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Thursday 22 February 2018

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 22 February 2018

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

General Question Time

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (Centre 1 Closure)

1. Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the potential economic impact on East Kilbride, what its response is to reports that HM Revenue and Customs has leased premises in Glasgow to progress the closure plans for Centre 1. (S5O-01784)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): The power to collect and manage taxes raised in Scotland remains reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament, and that includes decisions about HMRC office locations. The Scottish Government is clear that those powers should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament and that decisions about tax should be founded on close engagement with the taxpayer community in Scotland and on consideration of best practice from elsewhere. The Scottish Government is also clear that it has deep concerns over HMRC's transformation programme, not least over its potential negative impacts on local communities, including East Kilbride.

Linda Fabiani: Has the cabinet secretary noted that the staff capacity of the Glasgow location would be less than that of East Kilbride, never mind the capacity of offices such as Cumbernauld? Does the cabinet secretary agree with the Public and Commercial Services Union that, with Brexit uncertainty and reports of tax avoidance, the vision should be for a fully funded HMRC that can close the tax gap, rather than reducing staff numbers and closing local offices, with the impact that those will have?

Derek Mackay: I have listened closely to what Linda Fabiani has said, and she has spoken strongly about these matters. The Scottish Government has raised her concerns with the UK Government, given its decision-making role in these matters. I reiterate that if the Scottish Parliament had powers over tax administration and collection, we would be able to create a service that would be specifically tailored to Scotland's needs and would take the operational decisions about the issues that Linda Fabiani has raised. I will continue to take forward the concerns

and to raise these matters with counterparts in the UK Government.

Edinburgh Waterfront

2. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions ministers have had regarding the future regeneration of Edinburgh's waterfront. (S5O-01785)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): Scottish ministers were involved in discussions with the city region partners of the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal. The deal had its heads of terms signing in July 2017, which included a commitment to support the delivery of a significant number of new homes across the region by unlocking seven strategic sites, including Edinburgh's waterfront.

Scottish Government officials also meet colleagues from the City of Edinburgh Council on a regular basis and have been kept up to date with plans for the Edinburgh waterfront. Yesterday, my officials attended a meeting led by the chief executive of the council, where further details of its plans and aspirations to create transformational change in that area of the city were shared.

Miles Briggs: Does the minister agree that we have an unrealised potential in Edinburgh's waterfront and that connecting communities from Cramond to Portobello would provide many regenerational, cultural and leisure opportunities? What discussions have ministers had regarding proposals for the development and relocation of the National Galleries of Scotland collection facility in Granton, a project that I believe could act as a real catalyst in the regeneration of that section of the capital's waterfront? Will the minister commit to attend a summit that I am looking to arrange with other elected members and key stakeholders later in the year to help to take forward a vision for the future of Edinburgh's waterfront?

Kevin Stewart: With regard to the National Galleries of Scotland, Mr Briggs would be better to write to my colleague Fiona Hyslop about that.

I am pleased that the City of Edinburgh Council is developing plans for the waterfront area. That work offers a significant opportunity to create transformational change, as I have already said, creating a sustainable neighbourhood and reconnecting the city with its waterfront. I will ensure that my officials continue to work collaboratively with the council towards agreeing a vision and outcomes for the area and to look at how public sector collaboration could support the delivery of those outcomes.

Through the city region deal, the regeneration of Edinburgh's waterfront will be helped by our commitment to provide housing infrastructure funding of up to £50 million, predominantly in

private sector loans, to be spent on projects that will unlock housing in strategic development areas across the region, including the waterfront here in Edinburgh. We will prioritise work with partners to support council borrowing, to share the financing risk of infrastructure delivery required across those key sites.

We have also supported the construction of a new road at Granton waterfront, which will allow the provision of 104 affordable new homes by Port of Leith Housing Association. That road will also allow access for approximately 300 further affordable homes, to be provided in a later phase. Through our affordable housing programme, we are currently planning to support—

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Mr Stewart, there is another supplementary question, so you will have time to expand on your answer.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): Improving Edinburgh's waterfront is an issue that I have been working on since I was elected. What consideration has the Scottish Government given to the significant potential for regeneration of Edinburgh's waterfront, particularly in terms of delivering more affordable housing, and what consideration has it given to overcoming any barriers to investment, in order to encourage and enable development, particularly in the Granton and western harbour areas?

Kevin Stewart: I have already mentioned the new road and the 104 affordable homes that are to be built by Port of Leith Housing Association, and the fact that that road allows for an additional 300 affordable homes to be built at a later phase. Through our affordable housing supply programme, we are planning to support over the next few years a project with Link Group housing association and two further projects with Port of Leith Housing Association, which will provide up to 538 affordable homes in the area and receive around £22 million of Scottish Government grant.

That is a suite of proposals and there are also a number of budgetary measures that will ensure that the waterfront develops as envisaged by Mr Macpherson and others. The Government is doing a great deal to help to support the vision for Edinburgh's waterfront.

2 Sisters Food Group (Cambuslang Factory)

3. Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what engagement it has had with the 2 Sisters Food Group regarding its consultation on closing its factory in Cambuslang. (S5O-01786)

The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse): I have written to the chief executive of 2 Sisters Food Group to make clear our desire to work with him and his team to

ensure a sustainable future for production in the Cambuslang area. The Scottish Government's main economic development agency, Scottish Enterprise, is exploring options with the company to help to achieve that aim. Although our primary focus is on identifying actions that protect employment at the site, given the consultation that is now under way, we have also offered support to employees who may be affected, through our partnership action for continuous employment initiative. The local PACE team is meeting the management of the 2 Sisters Food Group on 5 March.

Clare Haughey: Since the announcement of the factory's proposed closure earlier this month, I have been working with relevant stakeholders to ensure the long-term viability of the site. I have met senior management, the workers, trade unions and neighbouring local businesses to ensure that I am doing all that I possibly can to support 450 jobs at the plant. Indeed, the local community has set up a campaign to save the business, demonstrating just how important the issue is locally.

The potential job losses would be devastating for the local economy, not only in Cambuslang but in surrounding areas. Will the minister give me, the workers and the community the assurance that the Government will leave no stone unturned in finding a positive resolution for the plant?

Paul Wheelhouse: I commend Clare Haughey for her involvement in trying to support the workforce and, indeed, the company in securing a long-term future for the site. I absolutely give her an assurance that the Scottish Government is committed to working with the company, the trade unions, the workforce and the local authority to provide every support possible to ensure a productive future for the Cambuslang site and its workforce. I am happy to continue to work with Clare Haughey, who I know has shown great interest in the issue and has contacted me directly to see what help can be provided, and I am keen to work with all local stakeholders and elected members to make that happen.

Ayrshire Growth Deal

4. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it will take forward the Ayrshire growth deal, given that it has not yet received United Kingdom Government support. (S5O-01787)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): As I have previously made clear, the Scottish Government is committed to growth deals covering all of Scotland, including the Ayrshires. We have already committed £5.3 million to the Halo project in Kilmarnock.

I acknowledge the hard work that all three local authorities have put into preparing proposals for the Ayrshire growth deal and welcome their steps towards creating a regional economic partnership to steer the region towards greater inclusive growth.

We have a commitment to 100 per cent of coverage of Scotland with growth deals and we want the UK Government to join us in that common purpose. I last met the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 1 February to discuss the issue and we have agreed to meet again shortly to explore how best to make progress.

Kenneth Gibson: For more than 18 months, the people of Ayrshire have waited for the UK Government to take forward the growth deal. However, despite heavy hints, winks and suggestions dating back more than a year, we appear to be no further forward in relation to a commencement date, meaning that Ayrshire is likely to fall further behind other, more prosperous parts of Scotland where deals are already in place. Does the cabinet secretary agree that even a truncated deal involving the three Ayrshire local authorities and the Scottish Government would allow at least some investment projects to begin and possibly encourage the UK Government to finally get its finger out and invest in Ayrshire?

Keith Brown: I share the member's frustration about the length of time that it has taken to come to a conclusion on the Ayrshire growth deal. In my substantive answer, I said that we are committed to growth deals throughout Scotland. That perhaps provides part of the answer to the member's question about the Scottish Government's intent.

We have a preference to work in partnership with the UK Government, not least because that expands the resources that can go in to any particular deal. We want to maximise the investment opportunities for Ayrshire, and I will remind the secretary of state when we meet that progress on the deal cannot be delayed forever and we will all need to move much more quickly to ensure that Ayrshire can capitalise on the opportunities presented by the growth deal proposals.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I notice that there is no line in the Scottish budget that was passed yesterday for the Ayrshire growth deal, so perhaps I could offer the cabinet secretary the opportunity to update Parliament on how much, in financial terms, his Government is committing to the Ayrshire growth deal.

Keith Brown: The member will find that there is provision in the budget for growth deals, and I have made it explicit, as have other members of the Government, that we are committed to the

growth deal. If only we had the same commitment from the UK Government. However much is being talked about, it is substantially more than the zero pounds currently being proposed by the UK Government. We will take forward this deal and we hope that the UK Government will do the same. However, until it does that we cannot make any progress. We have been committed to every growth deal so far and, as I have just said, this Government is committed to a growth deal in every part of Scotland.

Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal

5. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress regarding the Stirling and Clackmannanshire city region deal. (S5O-01788)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government remains fully committed to a city region deal for Stirling and Clackmannanshire and we have been leading engagement with the city region partners and the United Kingdom Government throughout the process. We remain engaged in discussion with the UK Government and the city region partners to agree and deliver the best possible deal for the region and we are working to conclude those negotiations and reach a heads of terms agreement as soon as possible.

Bruce Crawford: I would be grateful if the cabinet secretary would confirm what additional moneys are committed to the city region deal as a result of the successful passing of the budget yesterday, which was not supported by either the Tories or the Labour Party. Will he also confirm what progress has been made in regard to the UK Government's generous offer to gift land at Ministry of Defence Forthside if it becomes redundant in future? Will he also confirm or otherwise the helpfulness of the local Tory Conservative MPs in a process that was meant to be a partnership?

Keith Brown: The scale of Government investment in the deal and the projects included in it will of course be subject to negotiation between Governments and between the city region partners. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution made provision in the budget for around £120 million for city deals generally. However, we do not yet know the UK Government's contribution to the deal.

The member is right to say that an explicit commitment was given by Lord Duncan of the UK Government that MOD land would be transferred at no cost—additional to the city deal—and decontaminated. I do not think that that commitment still holds. Perhaps Bruce Crawford and other members with an interest in the issue

might want to ask the UK Government whether it intends to see through that commitment, in terms of both the Stirling deal and the Tay cities deal.

For our part, the Scottish Government's contribution will be genuinely additional and wholly new capital investment that would not be happening without the city region deal. We have committed over £1 billion on city deals for Glasgow, Aberdeen, Inverness and Edinburgh. We are the biggest contributor to city deals.

We want to see a successful deal here and I only wish that some of the local Conservative members—MSPs and MPs—had taken the constructive approach that we have seen in relation to other city deals, instead of the sniping and undermining of the process that is doing damage both to Stirling and Clackmannanshire in terms of seeing through the city deal. They should get behind the people of Stirling and Clackmannanshire and get behind the deal.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I welcome the cabinet secretary's growing support for repurposing the MOD site for social housing, which is desperately needed in Stirling.

I want to ask about Clackmannanshire, which was added relatively late on in the city deal process. How will the Scottish Government ensure that communities in both the Stirling area and the Clackmannanshire area benefit from the city deal?

Keith Brown: Mark Ruskell makes a good point. We have helped not least by providing, for the first time, additional support to the council—given the council's size and the fact that it came to the deal later—through the Scottish Futures Trust, and Scottish Government officials to help the council formulate its proposals. Good progress has been made with the proposals coming from Clackmannanshire Council.

I only wish that the UK Government, when it mentions this deal in Parliament, would mention Clackmannanshire, as it said that it would do. Clackmannanshire is a vital part of the deal, just as Stirling is. I reassure the member that the Scottish Government, for our part, will do what we can to assist in the redevelopment of Clackmannanshire and Stirling and will take both parts of the city region deal together. I am pleased that Clackmannanshire and Stirling have agreed to work together on the deal.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I remind the cabinet secretary and Bruce Crawford, for that matter, that the budget passed yesterday is based on extra real-term funding coming from the UK Government to the Scottish Government. When will the cabinet secretary stop playing politics, show leadership and start

spending some of the extra funding for the benefit of the people of Stirling and Clackmannanshire?

Keith Brown: Once again, Dean Lockhart misunderstands the process. The city deals are agreed by all the parties. We announce when all the parties are agreed and satisfied with the proposals. People in Stirling and Clackmannanshire will be well aware that he and his colleagues demanded that we put in the budget provision for city deals and then voted against that budget yesterday, including those resources. People will not forget the actions of the Conservative MSPs and MPs.

Scottish University Staff Pensions

6. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding safeguarding the value of Scottish university staff pensions. (S5O-01789)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Scottish Government officials are closely monitoring developments and have sought updates from stakeholders on this issue, including from the UK Government.

I encourage both sides to engage in further talks to find a resolution to this issue.

John Finnie: I thank the minister for that response and express solidarity, and indeed that of the Scottish Green party, with constituents at the Scottish Association of Marine Science in Oban today and all members of the University and College Union across the country who are out on strike. I am sure that they will also welcome the support of the National Union of Students.

The UCU has stated that changes to the pension scheme could see members lose up to £200,000. I appreciate that there is no direct role for the Scottish Government, but would the minister advise whether she has discussed the issues with Universities UK and will she encourage Scottish university principals to get back to meaningful talks to resolve the dispute?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As the member points out, this is not a Government-funded pension scheme so there is no direct locus for the Scottish Government as staff pay and conditions are matters for autonomous institutions, such as universities.

The Scottish Government is monitoring the situation closely and engaging with the relevant stakeholders. I had a meeting with UCU officials on Tuesday, which they deemed to be very constructive, to discuss their concerns about the lack of discussions. As I said in my original answer, I encourage both sides to get back to the

negotiating table and engage in further talks. That is the right thing for the UCU and its members and it is the right thing for students.

Additional Support Needs Pupils

7. Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what it is doing to improve support for pupils with additional support needs. (S5O-01790)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): We want all children and young people to get the support that they need to reach their full potential. We continue to support education authorities in meeting their duties under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 to identify, provide for, and review the additional support needs of their pupils.

We have empowered children through the extension of their rights under the Additional Support for Learning Act. This landmark extension of rights is supported by a new children's service, funded by the Scottish Government. We have also published further guidance on a children's learning code of practice, on supporting children with healthcare needs in schools and on complaints to Scottish Ministers.

Annie Wells: Despite the number of pupils identified with ASN having increased by 47 per cent since 2012, we know that resources are dwindling. The number of additional support for learning teachers has fallen by 12 per cent since 2012 and the latest figures show that local authority spending has dropped by £459 per pupil since 2012, which represents an 11 per cent cut. Based on those figures, and the feeling among teachers that not enough time is being devoted to ASN training, does the cabinet secretary truly believe that adequate support is being provided?

John Swinney: As a matter of fact, the number of staff supporting pupils with additional support needs increased between 2015 and 2016, the latest years for which figures are available. We will get the figures for 2017 shortly.

It is a matter for local authorities to determine the amount of resources that they put in place to support the special needs of young people, but they have statutory obligations that they are obliged to meet.

The day after the Conservatives argued for less public expenditure, tax cuts for the rich and less investment in the budget—and voted against the budget—it is a bit rich for them to raise with me the question of extra spending in relation to this issue.

The Presiding Officer: Before we move on to First Minister's questions, I am sure that members

will wish to join me in welcoming to our gallery Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. [*Applause.*]

I also ask members to join me in welcoming Ann Jones AM, Deputy Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:02

Home Leave

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): Earlier today, killer Robbie McIntosh was sentenced for the attempted murder of Linda McDonald in Dundee—a crime committed while he was on home leave awaiting parole. Does the First Minister agree that that appalling case raises further questions about our justice system and why killers who should be in jail are instead allowed to walk free before the Parole Board has even ruled that they are safe to do so?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Ruth Davidson raises a very important issue. The case that she raises is extremely distressing and my thoughts—and, I am sure, the thoughts of all of us—are with the victim of what was a horrific attack.

Obviously, I cannot comment directly on the decision that the court has taken on sentencing. However, I can confirm in factual terms what the sentence handed down today means. Robbie McIntosh has today been given an order for lifelong restriction. That means that he will not be considered for release until he has served the punishment part of his sentence. After that, consideration of release would be a matter for the Parole Board for Scotland. Any decision would be made on the basis of the need to protect the public, but if Robbie McIntosh were to be released at any point in the future, he would be subject to intensive supervision for the rest of his life.

As Ruth Davidson will be aware, a system of home leave has existed for life sentence prisoners for many, many years. It is a well-established part of the rehabilitation process. A rigorous risk assessment is undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service before any offender is granted any form of unescorted leave. That involves psychological assessment, social work reports and reports on the time that they have spent in prison. Home leave is also always granted with very strict conditions applied.

On the application of that system to this case, which I understand raises concerns, the Scottish Prison Service has undertaken an incident review, which has considered all stages of the individual's progression through the prison system. It has also reviewed the risk assessments undertaken to make sure that any lessons from the case are learned. That report has been shared with the multi-agency public protection arrangements—MAPP—strategic oversight group in Tayside, which initiated a significant case review. That will

consider the circumstances of the case and identify where any improvements that are needed can and will be made.

I fully understand that the circumstances of the case raise such concerns. However, I hope that the information that I have shared with the chamber today will be of some reassurance, not just to members but to the wider public.

Ruth Davidson: I thank the First Minister for her response. She is right to say that it is rare that we raise individual criminal cases in the chamber, but this example merits it. McIntosh had been out of prison just five days before he tried to kill again. As his victim's husband, Matthew, said:

"Given his past conviction for a brutal murder I can't believe the Scottish Prison Service deemed that this sick individual, who attempted to murder my wife, was allowed to be in the public domain."

