs should have been asking serious questions of their Government colleagues. The situation is surely embarrassing for Scottish ministers. They know that if such a legislative change was brought to this chamber, where it could be properly examined, it would never see the light of day in the form that it is in now.

It is convenient for Scottish ministers to move the legislative consent motion. If it is passed tonight, it will allow Westminster to confer on Scottish ministers almost unfettered power to drive a coach and horses through our data protection legislation.

I address my next remarks specifically to SNP back benchers. I can almost hear them thinking, "No, our ministers wouldn't do that."

**Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** Correct.

**Mike Rumbles:** Well, SNP members should not believe that for a moment. If Scottish ministers are granted the power unchecked by our Parliament, they will use it—either they will, or their successors will. It might come as surprise to some people, but our current ministers will not be in power for ever—

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mike Rumbles:** I would love to, but I have only 60 seconds left, so I cannot.

**Members:** Oh, go on.

**Mike Rumbles:** I would love to—I would love to have a debate about the matter.

Even if SNP members think that our current ministers are benign, they cannot be sure that the next lot will be.

It is not good enough for the minister to say—as he might do in a moment—that the legislative consent motion is necessary in order to combat fraud. The ends never justify the means.

This is far too important an issue to be left to a simple legislative consent motion that will give power to Westminster to act on our behalf and transfer Henry VIII powers to Scottish Ministers. We are not doing our job as MSPs if we allow that to happen. What is the point of having a Scottish Parliament if we allow the matter to go through without any real scrutiny?

It is still not too late for the cabinet secretary to withdraw the legislative consent motion and let us deal with the issue ourselves, here in this Parliament. It is perfectly possible for him to do that, so I urge him to do so right now.

16:56

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** I will deal first with the issues that were raised by Edward Mountain and Rhoda Grant. I note the concerns from relevant committees about the lack of time that was available to consider the memorandum, and I acknowledge that it was lodged later than we would have liked. In mitigation, I offer the following points. First, prior to lodging it, I wrote to Mr Mountain—on 12 January; 41 days ago—informing him of a number of issues that we felt should be brought to his and the committee's attention. That was an attempt to be helpful, and I hope that the attempt was successful.

In paragraph 5 of that letter, we said:

"We hope to lodge an LCM shortly."

I acknowledge that the memorandum was lodged later than we would have liked. However, precisely because we were conscious of the complexity of the plethora of issues that are dealt with in the bill—I do not, to be frank, have time to go through them all—I specifically wrote a non-statutory voluntary letter to the committee, as a matter of courtesy and in order to be helpful, saying what we proposed to do.

Since the complex bill was introduced at Westminster, it has been necessary to discuss and pursue a range of amendments to it. The bill has undergone substantial amendment during its time in Parliament. It was therefore important that our memorandum to Parliament reflect as closely as possible not the initial proposals but the final proposals in the bill. I hope that that explains the lateness of its lodging. I stress that we take such

matters seriously, so I want to give that assurance to the committee convener.

I can also provide an assurance in relation to the specific question that was asked, quite fairly, by Rhoda Grant. All regulations will be carefully drawn in a way that ensures that they do not breach any privacy rights, and this Parliament will have full scrutiny.

I was grateful to have had the opportunity to have a private word with Mr Rumbles about the matter that he raised a moment ago—I thank him for giving me some advance notice of his particular concerns.

Let me get straight to the nub of what concerns us here today. We have carefully considered one of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee's key suggestions, which was that the Scottish devolved public bodies that will disclose data to improve public service delivery, reduce fraud and tackle debt be named in the bill. However, we do not support that recommendation. We oppose it precisely because we wish to protect this Parliament's role in scrutinising proposals for data sharing. For that reason, we have asked the UK Government not to table amendments that would name devolved Scottish public bodies in the bill.

However, there are occasions on which co-operation through sharing of data is necessary. Let me give two examples. First, with regard to supporting prisoners on release, the bill would allow Scottish ministers to put before this Parliament regulations to allow the Scottish Prison Service to share with the Department for Work and Pensions a specific and limited set of data that would allow for a benefits package to be in place on an individual's release from prison, which would help with their on-going rehabilitation and contribute to the wellbeing of their families. That is a good thing.

A second example concerns tackling fraud. Regulations under the bill's fraud provisions could allow Revenue Scotland to share specific data with other Government departments to help to reduce tax avoidance and evasion, and to help to maintain the tax revenue that is available to support Scotland's public services. I submit that that, too, is a good thing.

Any such arrangements must be clear, codified and subject to safeguards around individual privacy. In any such data-sharing proposals, ministers will need to state clearly who would be able to share data and for what purposes. To summarise the point: in debt, in fraud and in public service delivery matters—those points have been quite fairly raised by Mike Rumbles—ministers must bring to Parliament a statutory instrument that will require to be considered under affirmative

procedure. This Parliament must, should and will be consulted and shall decide on any proposed usage of the powers on said matters.

I am not sure whether being accused of being benign as a minister is a compliment or an insult, but I accept it in the spirit in which it was intended. Having undergone an extensive process, we are satisfied that the provisions of the bill, as amended, as they relate to devolved matters, are appropriate.

**Mike Rumbles:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

I ask the Presiding Officer to confirm something, please. From what the minister has just said, it seems that, although the minister has requested that the UK Government pay attention to what is being said, if Parliament passes the legislative consent motion tonight, that would give Westminster carte blanche. Is that correct?

**The Presiding Officer:** That is not a point of order—the member is asking for clarification. He is well able to put that question to the minister; it is not for me to adjudicate on such matters.

The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

## Business Motion

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-04161, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 28 February 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee Debate: Report on the Economic Impact of Leaving the European Union  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 1 March 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Culture, Tourism and External Affairs;  
 Justice and the Law Officers  
*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 2 March 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
 12.45 pm Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.30 pm Ministerial Statement: Child Protection Improvement Programme  
*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Patient Safety Programme  
*followed by* Legislative Consent Motion: UK Criminal Finances Bill – UK Legislation  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 7 March 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 8 March 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Education and Skills  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 9 March 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
 12.45 pm Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.30 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Questions  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move en bloc motion S5M-04162, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, and motion S5M-04163, on designation of a lead committee.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Stop and Search Code of Practice (Appointed Day) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

## Decision Time

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** There are five questions today. The first question is, that amendment S5M-04122.1, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, which seeks to amend motion S5M-04122, in the name of Shona Robison, on motor neurone disease, Gordon's fightback, be agreed.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S5M-04122, in the name of Shona Robison, as amended, on MND, Gordon's fightback, be agreed.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament recognises the outstanding contribution of Gordon Aikman in improving care, services and research in Motor Neurone Disease (MND); pays tribute to his work to raise awareness of MND and the challenges faced by those who live with debilitating neurological conditions; recognises the many committed individuals who continue to work on improving quality of life for people who live with MND, and believes that the legacy of Gordon's Fightback campaign will bring benefit and comfort to the lives of people with MND, and their loved ones, for many years to come; recognises that MND is a terminal illness for which there is no cure, and believes that there is every possibility that a cure could be found by ground-breaking clinicians and researchers in Scotland, working collaboratively with experts across the globe.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S5M-03925, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on the Digital Economy Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)



Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

### Against

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 112, Against 5, Abstentions 0.

### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Digital Economy Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 5 July 2016, relating to the Scottish Ministers laying down fees and rules for the Lands Tribunal for Scotland in cases concerning the Electronic Communications Code and Part 5 (Digital government), so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, or alter the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S5M-04162, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of an Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Stop and Search Code of Practice (Appointed Day) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 [draft] be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S5M-04163, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

## Industrial Strategy

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-02976, in the name of Colin Beattie, on an industrial strategy for a more prosperous, fairer Britain. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the publication of the report, *Industrial Strategy for a more prosperous, fairer Britain*, in August 2016 by the Industrial Communities Alliance; considers that the strategy is a significant step forward in providing a context for debate that acknowledges the demise of Scotland's industrial base where whole sectors, including coal, steel, textiles, shipbuilding and heavy engineering, have disappeared entirely or have been reduced to a shadow of their former selves; regrets the impact on communities in Midlothian and across Scotland, which it considers have been left behind and now often have to get by on low-paid work in call centres or warehousing, or on benefits as a main source to top up income; considers that a revival of British industry would be especially beneficial to the economies of the Midlands, the north of England, Wales and Scotland; believes that the adoption of an effective industrial strategy would enhance competitiveness and help deliver a high-wage, high-employment economy, and notes the views that the industrial strategy document, with its focus on the economy, manufacturing, trade, procurement, finance, business support, skills, infrastructure, energy costs and research and development, would benefit from a Scottish dimension, with the aim of finding a consensus on how to best address what it considers are significant issues within communities and agreeing on a progressive and sustainable way forward.

17:06

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** I thank all the members of the Scottish Parliament who have supported the motion, and particularly Richard Leonard, who was actively involved in its drafting. In the public gallery, we have a number of members of the Industrial Communities Alliance and the cross-party group on industrial communities. For those who are unaware, the ICA is the all-party association of local authorities in the industrial areas of England, Scotland and Wales, and it plays a highly active role in the cross-party group on industrial communities, which I convene.

I hope that, by now, all MSPs have had a chance to read the Industrial Communities Alliance's publication "Industrial Strategy for a more prosperous, fairer Britain". I am sure that those who have will join me in congratulating the ICA on what is clearly a substantial document that seeks to highlight the present diminished state of industry in Britain and that proposes the steps that should be taken to drastically improve that state of affairs.

As a quick overview of "Industrial Strategy", the argument is made in the opening pages that Britain's economy is fundamentally unbalanced, with far too much reliance on our financial sector and far too little on our industrial base. Manufacturing output has still not recovered to the levels that were seen before the financial crisis of 2008. Some of the statistics that are referred to are, frankly, astonishing. For example, around half the value of all United Kingdom exports comes from manufacturing, yet only 10 per cent of the workforce is employed in that field.

The benefits of an active and functioning manufacturing industry are straightforward. A high-wage and high-employment economy can be created; export growth can help to provide much-needed financial input; and we could see the crucial revitalisation of many of our industrial communities that have seen tremendous depression over the past few decades. For example, I think of my constituency of Midlothian North and Musselburgh, which has suffered with the decline of the coal industry. As the ICA points out, coal is still in use throughout the British isles, yet our last colliery closed in December 2015.

The ICA sets out its vision of what we can do to remedy the situation in a series of headline points, which I would like to briefly highlight. On the economy, the strategy states:

"Provide an economic context in which industry can prosper".

That can be done through mechanisms such as a low exchange rate, low interest rates and business taxation that encourages investment while ensuring that companies pay their fair share.