The family says that it is not enough for the Scottish Prison Service and the Parole Board for Scotland just to look at what went wrong in this case, through, for example, the incident review that the First Minister mentioned, and that they must re-examine their criteria for assessment and release of all such criminals on home leave. Does the First Minister agree that that must now take place?

The First Minister: Absolutely. As I indicated in my previous answer, any lessons that require to be learned from the case require to be applied in the future as well. That is absolutely the case, so I agree with Ruth Davidson on that specific point. I entirely understand and sympathise with the views of the family. If I was in the shoes of the victim's family members, I would be saying exactly the same things. All of us recognise that.

No doubt Ruth Davidson will tell me if I get this wrong, but I assume that she is not arguing that there should not be provision in our criminal justice system for home leave. As I said, home leave has been an established part of the rehabilitation process for a long time. However, it is right that the most rigorous of risk assessments are undertaken by the Prison Service—it is the Prison Service, not the Parole Board, that decides on home leave matters. It is also important that strict conditions are applied. The kind of conditions that are often applied restrict where a prisoner can visit and stipulate what time they must be at their residence, for example. If there are lessons to be learned from this case—undoubtedly, there will be—those lessons must, of course, be applied in the future.

Ruth Davidson: I accept that this is an extreme case, but it taps into a wider public concern. Under current rules, prisoners can be allowed out of jail before their official release. As the First Minister said, that is called temporary release, and it

means that prisoners can be let out into the community without supervision.

Through a freedom of information request, we have discovered that there were more than 4,000 cases in the past year alone in which—as in McIntosh’s case—prisoners were granted such leave. Of course, in a small fraction of cases, such as those that involve compassionate leave, that might be appropriate. However, does the First Minister agree that, when 4,000 convicted criminals walk out of prison before they have even been considered for parole, we should perhaps look at the matter again?

The First Minister: We should look at whether there are lessons to be learned from cases such as this one, to change or tighten the way in which risk assessments are carried out in the future. I absolutely agree with that. I accept that such discussions can be difficult. They are difficult not just for members of this Parliament but for the public.

However, home leave has been an important part of the rehabilitation and reintegration process for a long time. In part, home leave allows an individual to be tested on how and whether they can adapt to living in the community. For life sentence prisoners, home leave is the final stage in a phased programme of increasing their freedoms. Often, it helps to inform the Parole Board’s decisions on a prisoner’s suitability for release. Home leave will be granted only after the prisoner has progressed successfully through the prison system. In principle, it is important to have such a system, but we must learn lessons from individual cases—albeit that they are extreme cases—to ensure that a continuous system of learning is in place. I am absolutely committed—as I know the Scottish Prison Service is—to ensuring that any appropriate lessons are learned.

Ruth Davidson: It is not unreasonable for the public to expect prisoners to serve their time. When cases such as the one that I have mentioned today emerge, the question from the public is: “Why again?” Why is a killer let loose to try to kill again? Why are the dice loaded against victims and in favour of criminals again? Why do we act only when another family is left to pick up the pieces of their lives again? Home leave for convicted murderers—free to walk the streets before they even face the Parole Board—should be reviewed. Is it not that simple?

The First Minister: With the greatest of respect, I say to Ruth Davidson that I do not think that the issue is that simple.

Ruth Davidson says that the public have a right to expect that prisoners serve their time and, in principle, I agree. In fact, it is this Government that finally took steps to restrict automatic early release

of prisoners. However, when prisoners are to be released, we owe it to the public to make sure that appropriate steps have been taken to reintegrate those prisoners into society, because it is those steps that reduce the risk of prisoners reoffending.

The worst thing that the Prison Service and the Parole Board could do in terms of wider public safety would be simply to release a prisoner on the last day of their sentence without taking any steps gradually, over a period of time, to rehabilitate and reintegrate them. That is why a system of home leave, however difficult it can sometimes be to discuss and debate, is a really important part of the criminal justice system.

At the heart of Ruth Davidson’s question—although, as is often the case with the Conservatives, their actions in government do not quite match their rhetoric in opposition—is the notion that, somehow, Scotland’s justice system is soft touch. Frankly, the facts do not bear that out. We have one of the highest prison populations in the whole of Europe. Of course serious criminals should be locked up—that is not in doubt—but the bigger challenge for our criminal justice system is how we rehabilitate prisoners, where appropriate, so that there is less risk of them reoffending.

With the greatest of respect, I say to Ruth Davidson that these are not simple issues; these are really complex issues. We have a duty to recognise that complexity and discuss it with the public. That does not take away from the fact that when something goes wrong in a case—as will always happen in any system, unfortunately—we must make sure that the views of the family are listened to and that lessons are learned. That is exactly the process that will be followed in this situation.

Early Learning and Childcare Provision

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): The First Minister’s own poverty adviser, Naomi Eisenstadt, has said that investment in good quality and affordable early learning and childcare is crucial. It is crucial because of the difference that it can make to children from poorer backgrounds. It was therefore a matter of grave concern to read Audit Scotland’s latest report last week criticising the Government’s progress in expanding early learning and childcare provision. It says that there is no national leadership, no sense of urgency, and a £160 million funding gap. How does the First Minister answer that damning criticism?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, let me share with members the very first paragraph of that Audit Scotland report. It states:

“The Scottish Government’s policy to increase funded early learning and childcare (ELC) is consistent with national strategic objectives around improving the lives of

children and their families. The Scottish Government and councils have worked well together to expand provision. Parents are positive about the benefits”.

We have, of course, already expanded early learning and childcare provision from the situation that was inherited from the last Labour-Liberal Administration. The plans that we are pursuing are the most ambitious plans to extend childcare and early learning that the Parliament has ever seen. Inherent in ambitious plans are challenges, but we are working through those challenges and are on track to deliver the expansion.

We are discussing with councils a multiyear funding package. It is not unusual with such policies for there to be initial disagreements between local government and the national Government about the amount of money that is required. We plan to have full agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the matter by the end of April.

Let us not forget the purpose of the policy: it is to improve the experience in the early years of our children and to prepare them better for their school years and beyond, and it is about helping parents to work without having massive childcare costs to pay. It is the right policy. Delivery of a policy at this scale has challenges, but we are determined—as we were with the expansion to 600 hours a year—to deliver it because it is in the interests of young people the length and breadth of this country.

Richard Leonard: It is there in paragraph 66 of the Audit Scotland report, which states:

“The Scottish Government has not led a national approach to help the expansion in funded hours”.

However, not just the depth, but the breadth of the problems in the Government’s early learning and childcare policy are cause for concern. Audit Scotland also reports that the Government

“has not yet done enough to ensure”

that the 12,000 additional staff who are needed to deliver the new entitlement

“will be in place in time”.

Where is the First Minister’s plan to find the additional 12,000 nursery workers who are needed to meet her childcare promise?

The First Minister: On the overall policy, I remember when Labour members—not Richard Leonard, I say to be fair, because he was not a member of the Parliament at the time—told us that we would not deliver the 600 hours a year to which we had committed. We delivered it; we have shown a track record in delivering expanded childcare, and we are on track to deliver the next expansion.

On the workforce, Richard Leonard asked, “Where’s the plan?” The question could be asked

of every aspect of Scottish Labour’s policies, but we will leave that to one side. Let me outline the workforce plan. First, the national recruitment campaign was launched in October last year, and we are developing phase 2, which focuses on carer changers, for summer this year.

We have increased capacity in early years courses in colleges and universities in order to support the first phase of the workforce expansion. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council is offering about 1,500 additional places on a one-year higher national certificate course in 2018-19, and there are 400 additional graduate-level places. We are also funding 435 additional graduates to work in nurseries in our most deprived areas and island councils by August this year.

Skills Development Scotland has committed to increasing the number of modern apprenticeships in early years and childcare by 10 per cent—

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): It is all going swimmingly, then. Audit Scotland is wrong.

The First Minister: We note that when Labour members get a detailed answer to the question, they do not want to hear it. [*Interruption.*]

Let me go back to the answer. Skills Development Scotland is increasing the number of modern apprenticeships in early years and childcare by 10 per cent, year on year, up to 2020. Of course, we are also enabling payment of the living wage to all childcare staff who deliver the funded entitlement.

I say clearly to Richard Leonard: there is the plan.

Richard Leonard: In among that avalanche of statistics—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Order, please.

Richard Leonard: The First Minister did not even address the huge shortfall in capital funding. Councils need almost £750 million to buy land and to adapt or build all the premises that will be needed to deliver the policy, but the money is not there for that, either.

This Government rightly made childcare its flagship policy, but as things stand there is not enough money, there are not enough staff and there are not enough buildings to enable it to keep that promise.

Scotland’s parents cannot even access their existing rights. One parent told the fair funding for our kids campaign group:

“It costs so much to have the kids looked after while I’m working, it’s not worth working.”