On manufacturing, the strategy states:

"Hold the line here: Britain should not abandon any more sectors of manufacturing production".

We need to encourage the reshoring of production from abroad to ensure that industries such as steel and coal are not allowed to degenerate any further.

On trade, it states:

"Welcome free trade—but only on the basis of fair competition".

We have seen the devastating effects of China's surplus steel being sold at subsidised prices. We must have a sensible approach to dealing with such markets, and that includes those countries that do not adhere to environmental obligations or basic workers' rights.

On procurement, it states:

"Use public procurement as a tool to support ... industry".

Public sector procurement is one obvious instance where authorities can set an example on engaging with local workers and supply chains.

On finance, it states:

“Make sure the banks provide long-term finance to industry”.

The 2012 introduction of the funding lending scheme may have helped to kick-start the economy, but banks used the vast majority of the money to increase mortgage lending. We must incentivise banks to invest in industry through any future such initiatives.

On business support, it states:

“Exploit the scope to provide aid to industry”.

Under current European Union rules, we can provide financial support for training, research and development, environmental compliance and, most important of all, regional aid that can be targeted at our less prosperous economies.

On skills, it states:

“Target resources at the high-level technical skills that industry needs”.

There is clearly a skills shortage in the manufacturing industries that needs to be filled, whether through apprenticeship schemes or steps like the training levy on large employers that will be introduced this April.

I will not go into the other aspects that the ICA has highlighted, but basically, those are the conclusions that it has reached in its “Industrial Strategy”, following its examination of the UK’s industrial environment. It would be difficult to disagree with any of them.

From a Scottish perspective, the document has been discussed at meetings of the cross-party group on industrial communities, and the conclusion was reached that a Scottish dimension is much needed. I encourage the ICA to continue its engagement with the cross-party group in meetings to come, and I look forward to helping to develop this work with the ICA and group members.

Of course, the ICA and the cross-party group have recently worked together on related topics, such as EU funding in a Brexit context. Whatever one’s thoughts on Brexit, there is no doubt that we are going through a period of great uncertainty, and I am sure that there was much relief when, following research by ICA members, the Scottish Government confirmed that EU funding for current Scottish projects would be in place until 2020.

Much of that funding has been directed at our post-industrial areas. Given that we do not yet know what the situation will be post-Brexit, I see it as a key role of the cross-party group to ensure that the Scottish and UK Governments are kept aware of the risks to such communities if that funding falters.

As I have mentioned, my constituency is one such post-industrial community and therefore might fall prey to any loss of EU funding. However, steps are being taken to improve the circumstances of my constituents through, for example, the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city deal, which sees the six local authorities in the region working collectively to bid to the UK and Scottish Governments for £1 billion of funding, with the potential for £3.2 billion of private sector investment if the bid proves successful. That funding would be targeted at infrastructure, skills and innovation, with the end result of improving our economic performance to allow repayment of the initial Government funds. Our region would benefit from greater autonomy, with public services being delivered more effectively and greater opportunities to tackle inequality and poverty.

The statistics for the region clearly display why such an initiative could prove a tremendous success. Its population of 1.3 million people represents 24 per cent of Scotland’s total and contributes more than £33 billion of gross value added to our economy, which equates to around 30 per cent of Scotland’s output. If the city deal’s funding bid is successful, we will have the opportunity to make local, flexible decisions that can reignite and improve the region’s industrial areas. It could be argued that the deal is not perfect and that there are some financial flaws in the plan, but overall it is very much a step in the right direction.

In addition, the cross-party group has a role to play in bringing together relevant stakeholders to provide input on a wide range of interests, and our meetings and discussions can contribute to the debate on how we move forward. The Scottish Government has proven very responsive to the group’s correspondence, and I thank it for that. It is evident that, when it comes to something as important as an industrial strategy, we need to be sure that those in power are listening to experts and, in that respect, the ICA can perhaps help to join up the thinking between the Scottish and UK Governments. I look forward to being an active member of the cross-party group in the work that it will do in the months and years to come.

We are now past the stage of examining the effect of the decline of industry. We now need new ideas and strategies, such as the city deals, to change the situation. We need to look to the future and, in that respect, I warmly welcome the publication of the ICA’s “Industrial Strategy”.

17:14

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

I congratulate Colin Beattie on securing this important debate. The motion under debate raises

the fundamental question of the future role of industry and manufacturing in the Scottish and UK economies. The ICA report is a welcome and important contribution to the debate on how we promote manufacturing in post-industrial communities across Scotland and the UK, and I congratulate the alliance on producing it.

The term “industrial strategy” can mean many different things. During the 1970s, it became synonymous with the failures of nationalised industries, poorly targeted investment and stalled economic growth. However, there has been—quite rightly—something of a renaissance in thinking about industrial strategies, and in a global context such strategies have been successfully deployed by Governments in countries as varied as Germany, South Korea and Singapore.

At the core of the Industrial Communities Alliance report is the ambition to see a revival in industrial activity in the economies of the midlands, the north, Scotland and Wales. It argues that an effective industrial strategy can enhance competitiveness and help to deliver a high-wage and high-employment economy. I agree with those objectives. Indeed, many of those goals are also encapsulated in the UK Government’s industrial strategy green paper, which was published last month.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** The member mentioned Scotland, Wales and other areas of the UK—former coalfield areas and the like. Perhaps he will reflect on his party’s catastrophic lack of an industrial policy during the 1980s. That decimated the industries and it is why we need an industrial strategy now.

**Dean Lockhart:** Obviously, the 1970s preceded the 1980s, and it was during the Labour Government of the 1970s that the UK economy had to be bailed out by the International Monetary Fund. However, let us not go over past history.

Many of the goals in the UK Government’s green paper are consistent with the recommendations of the ICA. The UK Government’s paper sets out a number of issues, including in particular the need to increase technical skills within our workforce and the need for higher levels of innovation in the economy, and those have also—quite rightly—been highlighted in the ICA paper.

In relation to a skilled workforce, we need to train our workforce better for high-end manufacturing jobs and to ensure that vocational and skills training are better aligned to industry and business demand. Scotland and the UK are fortunate to be home to many of the world’s top universities and they already provide world-leading research and development work, but the same level of investment has not been made in technical

and vocational training opportunities. Consequently, in Scotland, we have a shortage of technical skills, with Scotland ranking in the third quartile of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for the proportion of people with technical qualifications.

With the decline of manufacturing, the old system of apprenticeships also declined. That is a particular issue in Scotland, where we still have only half the number of apprenticeships per head of population compared with the rest of the UK. We agree with the ICA report that the UK Government’s apprenticeship scheme has been a step in the right direction in this area. We have also urged the Scottish Government to put in place 10,000 additional apprenticeship starts every year by the end of the current session of Parliament. We believe that that is the right policy to increase our skill set and, in turn, prepare the economy for a high-growth and high-wage outturn.

Let me turn briefly to innovation. For an advanced economy, higher levels of investment in innovation correlate with faster growth and income levels, both within different regions of the UK and internationally. Research and development leads to the creation of new products and services, more effective processes and higher productivity. In Scotland, the innovation centre programme is a welcome step in the right direction as it brings together industry and universities to address the innovation needs of industries across eight different sectors in Scotland. However, more needs to be done, and that is why we welcome the measures that are set out in the ICA paper and the UK Government paper that look to boost productivity and innovation across the UK.

I highlight the success that the UK has had in the car and aerospace manufacturing sectors, with the UK being the second largest car producer in Europe and a global leader in aerospace. That demonstrates that the UK can, with the right approach and the right policies in place, compete globally in key industrial sectors. In order that we can replicate that success in other sectors, I urge the Scottish Government to engage constructively with the joint ministerial committee that the UK Government proposes in its green paper so that, together, we can develop an industrial strategy to address the issues that the motion sets forth.

I thank Colin Beattie again for bringing this important debate to the chamber.

17:19

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I thank my colleague Colin Beattie for bringing this important issue to the chamber for debate, and I welcome the report by the ICA.

Over the decades, we have come to realise that we are only ever one large business closure away from a local crisis. As steel plants, coal mines and car plants closed in the 1970s and 1980s, it felt as if Scotland's manufacturing industry was in free-fall and communities that were reliant on the work that was provided by those giants felt a degree of dismay. The effects and the impact can still be felt today.

My constituency of Falkirk East is home to some of Scotland's most important sites. The petrochemical manufacturing and refinery sites of Ineos and Petroineos in Grangemouth lie cheek by jowl with the British Petroleum site at Kinneil Kerse en route to Bo'ness. It is not difficult to recognise Grangemouth's importance to the Scottish and UK economy with plants such as Syngenta, CalaChem and Fujifilm based there too, and with the container port being Scotland's largest and the only port in the UK to export more than it imports.

The report, "Industrial Strategy for a more prosperous, fairer Britain", which was compiled and published by the ICA, appears to point to an overreliance on the services sector by the UK economy, which is a fair comment. That the UK is one of the major financial hubs in the world can only be welcomed, but if the economy is based on one sector and we fail to diversify into other areas such as manufacturing, we will sleepwalk into another catastrophic economic downturn, the likes of which will, without doubt, be worse than in 2008.

We should look to the recent past to prepare for the challenges of the future. Sixteen years ago, job losses from the petrochemical plant in Grangemouth were looming and it was recognised that something had to be done to diversify the local economy to protect the area from certain financial disaster. Falkirk Council was led by the Scottish National Party at the time, and my friend and colleague Councillor David Alexander was the council leader. Alongside Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley and the then BP operation in Grangemouth, he launched the Falkirk action plan in 2002, which consisted of four public meetings to find out what the people of Falkirk district wanted for their area.

From the action plan, which gathered a range of views from across the district, the my future's in Falkirk initiative was created—a series of 24 targeted programmes that were designed to tackle the economic situation head on. My future's in Falkirk laid the foundations for the Helix park and the world-famous Kelpies and bolstered the district's tourism industry—it continues to grow by 5 per cent each year—helping to secure the Falkirk area's reputation as the place to visit and the place to invest.

A key element of the my future's in Falkirk initiative was that each programme was built with

maximum flexibility in order to overcome changes in the economic and market conditions. For example, Grangemouth's industrial capacity was expanded from a sole manufacturing site to include research and development facilities to create sustainability.

Many of the programmes were ambitious. At the time, some might have said that elements of the initiative were extremely risky, but it was well worth taking the chance and thinking outside the box, and the SNP-led council was prepared to do that—nothing ventured, nothing gained.