Another parent said:

“When I had my second child it was cheaper for me to be at home than at work.”

The policy might well fit on an election leaflet, but the First Minister's delivery of it is not fit for purpose. No one can believe her childcare promises for the future, because her policies in the present are failing. Local councils say it, parents say it, and Audit Scotland says it. When will she start to listen?

The First Minister: I apologise to Richard Leonard for providing in my previous answer more facts than he could cope with, and for giving him more of a plan than he actually wanted. Unfortunately I am going to do the same all over again.

On our past commitments, we delivered the 600 hours a year to which we committed. Flexibility is increasing; the proportion of council settings that provide funded care before, during and after school has increased, as has the proportion of council settings that operate during school holidays. Of course, it is in order to increase flexibility further that we are going from 600 hours a year to the 1,140 hours a year to which we are committed.

The funding will be delivered over a number of years, up to 2020, so in the year that is about to start, we will provide £76 million in revenue funding to local authorities. Of that, £52 million is new.

Richard Leonard talked about building premises. For 2018-19, we are providing £150 million in capital funding specifically to support the next phase of infrastructure investment.

Finally, I have to say that it is a bit rich for Richard Leonard to come here today and complain about the funding for this policy, given that yesterday he and all his colleagues voted against the funding for the coming financial year that I have just outlined.

The Presiding Officer: There are a number of constituency supplementary questions.

Knife-crime Statistics

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Recent figures that have been revealed by *The Press and Journal* show that my region, North East Scotland, had the highest number of school pupils caught with knives. I have here a letter from December 2017 in which the Cabinet Secretary for Justice promised me that he would publish in January 2018 statistics on school exclusions for carrying weapons. As of today's date, those statistics have not been published. Why not?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will ask the justice secretary to write to update the member. Liam Kerr and I have had exchanges on

the issue previously, and I have had exchanges on it with Ruth Davidson.

We now publish more statistics on carrying of weapons in schools. Police Scotland statistics now distinguish between different categories, which is right and proper. Equally important is publication of the data.

We have a number of programmes of work, many of which are funded by the Government, to reduce violence on the part of young people, and not just in our schools, but generally. It is important work and I will ask the justice secretary to give Liam Kerr an update on the specific point that he raised. I am sure that members across the chamber are united in committing to doing as much as we can to tackle and challenge the problem.

Orkney Ferry Services

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Under the contract between the Scottish Government and Serco NorthLink, Orkney's lifeline ferry service across the Pentland Firth has been provided by a freight vessel in recent weeks. Does the First Minister believe that that is acceptable? If not, can she explain what steps her Government has taken to ensure that a more appropriate replacement vessel is identified?

Will the First Minister also apologise to those who have been unable to travel on the route during the refit, including my constituent Terri-Jane White, a University of the Highlands and Islands student representative who has fibromyalgia, who asks the legitimate question:

“How is a replacement ferry in 2018 not accessible for wheelchair users?”

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Other than what Liam McArthur has just shared, I do not know the details of his constituency case. However, it is deeply regrettable if any person, particularly someone who has a disability, feels that they are not getting the standard of transport system that they have the right to expect. We want and expect the highest standards, whether on NorthLink Ferries or any other part of our transport system.

On the specific issue of the type of vessel being used during a refit of the normal vessel, Serco will have had to consider a number of issues. I am more than happy to ask the transport minister to speak with Serco on that point and communicate directly with the member on the detail.

Drug Deaths

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): This week, “Channel 4 News” led with a heart-breaking report. Our city suffered 12 drug deaths

in January alone, compared to 38 in the whole of 2016. Dundee has the highest rate of drug deaths in Scotland, Scotland's rate is far above the United Kingdom average, and the UK's drug death rate far exceeds the European average.

This is a human crisis deep in the heart of our communities. What can the First Minister's Government do to help reduce drug deaths in Dundee and across the country?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): This is an important issue. Everyone would be distressed at any drug death and at the contents of the "Channel 4 News" report earlier this week. I will address Dundee specifically first.

Jenny Marra will be aware that Dundee alcohol and drug partnership proposes to hold a commission specifically on drug misuse in Dundee, to identify best practice and consider issues that have an impact on drug use, including mental health, deprivation and social inclusion. That move is to be welcomed.

I know that the issue has previously been debated widely in Parliament. Data indicates that the rise in the number of drug deaths is predominantly driven by a cohort of older chaotic drug users experiencing multiple co-morbidities. Last year's NHS Scotland report established links between the rise in the number of drug deaths and the legacy of social policies going back to the 1980s.

It is absolutely important that we do everything that we can now to tackle and address that rise, which is why we take a public health approach to problem drug misuse. We are reviewing our national drug strategy so that it is founded on the principles of seek, keep and treat. The nature of Scotland's drug problem has changed, which is one of the reasons for our introducing a combined drug and alcohol treatment strategy. We are also investing significant sums of money in tackling problem drug and alcohol misuse. In the budget, we announced additional funding for alcohol and drug treatment services. Drug and alcohol misuse are important issues, and we must work as hard as we can to tackle them.

I end on a more positive note that should give us encouragement for the future. The latest figures indicate that drug taking in the general population is actually falling, and it remains low for young people. In the past year, the number of adults aged 16 to 59 who use drugs has decreased. I am not saying that that should make us complacent, but it does underline the fact that the issue is about a legacy of older drug users who are now suffering serious health problems. That must help us to target the interventions that we need to make to address that more effectively.

Nursery Education

3. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am with the First Minister on her ambition to expand nursery education. However, I am deeply concerned that she will not be able to deliver it. I hope that she understands that, when so many organisations have spoken out recently. Let us look at who has done so. The fair funding for our kids campaign has talked about a lack of flexibility. The Accounts Commission has spoken of "significant risks", a lack of clarity, poor planning and a funding shortfall. The Scottish Childminding Association has said that the sector is potentially facing a crisis. Why does the First Minister think that all those organisations are wrong?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That is a mischaracterisation of my position and of that of the Government. We are working closely with local authorities and will fully address all the recommendations of last week's Audit Scotland report. In fact, childminders will be absolutely central to delivering the expanded provision to which we are committed and that we have already talked about today.

On the lack of flexibility—as Willie Rennie describes it—as I said earlier, we are seeing increasing flexibility in the current system. However, the recognition that the current system is not flexible enough is one of the things that led us to give the commitment to doubling provision. It stands to reason that if we have whole-day provision as a matter of right, the ability to provide nursery education more flexibly increases.

I readily acknowledge—as we did when we made the commitment—the challenges in delivering such an ambitious policy. However, it is one of many policies to which the Government is committed that have the potential to be genuinely transformational. Therefore we will continue to take the action and put in place the plans—even if they are more detailed than Richard Leonard wants them to be—to make sure that, by working with our local authority partners, this commitment will be delivered, just as our previous one was delivered, because it is for the benefit of young people in every part of the country.

Willie Rennie: I repeat that I agree with the First Minister's ambition. I really want the policy to work. However, if everything is okay, why are so many organisations speaking out? When fair funding for our kids warned her in 2015, the First Minister said that she would fix it. In 2016, it warned her again, and the First Minister simply repeated the same words—and they are back again this year. At the current rate of progress, it will take another 20 years to recruit the staff needed and 45 years before places are available everywhere during the school holidays. Three

years after the First Minister made that promise, why is the Government so far behind?

The First Minister: We are not far behind. I have to say that some of the claims that Willie Rennie has just made are ridiculous, and will be seen to be so in a few years' time when we have delivered this commitment, just as we delivered the one on 600 hours when many people across the chamber were sceptical that we would do so.

I do not want to put words into the mouth of the fair funding for our kids campaign—it will speak for itself—but many of the frustrations that it has are about the current system and its lack of flexibility. Earlier, I gave Richard Leonard statistics about the increase in flexibility that we have seen over the past few years, but that does not go far enough. It is the recognition of that that has led to our commitment to double provision. We want to increase the provision in the way that we have set out, and to make it inherently more flexible. Crucially—interestingly, neither Richard Leonard nor Willie Rennie raised this today—we want to make sure that the provision is of a very high quality because, although the benefits to parents are important, the policy is fundamentally about improving the early years experience of our youngest children.

This is one of the key policies of this Government and I fully expect its delivery to be scrutinised as we go through the next few years, but we are determined to deliver it and determined to put the funding and planning in place to make sure that we do so.

The Presiding Officer: We have some further supplementary questions. The first is from Ivan McKee.

Scottish Members of Parliament

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Just eight months ago, the Scottish Tories boasted about championing Scottish interests at Westminster, but now it transpires that their members of Parliament take their marching orders from Jacob Rees-Mogg, not Ruth Davidson. How can any Scottish MP justify to their constituents support for the hardest of hard Brexits?

The Presiding Officer: The member is entitled to make a point, but it is not massively a question for the First Minister.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Is Brexit not a question for me, Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer: The First Minister may respond briefly, but she will have an opportunity under the next question to respond at length on Brexit.

The First Minister: With the greatest respect, I think that Brexit is very much a matter for the First Minister, given the risks that it poses.