We even brought the Royal National Mod to Falkirk. They said that that would never be achievable, yet the Mod came home to Falkirk in 2008. I say "came home" because the concept of the Mod originated from the annual cattle trysts in Falkirk in the 18th and 19th centuries, when Gaelic-speaking cattle drovers met and sang Gaelic songs together, creating a festival of Gaelic culture that had never before been seen in lowland Scotland. In 2008, the Mod brought with it millions of pounds that substantially boosted the local economy and the local culture.

The statistics show that, from 2005 until autumn 2008, Falkirk district's unemployment rate was below the average rate in Scotland, whereas it was above the national average rate from 2001 until 2005. Equally, employment in the area had been in decline from 2001 until the advent of the my future's in Falkirk initiative, yet employment rose in the area from 2003 until 2007. Although the global economic downturn from 2008 onwards had an impact across Scotland, the UK and beyond, the effects were not as hard hitting in Falkirk, due to that foresight in 2002. In fact, the then Minister for Communities, former MSP Wendy Alexander, hailed my future's in Falkirk as the best regeneration scheme that she had ever seen.

All that would not have been possible without further key elements of partnership and the belief that the programmes were possible. Working together to overcome the challenges worked in Falkirk district and catapulted the area to become recognised as the most enterprising place in Scotland in 2010.

Much of the ethos and belief that were central to the success of the my future's in Falkirk initiative—and of invest Falkirk—can be transferred to other communities around the country, and I encourage members to take note of the examples in Falkirk to help to drive the necessary change in their areas.

17:24

**Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Colin Beattie for lodging the motion in the Parliament, and I thank Steve Fothergill and his

team at the Industrial Communities Alliance for putting together their credible, radical and compelling strategy for reindustrialisation and a rebalancing of the economy.

Steve Fothergill is a modest man, so let me say that down the years he has published groundbreaking research. Not least, he has uncovered the real rate of chronic long-term unemployment in our former industrial cities, towns and villages—the very communities that the alliance so effectively represents. I ask the cabinet secretary to go back and look at that research into the real rate of unemployment, so that instead of telling us every month how resilient the Scottish labour market is, when the Scottish claimant count and unemployment rate are announced, he asks what his Government can do to address the long-term, deep-seated but hidden unemployment that still scars many of the communities that we represent in the cross-party group on industrial communities.

If we add to the claimant and unemployment count, as we should do, the people who are listed as economically inactive but who want to work, we find that today's real unemployment rate in Scotland is nearer to 9 or 10 per cent than it is to the 5 per cent that official figures would have us believe. Indeed, if we add those people who are working part time but could work full time, and those who are in temporary work but want permanent work, the rate is even higher.

As Steve Fothergill and his fellow researchers have shown, time after time, the profound inequalities in the real rate of unemployment—the unequal burden of unemployment between the best and worst parts of Scotland—are far greater than the official figures would lead us to believe. For example, in 2014 the team calculated that the real unemployment rate in the former coalfield communities of Fife, Ayrshire and—the area that I represent—Lanarkshire was more than 15 per cent, compared with an average real rate of just 11 per cent. If ever there was a case for a new industrial strategy, it is made by those statistics and the human stories that lie behind them.

Datasets that the Scottish Parliament information centre obtained for me recently show that in 1979, the year when Margaret Thatcher came to power, more than 600,000 people worked in manufacturing in Scotland. Today the figure is around 200,000, which is 8.6 per cent of the workforce. That is precisely why the report that we are considering argues that our economy is fundamentally unbalanced. We also know from the SPICe dataset that productivity in Scotland is below the UK average; that expenditure on R and D by businesses in Scotland is almost half the UK average; and that industrial investment in the

private sector in Scotland lags behind that in the UK.

That is why it is right that Colin Beattie calls, in his motion, for “a Scottish dimension”. We need a strategy for industry in Scotland that is long term, not short term, and which includes long-term support for investment and innovation. We need a strategy that addresses the problem of Scotland having become too much of a branch-plant economy. We need a strategy that embraces democratic economic planning, so that the opportunities that are created by, for example, the Scottish Government's goal to tackle climate change bring jobs to our local communities.

The strategy must also advance democracy and equality in the economy, so that the proper role of trade unions as representatives of workers in the economy is recognised, and so that women, who are all too often shut out of the corridors of economic power, are finally let in.

I warmly welcome the Industrial Communities Alliance's report, which makes an important contribution to the debate. I hope that it helps the Parliament and the Government to consider how we can use the powers that we have to expand the horizons of working people in this country, and thereby bring hope back to the industrial communities that we are sent here to serve.

17:29

**Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** I see my role in the Parliament as being to make a small contribution to making the Highlands a place in which to live, work and do business, something to which the ICA report, which members have eloquently praised, also contributes. We have seen quite a lot of investment and economic activity in the Highlands in recent months, which shows that the Highlands are becoming exactly such a place. It is fantastic news for those of us who call the Highlands home.

Yesterday alone, in the constituency of Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, planning was approved for 50 new houses on the Black Isle and an £80 million fish food processing plant on Skye that will create 55 new jobs. That is off the back of a fantastic development, over the past few months, which has given a great boost to industry in the Highlands—the sale of the Lochaber smelter. Lochaber has long been famed as the home of the Lochaber smelter, which is based in Kinlochleven and Fort William—in fact, Kinlochleven was almost named Aluminiumville. What has been great about the past six months is that demonstration that investment in industry in the Highlands is not just history but is starting to pick up.