The Presiding Officer: The question was phrased about Conservative MPs, and I do not believe that you are responsible for them, First Minister. You will have a chance to answer the question in a few minutes. We will move on to the next supplementary question, which is from Jackson Carlaw.

Asian Community (Attacks)

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): At a recent meeting with the Asian community—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Please be quiet and let Mr Carlaw speak.

Jackson Carlaw: At a recent meeting with the Asian community in my Eastwood constituency, Police Scotland confirmed that there has been a sustained series of forensically aware, gang-related, targeted attacks on Asian households in, I understand, Eastwood and East Dunbartonshire. The attacks are taking place between 12 pm and 6 pm, fortunately but not exclusively when properties have not been occupied.

My constituents make no complaint about the actions of Police Scotland or the efforts that it is making, but Police Scotland has made the point that there is a reluctance on the part of the public to come forward, as they believe that the information that they may have will be regarded as either trivial or circumstantial. Will the First Minister join me in assuring people that they are not wasting police time and that, if we are going to tackle this particular, very pernicious attack on the Asian community, it requires all members of the public to give whatever information they have to the police immediately so that they can act on it?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes. As Jackson Carlaw is aware, I represent a very large Asian population in my constituency, and I am well aware of the issue and these attacks, which are targeted on the Asian community. They are absolutely unacceptable and should be completely condemned by all of us. I personally know people who have been targeted in that way in recent weeks. It is a serious issue and one that, on a constituency basis, I will be raising again with Police Scotland, although it works very hard to support the community.

Jackson Carlaw is right to say that anybody within the community who has concerns should come forward and share those concerns. The information that they give will never be treated as trivial, because it is not trivial. The attacks are pernicious and must be tackled. I know that Police Scotland is determined to do all that it can to

tackle them, and all of us should give all the support that we possibly can to a very valued and valuable part of our community as they face attacks on them that are completely unacceptable.

Golden Eagle

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): In 2017, a rare and beautiful young golden eagle was raised in the Scottish borders by the only pair of breeding adults there. He was satellite tagged, and last month he left home for the first time. Less than a week later, he disappeared in the Pentland hills near Currie. His tag stopped sending data for three days, then started again, this time in the North Sea off St Andrews. RSPB Scotland and Raptor Persecution UK regard the disappearance as highly suspicious, and I believe it is likely that the young eagle has been illegally killed.

Donald Dewar described the persecution of birds of prey as “a national disgrace”, but it is still going on. What is the Scottish Government doing in response to the reports? Will the First Minister finally commit to a licensing regime for game bird shooting?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I agree that the persecution of birds of prey is unacceptable, and I absolutely associate myself with the comments that Alison Johnstone has made in that regard. The Government treats this and sees it as an extremely serious issue.

As Alison Johnstone will be aware, a group was set up following a report on the issue that was commissioned and published last year, and it is looking at various aspects such as licensing and the impact of grouse shooting. I—and, I am sure, Roseanna Cunningham as the responsible minister—will be happy to meet Alison Johnstone to discuss that work in more detail. I am sure that all of us across the chamber are united in agreeing that this is unacceptable and requires to be tackled robustly.

Scotland's Place in Europe

4. Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government will provide an update on negotiations regarding Scotland's place in Europe. (S5F-02068)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The joint ministerial committee (European negotiations) met this morning. I understand that the meeting broke up just before this session of First Minister's questions and that there will be another meeting next week.

In our discussions with the United Kingdom Government, we continue at all times to seek to protect both the devolution settlement and Scotland's place in Europe. That said, the UK

Government is still refusing to listen to the case for retaining single market membership, despite the clear evidence, including from the UK Government itself, of the damage that will be caused by a hard Brexit.

Decisions on the future relationship with the European Union continue to be taken without the proper involvement of all the Governments of the UK. Although I wrote to the Prime Minister on this very issue on 6 February, I am sorry to say that I have yet to receive a response.

Mairi Gougeon: I want to focus on the devolution element, because a founding principle of devolution is that the powers of this Parliament can be amended only with the consent of this Parliament. The Finance and Constitution Committee's cross-party report made it clear that, as it currently stands, the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

“is incompatible with the devolution settlement in Scotland.”

In the First Minister's view, are the UK Government's new proposals, which would essentially give it a supervisory role over Holyrood, now compatible with devolution?

The First Minister: No, I do not think so. It is right to recall the Parliament's unanimous view that clause 11 of the withdrawal bill is incompatible with devolution. There has been movement from the UK Government, and I welcome that, because I think that it is a recognition of how unacceptable the initial proposals were. However, that movement does not yet go far enough.

Perhaps I can simplify things by saying that what is proposed would not just give the UK Government oversight of this Parliament and Government but, in matters that are devolved to this Parliament, effectively give it powers of imposition or veto. I do not think that that is acceptable, and the Government of Wales does not believe it to be acceptable. That is why there must be further movement from the UK Government if we are going to reach the agreement that I hope we can reach.

I think that we are being asked by the UK Government to take it on trust that it will not exercise those powers in an unacceptable way. I am not casting aspersions on the good faith of any individual, but we should not forget that this is a UK Government that, at times, seems willing to ride roughshod over the Northern Irish Good Friday agreement. I do not think that we can simply take it on trust that the same Government would always respect the devolution settlement.

That is why we must have guarantees that this Parliament, its powers and the devolution settlement will be protected. No Scottish

Government worth its salt would accept anything less.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Will the First Minister respond to the report that came out this week from Scotland's Rural College, which, on the issue of leaving the EU, found that

"in every scenario Scotland's farmers would be worse off compared to under the current trade arrangement, with some or all producers facing lower returns"?

The First Minister: There is absolutely no doubt that Brexit will have a significant impact on the day-to-day running of every farm and croft across the country, and this important study reaffirms what previous studies from the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute and Quality Meat Scotland have shown. It is further confirmation that the Scottish Government's position of remaining in the EU—or, failing that, of staying in the single market and customs union—would be in the best interests of not just Scotland but the whole of the UK.

That is why it has beggared belief to see a third of Scottish Tory MPs this week signing a letter that effectively calls for the hardest possible no-deal Brexit. That is absolutely shameful, because it is against the interests of the country that they are supposed to represent.

Childcare

5. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the recent Audit Scotland report, which states that its childcare plans face "significant challenges". (S5F-02057)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Our commitment to double the number of hours of free nursery education is the most ambitious expansion of funded early learning and childcare that this country has ever seen. It provides all three-year-olds and four-year-olds, and eligible two-year-olds, with 1,140 hours of nursery education and will ensure that children get the best possible start in life, while supporting parents and families into work, training and education.

We will of course carefully consider the recommendations in the Audit Scotland report and address the issues that it raises. We remain on track to deliver our expansion plans, and I welcome Audit Scotland's recognition of our good working relationship with local authorities and other partners to deliver our shared objective. I am assured that we will reach agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on a multiyear funding package by the end of April.

Michelle Ballantyne: As the First Minister indicated earlier, the quality of childcare provision depends on the quality and availability of good

staff. The Scottish Government has estimated that it needs between 6,000 and 8,000 additional whole-time equivalent staff to deliver the planned expansion and, presumably, the Government's funding estimates are based on that. However, Audit Scotland's report reveals that the councils' estimates place the number required significantly higher at 12,000 additional staff. Will the First Minister tell me which figure is correct?

The First Minister: The figures that the Scottish Government has put forward are those that we believe are required. As I said to Richard Leonard, we have a detailed plan in place to recruit the additional staff that are required for the policy, and we will continue to discuss the issue with COSLA.

We must not miss the massive opportunity that is presented by the policy. As I said earlier, it is about improving the early years experience of children, which will help them with attainment in school later on, and about making it easier for parents to get into work. However, it is also a massive opportunity in relation to the greater availability of jobs in that sector, particularly—but not just—for young people. Every aspect of the policy is positive. Yes, challenges are inherent in the policy because of its ambitious nature and scale, but we will continue to work to make sure that, just like the previous commitment that we gave, it will be delivered in full.

Abusive Behaviour and Misconduct (Third Sector)

6. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator is aware of multiple allegations of abusive behaviour and misconduct in the third sector. (S5F-02049)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Like everyone, I have been appalled to hear reports of abuse and misconduct by staff in the third sector. I am clear that the Scottish Government will not tolerate human rights abuses, wherever they take place. We expect all organisations to monitor their work closely, and any reported incident must be dealt with firmly and thoroughly.

OSCR's regulatory focus is to ensure that charity trustees appropriately deal with any allegations of misconduct or other serious incidents affecting their charity. Where complaints have been made to OSCR, I am assured that the trustees have acted promptly and in line with their legal responsibilities, and that safeguarding policies have been put in place.

Monica Lennon: Scotland's charity sector plays an important role in creating a fairer Scotland, and we are all grateful to charities for the work that they do.