The report talks about the drive and determination that are required to bring about a

sustainable revival of industry. I stand here as an MSP who has seen that begin to happen in Lochaber and the west Highlands—an area that sees industry not just in terms of jobs and the income that is generated from those jobs but in terms of the impact on communities, which is something that the report identifies.

The Lochaber aluminium smelter in my constituency epitomises what we are trying to achieve across the country. It shows that we can keep industrial jobs as well as contribute to local communities, education and the environment. The decision to safeguard 150 jobs in Fort William and to create potentially hundreds more jobs will have a brilliant knock-on effect on housing, which is a serious issue; on transport, which is an issue that has been raised with me a number of times; and on education. West Highland College UHI, which is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, has been doing great things over the past few years, and there is now a need for expertise and training in Fort William so that people can be sourced for the new jobs. That means that West Highland College UHI will have a great opportunity to expand its courses and not only encourage more people to stay in the west Highlands to study but attract more people in and make Fort William a place of excellence and expertise in training for industrial jobs and opportunities.

In the west Highlands, we are seeing the beginning of a new chapter. When the decision was made, I wrote that I thought that the recent takeover would rewrite the future of Fort William and Lochaber, and it has restored community pride to the area. If we replicate across Scotland the commitment that we have seen locally to an effective and sustainable industrial strategy, we can rewrite the industrial future of Scotland and seek the restoration of that community spirit and pride that was once characteristic of industrial towns and cities the length and breadth of the nation.

17:33

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I, too, congratulate Colin Beattie on securing the debate. As he said, it is timely and extremely pertinent to the circumstances in which we as a nation find ourselves. As we look towards a Britain outside the European Union, we need to plan for the future and work to build a country in which future generations will have the chance to do better than their parents and grandparents.

That is why we, too, warmly welcome the publication by the Industrial Communities Alliance of “Industrial Strategy for a more prosperous, fairer Britain”. The report says:

“It is wrong to think of ‘industry’ as something from the past.”

We agree. The report says:

“An effective industrial strategy can enhance competitiveness and help deliver a high-wage, high-employment economy.”

We agree. The report says:

“A revival in British industry would be especially beneficial to the economies of the Midlands, North, Scotland and Wales.”

We unequivocally agree. The report is a significant step forward, and the context of the debate has been set.

I was pleased that, in January, the Prime Minister launched the UK’s modern industrial strategy as a critical part of the British Government’s plan for post-Brexit Britain. It aims to deliver a stronger economy and a fairer society, in which wealth and opportunity are spread across every community in our United Kingdom and not concentrated in London and the south-east.

The strategy will help young people to develop the skills that they need to deliver the high-wage, high-employment economy of the future. They are the same young people, doing the same jobs as the Industrial Communities Alliance calls for, in the same areas as the alliance represents.

The UK Government tackles directly the call by the alliance to develop

“Regulatory regimes that ensure the protection of workers, consumers and the environment but do not hinder investment and growth”.

The strategy heralds a new approach. It is not about

“stepping back and leaving business to get on with the job, but stepping up to a new, active role that backs business and ensures more people in all corners of the country share in the benefits of its success.”

It is hard to see many areas in which the UK Government and the Industrial Communities Alliance differ in their aims for the future of British industry. Indeed, the strategy acknowledges the report’s call for improvements in research and development in this country and its claim that we too often fall down on the transfer of knowledge and innovation from the laboratory to the shop floor. Although British excellence in key technologies, research disciplines and institutions gives a competitive advantage, we must maintain, strengthen and invest in our research and development programmes and institutions.

I think that the alliance must be pleased with the new strategy as outlined by the Government. In fact, just by having a strategy, the Government has met one of the alliance’s main demands.

Mr Beattie’s motion is a good one. I note that it suggests that the Industrial Communities Alliance

“would benefit from a Scottish dimension”.

I also note that the report is on the situation in the UK as a whole, just as the Government's industrial strategy is a plan for the UK as a whole. The Industrial Communities Alliance is made up of local councils from across the country, including 15 from Scotland. I argue that that gives its report a Scottish dimension, although I accept Richard Leonard's salient points.

I welcome the Industrial Communities Alliance's report and find much to agree with in Colin Beattie's motion. The document provides a context for debate and I agree that

"the adoption of an effective industrial strategy would enhance competitiveness and help deliver a high-wage, high-employment economy".

I am therefore pleased that the UK Government has produced a modern industrial strategy for the UK. That strategy and the alliance's document are both plans for the future with explicit objectives to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the country. That is no small task and will take years of hard work. I look forward to the Parliament, the Scottish Government, the UK Government, the Industrial Communities Alliance and stakeholders across the country working together to turn that vision into reality.

17:37

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Colin Beattie on securing the debate. I also congratulate the alliance on the publication of its document, which is an excellent piece of work that identifies the key imbalance in the country's economy. It shows only too clearly how an overreliance on services in the financial sector and the repeated undermining of the manufacturing sector have left us with far too many low-paid, insecure jobs, particularly in former industrial and coalfield areas, such as parts of Midlothian and West Lothian in my region, as well as Lanarkshire, Fife, Ayrshire and similar areas across the UK.

A combination of the fallout from the global financial crisis and a European Union and International Monetary Fund response that saw austerity sweep continents as a key tool of economic policy, along with a shrinking of industrial capacity and the deskilling of large sections of our communities, has gone a long way to create the conditions that we see across Europe and the US, where people in former industrial communities seek answers in the simplistic solutions of economic nationalism.

In this country, coal, electronics, paper, oil, food and textiles companies have all gone to the wall. The main response has been the offer to send in the partnership action for continuing employment

team to help people to find new jobs and write CVs. As good as that help is, it is not an industrial strategy. We need to create jobs and prevent job losses; we need to stop people becoming unemployed. We need an active industrial strategy. As the report says, that must involve a much more co-ordinated approach through procurement, investment, planning, skills, research and development, Government investment, financing infrastructure and more.

Although many questions about Brexit need to be answered, there are—if we take them—opportunities, too. The right to provide state aid to industries and sectors must be a priority in the negotiations. Having the right to determine our own procurement policy, to deliver apprenticeships and skills, to end bogus self-employment, to end zero-hours contracts and to pay decent wages must be policy objectives. They are just some examples of areas in which Governments of all colours—and I mean all colours—have hidden behind EU procurement or state-aid rules to avoid making progressive decisions.

We need to support the transition to a greener economy in which technology supports us all to live more fulfilling lives, and having an active industrial policy is part of that. One of Scotland's greatest missed opportunities has been in wind energy. We should have had turbines that were financed, built, owned and operated in this country. Communities and public bodies could have developed all of that in a truly sustainable way. Instead, the kit has been built abroad and many of our wind farms are owned by foreign multinationals, venture capital firms or wealthy individuals, with the result that the profits float off with every turn of the turbine to boardrooms in places such as Paris, Bonn and Amsterdam. If ever there was an absence of planning and industrial policy, that is it. We could make similar comments about the new Forth crossing.

Time does not allow me to go into the many other economic aspects of the report; I hope that we will be able to do that some other time. I hope that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, such as those that were made under Mr Lockhart's party's rule in the 1980s. We must learn from the report and use it to put pressure on the Scottish and UK Governments to deliver full employment. For me, that should be the key economic policy of any Government.

17:42

**The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown):** I thank Colin Beattie for lodging his motion and highlighting the importance of industry to the Scottish economy. I also thank him for his work with the cross-party group on industrial communities, which I have met



on a number of occasions and some of whose members are in the gallery.

The Scottish Government has a clear approach to industrial policy, which includes the overarching framework of our economic strategy, as well as the reforms and actions in our manufacturing action plan, which help to support our ambitions for a sustainable and inclusive economy.

Presiding Officer, you and I are probably among the few members present who remember when members' business debates were consensual debates. In the past, that was the nature of them, but we have obviously moved well beyond that. In particular, the speeches of Dean Lockhart and Richard Leonard were like two cheeks of the same, rather sour face, given their sniping at the Scottish Government.

However, it is worth saying that, as Richard Leonard said, the Scottish Government's approach is in marked contrast to the approach of successive UK Governments. For decades, whether in the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s or subsequently, the UK Government has been content to sit back while industrial output and employment have fallen. Several members have mentioned the primary steel industry, which employed 320,000 people in 1971. By 2015, that had dropped to 21,000. That means that nearly a third of a million jobs have gone in just over 40 years, and that loss has been concentrated in a small number of communities. As recently as September 2015, the closure of the Redcar steel plant resulted in the loss of 1,700 jobs. The UK Government did nothing to prevent that.

I do not disagree with Richard Leonard's point about underemployment. We have acknowledged that at every opportunity. It would not make sense for the number of people who are economically inactive—those figures are produced—to be added to the claimant count, but I agree that they are an important factor.

However, it would be good to have a bit of balance. At around 4.9 per cent, the current unemployment rate is still too high, but it should be recognised that it is substantially below the figures that we had in the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s and many subsequent years. The Conservatives very often make the point that it is substantially above the UK level, but it is, in fact, almost identical to the UK level.

Richard Leonard said that Scottish productivity levels are substantially below those of the UK. Within the past week, we have seen them almost match—they are within less than 1 per cent—for the first time. We inherited from the Government that Richard Leonard supported in 2007 a differential of around 6 or 7 per cent, and that has now been virtually closed.

**Richard Leonard:** The cabinet secretary has made the point before about record low levels of unemployment, so I checked. The level of recorded unemployment in 2005 and 2006 was exactly the same as it is now. We can go back to the mid-1970s, before deindustrialisation escalated into the 1980s, and see that the figures were comparable to those of today. Therefore we are not living in times of record low unemployment; in fact, if we go back before the 1970s, the unemployment levels were substantially lower than those that are being recorded at the moment.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will give the cabinet secretary some extra time because of that long intervention.

**Keith Brown:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I never referred to record employment levels—I did not make that point. Employment levels previously might have been mentioned, but I recognise that the current unemployment levels are not record ones. I also recognise the figures from 2005 that Richard Leonard mentioned, but he missed out the late 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s and many subsequent years. He picked out one or two years. We should look at the other years and see the levels of unemployment that previous Governments were content to see.

When we were about to suffer the industrial closure of the Tata Steel plants at Dalzell and Clydebridge, the First Minister, as has been mentioned, immediately established a task force partnership involving central and local government, local politicians of all hues, trade unions and industry to do whatever could be done to save the plants and look after the men and women whose jobs depended on those plants staying open. When the possibility of a deal emerged—that took a great deal of work—we did not leave it to market forces to determine the outcome; we intervened and acted as honest broker to ensure that the deal went ahead as quickly as possible.