Recent reports about sexual misconduct in Scottish charities have been worrying. There is no legal requirement for charities to report notifiable events to OSCR, so it is left open to charities to decide whether an event merits reporting. Since 2016, 8 per cent of all cases notified to OSCR have related to sexual misconduct. We know that stigma and poor understanding of legal rights prevent victims from reporting sexual harm and, coupled with charities applying discretion to what they tell OSCR, that means that the true scale of sexual misconduct in the charity sector could be larger.

What steps will the First Minister consider taking to ensure that the current charity regulations and OSCR procedures are robust and fit for purpose? Will she update the Parliament on other steps that the Government is taking to speed up a change in culture that ensures that sexual harassment and sexual assaults are not played down or rooted in victim blaming?

The First Minister: On the first part of Monica Lennon's question, we will continue to discuss the issue with OSCR and to listen to its views about any changes that it considers to be necessary to the procedures that are in place. As I said, it already has a regulatory focus to ensure that charity trustees appropriately deal with any allegations of misconduct.

My second point is one that Monica Lennon alluded to. Notwithstanding the quite horrendous revelations that we have been reading and hearing about in recent weeks, we must remember the good work that our charity sector does. Literally thousands of people the length and breadth of the country, many of them volunteers, contribute their time and efforts to help to make this country a better place. I was very proud yesterday, as I was last year, to officially open the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations gathering event in Glasgow, which is an opportunity to recognise the efforts of our charities and our third sector generally.

Finally, on the more general point, all of us have an obligation in this regard. At the moment, we face allegations in politics one week or Hollywood the next, and more recently they have been in the charity sector. However, underlying all that is not a particular sector or organisation; it is the fact that in our society we have a culture where some men—I stress that it is some—still abuse positions of power that they hold. That is unacceptable. These things are not easy for any of us, but we all have a duty to stand up and do the right things to ensure that we challenge that fundamental underlying culture and change it for good.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): In the light of the recent reports, does the First Minister agree that, while children die from lack of food and

while men, women and children across the world are disadvantaged in ways that we cannot begin to imagine, we cannot allow the appalling behaviour of the few to jeopardise the aid commitment to those who need it the most?

The First Minister: Absolutely. I hope that every member of this chamber would unite behind that. We should never condone or diminish individual cases such as the ones that we have heard of, but our charity sector generally and our international aid sector in particular do valued, valuable and vital work and we must support them in that. We all know that some politicians—not in this chamber, I hope, but perhaps in other parts of the United Kingdom—would use those revelations to undermine the very commitment to international aid that we are proud of. We must not allow that to happen. We have a duty to help the most vulnerable and poorest across the world, and I want us to continue to do that.

Scottish Stone Group

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-09968, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the establishment of the Scottish Stone Group. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the establishment of the Scottish Stone Group, which has been set up to raise awareness of the country's indigenous stone sector and promote an important environmentally-sustainable material, by what it considers some of Scotland's leading stone companies, Denfind Stone of Angus, Hutton Stone of the Borders and Tradstocks of Stirlingshire; notes that, while approximately 85% of stone used in Scotland is currently imported, the group aims to promote the use of indigenous natural stone and grow the industry, creating more jobs and apprenticeships, and wishes it success in realising these ambitions.

12:49

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I thank the members who signed my motion and so allowed it to be debated, and I thank all those who will participate. I welcome the representatives of the Scottish Stone Group who I believe are in the public gallery.

A highly successful campaign is presently being waged to protect Scotland the brand in the food and drink sector against a supermarket campaign to stick a union flag on products that are made here, which is bizarre when we consider the reputation and provenance of our food and drink. "Made in Scotland" is a label of pride—it is something to be boasted of, not undermined. "Made of Scotland" is the equally proud and, I hope, equally effective boast of the Scottish Stone Group.

The group, which was established in 2016 and officially launched last year, has three members: Denfind Stone of Angus, which is in my constituency; Hutton Stone of the Borders; and Tradstocks of Stirlingshire. The group seeks to

"Promote ... collaboratively within the sector the positives of using natural stone, such as creating skilled jobs in Scotland, supporting communities, and producing sustainable and ethically sourced materials",

and to share innovation and work together

"where possible for the good of the industry—raising the level of quality standards across Scotland."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Dey. I ask those in the public gallery to leave—or to sit—quietly, please. Please continue, Mr Dey.

Graeme Dey: Thank you, Presiding Officer. The group also seeks to engage

"with research, academia, skills development or knowledge transfer to enhance the value of the industry."

The stone sector is an important manufacturing industry and has considerable growth potential. A 2016 British Geological Survey report that was funded by Historic Environment Scotland found that 160 people were employed in the stone quarrying and processing industry in Scotland and that the combined turnover of the firms involved in the sector was about £10 million. However, currently, about 85 per cent of the stone that is used in Scotland is imported, which comes at an estimated cost of £40 million a year to the economy.

The indigenous industry has something to offer beyond economic benefit, important as that is. It can also help our response to the impacts of climate change and our emissions reduction efforts, because stone lasts. It should serve a purpose for hundreds of years and it has a vital role in preserving our historic built heritage. Interestingly, Scotland has more stone buildings per head than any other country in the world. Natural stone is not made—it already exists—and processing it uses minimal energy. There is a dramatic difference in the carbon footprint between our indigenous stone, and imported stone and reconstituted and other building materials. Indeed, sandstone that is imported into the United Kingdom from China has about six times as much embodied carbon as sandstone that is sourced in the UK.

In the Victorian industrial era, the natural stone industry was the country's largest employer, and tens of thousands of quarriers and stonemasons used locally sourced stone to construct Scotland's towns, cities and infrastructure. The stone industry declined rapidly towards the end of the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century due to changes in the labour market, the widespread adoption of cheaper building materials, changing architectural styles and the great war.

Demand for natural stone for new buildings, as well as for repairs, is on the rise. The size of the industry leads to much of that stone needing to be imported. The near absence of an indigenous building stone industry throughout much of the previous century also means that, today, there is a shortage of knowledge and skills in key areas, such as operating a building stone quarry and repairing the stonework in traditional buildings. Furthermore, the use of inappropriate materials in repairs, which can lead to accelerated stonework decay, is a widespread problem.

There is a gap to be filled but, thankfully, if properly encouraged and supported, a solution is at hand, and I will expand on the specifics of that solution.

Tradstocks, which is based in Thornhill, near Stirling, is focused on sustaining and creating Scottish built heritage by providing the iconic Scottish stones traditionally used throughout our country's history. It supplies stone for projects from prestigious public realm projects for town centre rejuvenation or flood defence schemes, to new-build homes and restoration.

If we were to head down to West Fishwick in the Borders, we would find Hutton Stone, which is famous for its three exclusive sandstones. However, I suspect that it will surprise no one that I want to focus on Denfind Stone, which is based in Monikie in my constituency, whose development I have followed with interest. The firm was founded in 2004 by Brian and Alison Binnie as a farm diversification project following their purchase of their tenanted farm in 2001. It included a sandstone quarry that had lain dormant for almost a century.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Pitairlie quarry was at the heart of the thriving Angus sandstone industry, providing sandstone for use in many projects throughout the UK. Around the time of the outbreak of the first world war, the demand for Angus sandstone dwindled and the quarry ceased operating in 1915.

The new business started off selling dyking stone before identifying an opportunity to develop a unique range of cladding products principally for residential, commercial and public sector buildings.

Denfind Stone is now a leading Scottish natural stone supplier, employing 18 people, and it works collaboratively with the Scottish Stone Group. In 2012, its operations were moved to a purpose-built facility, with an investment of £1.25 million. I was privileged to perform the official opening, and from there—I claim no credit for this—the business has grown through significant investment in new plant, machinery and buildings and is currently seeing the benefits of that not just in increased sales and revenue figures but in wider reputational growth. With a view to developing the business, the company is looking to invest in a new shed at a cost of £200,000, which will reduce noise and dust as well as provide a carbon saving of 20 tonnes. The company estimates that that investment will also reduce journey miles for its vehicles by 3,000km annually.

Denfind Stone, working collaboratively with its colleague companies, is involved in flood prevention schemes and other local authority projects the length and breadth of Scotland. However, we can also find Denfind's work beyond our borders: in Wales, in England and all the way over in Dubai. Perhaps, though, it is its work closer to home that illustrates the best thing about the business for me. We often hear of businesses

supporting local supply chains, without seeing further evidence of that. However, Denfind is not just based in Angus; it supports other businesses in Angus and nearby. It uses local hauliers and other local companies and is a local success story that has locals sharing in that success.

Denfind is also sharing its knowledge, with a view to the future. Denfind has identified a shortage of skilled stonemasons who are familiar with using Angus stone, and the company is working closely with Dundee and Angus College and Historic Environment Scotland to develop additional learning modules for construction sector apprentices to enable them to have dedicated time working with natural stone. The company has also been involved with local schools and teachers to work with young people to aid their transition from school to the workplace environment. The developing the young workforce initiative has included a group of fifth-year pupils from Carnoustie high school visiting the nearby Denfind premises for a tour of the quarry and the production facility. A local primary school has also engaged in that way. That is all good news for the sector if it is to achieve its potential.

I hope that everyone will join me in wishing Denfind Stone and the rest of the Scottish Stone Group every success in the future, because the group has much to offer Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate, with speeches of around four minutes, please.

12:57

Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con): As ever, a members' business debate paves the way to explore new ground, and I thank Graeme Dey for bringing his motion before Parliament.

As the motion states, Scotland imports around 85 per cent of its building stone, at a cost of approximately £40 million each year. That has not always been the case. The Scottish stone industry used to stretch far and wide, with thousands of quarries supplying stone for the construction of buildings, walls, roofs and pavements throughout the country. Indeed, Scotland still has over 450,000 traditional buildings, all of which are in need of maintenance and repair or will be at some point. However, the slowing supply of, and dwindling domestic demand for, home-grown stone has meant that public awareness of the industry has waned. In turn, that has reduced the take-up of jobs relating to stone extraction, putting the industry at risk of disappearing altogether.

Now, imported stone reigns. The famous growing economies that we often hear of, such as those of China and Brazil, have forced their way to the top of the stone exporting chain, offering vast

quantities of identical blocks at far cheaper rates than Scotland or, indeed, the European Union can. I am an advocate of free trade, but certain products hold a reputation and quality that separates them from others. It is easy to distinguish between ripe and rotten fruit or between a Land Rover and a Lada, for example, but I would wager that, on the topic of stone, the average Scot would not be able easily to tell any differences. Why would they? Knowledge of the stone industry and its rich Scottish history sits at an all-time low. For instance, I must admit that I did not fully appreciate until this week that this very building was constructed using several different types of stone, some of which came from my North East Scotland region: the famous Aberdeen granite.

Raising awareness of the industry might prop up the struggling demand, but it would likely not be enough. The imported low-cost alternatives have enforced the idea of uniformity, asserting that symmetry equals quality. I disagree. I believe that the range and variation in natural stone is what makes it so distinguishable and desirable. As a Scottish Conservative, I am always eager to hear of more ways to grow the economy and promote localism, and the resurgence of the Scottish stone industry ticks both those boxes.

It has been estimated that, if all Scotland's building stone was sourced domestically, it would create around 1,600 jobs directly, with more coming from the process of exporting, should the Scottish alternative prove internationally attractive. That would benefit the whole of Scotland, but it would particularly benefit the rural areas where many quarries—probably most quarries—are based.

The north-east currently houses one of the Scottish Stone Group partners, Denfind Stone, as Graeme Dey mentioned. It supports jobs through its operations in Pitairlie quarry, and it recently provided the stone for the Dundee riverside's vital flood protection wall, which I have seen. I visited Denfind Stone this week and can testify that the organisation is impressive and a credit to the north-east.

Hutton Stone, which is a Scottish Stone Group member that is famous for its sandstone, has spent the past two centuries providing jobs in the Scottish Borders and enriching Scottish stone's valuable history through its operations, including the reopening of Swinton quarry in 1990. My colleague Rachael Hamilton tells me that the stone from that quarry was used in Edinburgh castle's hall of honour.

The third member of the Scottish Stone Group, Tradstocks, uses its base in Stirling to support and maintain Scottish heritage through supplying the

stones traditionally used throughout Scotland's history.

However, a hurdle stands in the way of Scottish building stone suppliers such as the three founders of the Scottish Stone Group. European Union procurement and fair competition laws prevent public contracts from being awarded to stone suppliers from specific quarries. Although some exemptions exist, the rule has been described by the Natural Environment Research Council as creating a reluctance

“to risk a legal challenge from other stone suppliers or from the European Parliament”,

meaning that Scottish building stone is

“never specified for new construction in public projects.”

That policy, which is intended to benefit the EU, has resulted in most of its members importing stone from outside the EU's borders, benefiting none of the suppliers within. That is one area where the Scottish stone industry can excel in the coming years. As we leave the EU and are no longer bound by the directive, we can ensure that home-grown Scottish stone is at least considered in public contracts.

Together, by raising industry awareness and building the workforce's relevant skills, we can—if you will excuse the pun, Presiding Officer—carve out a “boulder” future for the Scottish stone industry. I therefore welcome the establishment of the Scottish Stone Group as the first step in that process.

13:02

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): I thank my colleague Graeme Dey for securing the debate. Stone has been used as a building material across Scotland from prehistoric times to the present day, and in its heyday as a building material in the 19th century there were more than 700 quarries across the country. As Graeme Dey said, it has been estimated that Scotland has more stone buildings per head than any other country in the world.

Edinburgh alone once had 25 quarries, from Camstone quarry in what is now Holyrood park to Redhall and Hailes quarries in my constituency, both of which are now also public parks. Redhall sandstone was used in the construction of St. John's church at the corner of Princes Street and the Film House in Lothian Road. Hailes sandstone was used for both Dalry and Roseburn primary schools. The use of local stone for much of the city helped to make it unique and gives it character and a sense of belonging to the area.

Edinburgh's old and new towns were awarded the status of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization world heritage sites in

1995, in recognition of their outstanding architectural, historical and cultural importance. The local sandstones, some of the finest in Britain, supplied the majority of the building material for those buildings, helping to establish that uniqueness of surroundings.

Unfortunately, building in stone fell into severe decline after the first world war, although stone-clad buildings continued to be constructed well into the 1930s. As a result, all the quarries in Edinburgh, and a vast number across Scotland, closed, until by the end of the 20th century there were only 20 remaining in Scotland, mainly providing building and pavement stone.

Work on Edinburgh's new town began in 1760, and more than 250 years later many of those stone buildings are in need of repair, but the local quarries where much of the sandstone came from no longer exist. Thankfully, stone from Cullaloe quarry in Fife—I hope that I have pronounced that properly—had been identified as early as the 19th century as an alternative to the Craighleith sandstone that was used for much of the sandstone, and the quarry was reopened in 2003 to meet the demand from builders repairing Georgian Edinburgh. Cullaloe quarry is owned by one of the companies that came together to form the Scottish Stone Group in 2016.

Stone cladding is once again being used on buildings across Edinburgh, but 85 per cent of that stone is imported from as far afield as China. Scottish whinstone can match or better Chinese granite for strength, durability and longevity. Scottish stone is also a low-carbon product. With more architects and builders using locally sourced stone, more jobs and apprenticeships will be created.

Using stone that is not local to an area can have a detrimental impact not only on the character of an area but on the buildings that are under repair. Local stone is more resistant to weathering than some imported stone. A 2008 report by the British Geological Survey on Edinburgh's new town highlighted that

“the use of replacement stone of different mineralogy and porosity compared with the original sandstone masonry has resulted in both aesthetic degradation and accelerated physical decay”.

If Edinburgh is to continue to be a world heritage site and attract tourists from across the world to visit the city, with its unique character and architecture, it is up to planners to ensure that our built environment is protected. As the BGS report concludes,

“It is clear that robust strategies and policies for safeguarding the stone built heritage, supported by the public, are necessary for the benefit of the present and future generations.”

The creation of the Scottish Stone Group and its promotion of the use of local Scottish stone will not only help to protect our historic built environment but will provide much-needed employment in rural and semi-rural areas.

13:06

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I thank Graeme Dey for bringing what I think is a unique subject for debate to the chamber today, and I pay tribute to the Scottish Stone Group for its efforts to preserve one of Scotland's great industries. People who are born in Dumbarton are known as sons and daughters of the rock—the rock on which stands Dumbarton castle—so my constituents will feel a particular affinity for this debate.

Scotland has a rich history of building with stone, including many famous structures such as castles and bridges. All those stone structures have contributed greatly to the historic landscape of our country. As we have heard, our stone working industry was once a major employer in Scotland, supporting tens of thousands of jobs spread across several thousand quarries. It is difficult to imagine that now, because the building stone industry has greatly diminished. Little more than a handful of quarries are still in operation and the future of the industry is threatened further by the growing use of imported stone. Two of the very few remaining quarries are in my constituency—one at Dumbuck and the other at Sheephill. The noise that we regularly experience is something that we have come to associate with both quarries.

As Graeme Dey rightly highlighted, at the last count in 2016 only around 160 people were employed by companies producing building stone in Scotland. The jobs are spread across 17 active quarries, only seven of which are active continuously. Given that, as other members have said, around 8.8 per cent of the total UK imports of stone come to Scotland, that represents around £40 million, yet the combined turnover of the Scottish stone industry is approximately £10 million. One does not need to be a genius at maths to work out that we can clearly do better and anchor more of the stone supply chain in Scotland.

Stone has the potential to serve its purpose for hundreds of years, making it probably the best-value building material in terms of lifetime costs, because stone is not man made; it already exists. As Gordon MacDonald said, processing stone uses minimal energy; if we used our own stone instead of importing it, it would make a huge difference to our carbon footprint. Most importantly, from my perspective, promoting an important manufacturing industry such as the stone industry has the potential to create hundreds

if not thousands more jobs. If the amount of stone that is currently imported to Scotland was produced in Scotland, that could bring highly skilled jobs—estimates suggest as many as 1,600—to local communities. Many of those skilled jobs would be in the rural economy and economically deprived areas. We must not forget that any new jobs in the industry would have a positive benefit in indirect jobs and spending in our local economies.