As Kate Forbes mentioned, when Rio Tinto Alcan announced its intention to sell off the aluminium smelter in Fort William, we acted. We did not stand back, as previous Governments had done. We helped to provide the guarantees that were necessary for a new owner to step forward—a new owner with plans not just to save the smelter but to expand manufacturing and bring in much-needed and highly skilled manufacturing jobs.

I could also, of course, mention the work that we did with Ferguson Marine to ensure that shipbuilding stayed on that part of the Clyde.

Despite all that, there are, of course, clouds on the horizon. A hard Brexit threatens Scotland's

current position in the European single market and hence affects Scotland's national interests.

I was almost ready to agree with Neil Findlay's characterisation of the effect of deindustrialisation in the United States and the extent to which that led people to find wrong answers. However, it was like listening to a UK Independence Party member or hard Brexiteer starting to talk in derogatory terms about economic nationalism. I just could not really understand the connection. He did not make the connection between those two particular outlooks: hard Brexit, which he supports, and economic nationalism. A hard Brexit would, of course, damage jobs and living standards deeply and permanently.

**Neil Findlay:** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Keith Brown:** Do I have time, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Yes.

**Neil Findlay:** I do not know where the cabinet secretary is getting the idea from that I support a hard Brexit. I have never said that. What I am saying is that we should not pretend that everything that comes with Brexit is a negative. If we have the right mindset and a decent negotiation for the conditions of Brexit, we can do things that would positively be an advantage to a proactive industrial policy. To deny that is to live in cloud-cuckoo-land.

**Keith Brown:** Once again, we have some common ground. Neil Findlay is right to say that there are points in looking at the opportunities. Whatever the scenario, we have to look at the opportunities as well as the threats, but the idea of condemning economic nationalism in the United States and supporting Brexit just does not make sense to me.

Under a hard Brexit, Scottish gross domestic product could be about £11 billion a year lower by 2030, and resources for public spending could be up to £3.7 billion a year lower.

**Dean Lockhart:** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Keith Brown:** Again, I ask the permission of the Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You can take an intervention, cabinet secretary. I am rather enjoying this.

**Dean Lockhart:** As are we.

The cabinet secretary seems to be blaming Brexit for all the economic woes. Can I remind him that the underperformance of the Scottish economy dates back 10 years to when this Government took control, and that, for every year bar two, the Scottish economy has

underperformed that of the rest of the UK? The UK right now is the fastest-growing economy in the G7, with over 2 per cent growth. In Scotland, economic growth under the SNP is 0.7 per cent. How does that have anything to do with Brexit?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that that has to be the last intervention, cabinet secretary.

**Keith Brown:** Once again, the reason why I discount much of the commentary that I get from Dean Lockhart in relation to the economic situation in Scotland is because—

**Neil Findlay:** Because he is a Tory.

**Keith Brown:** —well, apart from the fact that he is a Tory—he continues to deny that there are two active Governments in the Scottish economy. Look at the report that we are considering tonight—look at the specific recommendations that it makes for what could make an effective industrial policy: low exchange rates, low interest rates, a measured approach to deficit reduction, regulatory regimes for the protection of workers and business taxation. Those are all powers that are held by the UK Government but which he denies have any impact on economic performance in Scotland. Whether it is in terms of unemployment or growth, the UK Government is complicit, yet it never acknowledges or accepts that responsibility. That is why I do not think that we can take seriously the points that Dean Lockhart has been making.

**Dean Lockhart** *rose*—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No, Mr Lockhart.

**Keith Brown:** The UK Prime Minister has suggested that the way to avoid the threats of a hard Brexit is to turn back the clock to a low-tax, low-regulation economy with the associated loss of the workers' rights, environmental and social protections and public services that we fought so hard for, even though we cannot hope to compete with—*[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Sorry, cabinet secretary. Mr Tomkins, you did not take part in the debate or press your button, so please do not sit in the back row yelling.

**Keith Brown:** Thank you, Presiding Officer, for that timely intervention. We cannot hope to—and would not want to—compete with the low-wage, low-value industries in some other parts of the world.

I agree with the many members in the chamber who made the point that we have to rekindle the spirit of innovation of James Watt, Thomas Telford and James Clark Maxwell. To do that, we need innovation, the finance to follow through on that innovation and a skilled workforce. We have to

adapt our industries to evolve and to innovate. New products and new processes will drive up the value of our industrial output. That is why we have the manufacturing action plan for Scotland, with its comprehensive proposals for action. That is why we created the innovation centre programme which, to be fair, Dean Lockhart mentioned positively in his speech. That is why we are actively progressing plans for a national manufacturing institute for Scotland.

Finance is crucial, as the report makes clear. We also have to create the environment for our innovators, entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises to flourish. Our SME holding fund, which utilises European funding—which, of course, will no longer be available after Brexit—provides micro-credit finance up to £25,000, loans up to £100,000 and equity investment up to £2 million. We have also established and are bringing forward the £500 million Scottish growth scheme to provide investment guarantees and loans of up to £5 million.

A skilled workforce, as mentioned by some members, is also crucial. We continue to invest in a successful modern apprenticeship programme, which is on track to achieve our target of 26,000 new starts in 2016-17 and 30,000 starts by the last year of this parliamentary session.

In closing, I once again thank Colin Beattie for lodging the motion and giving us the opportunity to have a lively debate and to highlight the work that we are doing in Scotland to adapt our industries to the challenges that lie ahead.

*Meeting closed at 17:53.*



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