It is incumbent on all of us across the chamber to work with the industry to ensure that it can continue to support jobs and, we hope, grow. We must work with local communities and local authorities to show the benefits that the stone industry can bring.

There are, of course, sensitivities when quarries are located close to residential areas, and environmental concerns too. By working together within the planning system, we should be able to deal with those and arrive at sensible positions. Indeed, many quarries are helpfully in rural and isolated areas, so it may not be a significant issue everywhere.

I hope that we can all get behind the Scottish Stone Group and promote the industry. The potential increase in jobs and apprenticeships alone is something that we simply cannot ignore.

I thank Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber. This is probably the first time that I have spoken about stone in a debate. I am sure that it will not be the last, if it is anything to do with him.

13:11

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Graeme Dey on bringing this motion to the Parliament to welcome the establishment of the Scottish Stone Group. This is the first time that a debate has taken place in this chamber on the Scottish stone industry, and I am delighted to be able to take part in raising awareness of such a relevant topic.

Scotland has experienced a very rich history which has made a unique contribution to our culture and society, as well as our economy. That is why today we are celebrating the Scottish Stone Group for raising awareness of one of Scotland's biggest legacies. Our landscape and architecture contain thousands of years of history that highlight our cultural diversity. The Scottish diaspora has meant that our stones and architecture have been used and appreciated internationally.

According to Historic Scotland, 450,000 traditional buildings exist today. However, thousands are in need of repair. Our ability to complete repairs is restricted by the lack of

indigenous stone. In addition, we are at risk of losing the knowledge and skills of a historic industry, as well as the cultural heritage of our towns. Our towns are a cultural asset, contributing to our local socioeconomic wellbeing.

Today, only 160 people are employed by stone-producing companies in Scotland. Thousands of people in our local communities were employed by the Scottish stone industry during the industrial revolution, and the collapse of the industry was just one of the many effects of deindustrialisation on our local economies. The effects were felt throughout Scotland, as related employment in transport and construction was affected.

In Kirkcaldy, as in most Scottish towns, the architecture of our buildings makes a significant impact on the uniqueness and sense of place for our residents and for the thousands of tourists who visit Kirkcaldy every year.

Supporting the stone industry creates skilled employment and innovation in technology. It is estimated that reviving the industry would create 1,600 jobs, with further employment potentially created as a result of exports.

As the demand for Scottish stone is growing, we must consider the environmental impact of the industry. We must safeguard reserves and encourage our local councils to recycle and reuse materials. There are several environmental benefits to utilising stone as a building material. It is durable, and using it uses less energy than the use of widely used construction materials such as concrete and brick.

We live in a globalised world, and Scotland faces intense competition from China, India and Brazil, which export stone widely. According to recent research, 85 per cent of Scotland's stone is imported, and sandstone imported into the UK from China uses six times as much carbon as sandstone sourced in Scotland. The use of alternative building materials such as mortar has meant that our buildings are subject to further decay at a higher speed. The environmental costs are too high, and we must take advantage of a more environmentally friendly option.

Looking to the future, there are signs of significant accomplishments. We must develop and promote policies that contribute to placemaking and sustainable development, while continuing to recognise the historic value of our Scottish stone. Increased partnerships between important organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland, the Built Environment Forum Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland, to name just a few, will contribute.

The Government must continue to work with these groups in order to raise public awareness of the social, economic and cultural benefits of the

industry. It has identified potential for opening new quarries, particularly in rural and marginalised areas, in order to stimulate local economies by creating new skilled jobs and combating population loss. In line with recommendations from the Scottish Stone Group, we must organise workshops to discuss these important issues, involving as many groups as we can.

I thank Graeme Dey and the Scottish Stone Group for raising awareness of the importance of our historic landscape. We need to continue to spread the information to all relevant sectors, ranging from quarries and construction companies to local areas. We must celebrate Scotland's diverse geology and restore an industry that brought great prosperity to our culture, society and economy.

13:15

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I welcome this interesting members' business debate and I thank Graeme Dey for bringing it to the chamber.

It is important that we encourage the use of Scottish stone in buildings and municipal works around Scotland. Interestingly enough, some local councils have used imported stone for projects to upgrade town centres, including granite from China and the far east, to which David Torrance referred, because it has a lower cost than the stone produced in the United Kingdom and Scotland in particular.

We need to look at opportunities to help Scottish stone producers to be competitive, with competitively priced products. Many years ago, we saw the demise of Ballachulish slate, which was replaced with imported Spanish slate.

We now have a real gain in Scotland as a result of the manufacture of Scottish curling stones, which use Ailsa Craig stone. I am proud that Ailsa Craig, or Paddy's milestone as it is sometimes called, is in my region of West Scotland. The curling stones are currently used all over the world in all curling competitions—this year they are being used in the winter Olympics in Korea. Let us hope for some success for team GB—let us hope that the stones bring us some gold medals. They are the only accepted competitive curling stones in the world. What a great example of our Scottish stone products.

I propose that any Government and local government projects that involve stone—I am talking about stone generally, not just curling stones—should be encouraged, wherever possible, to use Scottish-produced stone in their construction. That would encourage increased production of Scottish stone and increased awareness of it. It would also encourage attractive

prices for the construction companies as a result of increased volume.

If we can achieve the recognition and international reputation gained by the Ailsa Craig curling stone, surely we can do the same for our fantastic and good-quality stone products. I hope that the Scottish Stone Group will encourage that. I wish it all success.

13:17

The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse): I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate and welcome the contributions that members across the chamber have made.

I am genuinely delighted that we are having a debate about an industry that has maybe not been in the spotlight and has perhaps not had the attention that it deserves. We have heard from members across the chamber how important our stone is to the heritage that we sometimes take for granted in this country. It is a great part of what makes Scotland a special place. As David Torrance said, it affects all our communities and town centres. I suspect that we will all have had correspondence from constituents about the quality of the built environment, because it upsets people when they see it deteriorate.

Having a domestic source of stone to replace worn-out stone on deteriorating buildings is absolutely vital if we are to preserve the iconic structures and town centres that we all take for granted.

As Graeme Dey highlighted, the Scottish Stone Group was established with the excellent aim of promoting the use of indigenous stone in Scottish construction projects. I was delighted to attend its launch in the Scottish Parliament, as many other members did, in November. It was great to see members of the group looking around the chamber today as well. I welcome them to the chamber.

It is important that we raise awareness of the issue, as other members have done. A significant amount of stone is imported into Scotland at this time and there is a great opportunity to grow the sector and replace imported products with quality Scottish stone that is quarried here in Scotland.

Scotland has a great variety of stone that is suitable for building, due to its varied geology, to which Gordon MacDonald, David Torrance, Graeme Dey and other members referred. It also has a tremendous heritage of impressive stone buildings throughout the country. Indeed, as members have said, it is claimed that Scotland has more stone buildings per head of population than any other country in the world. With Stirling Castle, the royal mile and Urquhart Castle on Loch

Ness, Scotland's landscape is undoubtedly enhanced by its tremendous stone buildings that fit so well into their settings. The types of stone that are used vary across the country and give a sense of place, from the warm sandstones of the Borders to the granite of Aberdeen that Bill Bowman and Maurice Corry referred to.

Therefore, I am delighted that three stone companies—Denfind Stone, which is in Mr Dey's Angus South constituency; Hutton Stone, which I had the pleasure to visit in Berwickshire in the Scottish Borders; and Tradstocks, which is based in Stirlingshire—have seized the opportunity to co-operate and create the Scottish Stone Group. The group will raise awareness, collaborate, look for ways in which it can make the sector more competitive and help to build a relationship with the Government and our agencies so that we can support the industry in important areas such as innovation.

Those companies' combined experience, knowledge and product provides the group with a strong foundation for success—a rock solid foundation, if I can add to the puns that we have heard today. I applaud them for doing so. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, I did not want to disappoint Jackie Baillie; I knew that she was waiting for a pun from me.

The Scottish Government promotes good design, which respects context and makes use of materials that are sympathetic to the setting of the project and limit the impact on the environment. Jackie Baillie, Graeme Dey and others have raised very powerful points on the carbon intensity of the process when stone is sourced from locations such as China.

Our built environment has a rich legacy of the innovative use of stone, and we are keen to capitalise on, and promote the use of, our national assets wherever possible. As well as looking attractive and fitting into our landscapes, Scottish stone has the advantage of being very environmentally friendly. Notwithstanding the valid points that Jackie Baillie raised on the need to be mindful of communities and the environmental impact of the quarrying process, great strides forward have been made. How modern processes are becoming more efficient and less damaging to the environment is one of the important messages that we have heard from the Scottish Stone Group. Perhaps people's view of the quarrying industry is founded in something that happened hundreds of years ago, but we have moved on a lot and technology is helping that process.

Stone needs little processing as a product, and it does not need to be transported any great distance, which is an important consideration given that it is such a heavy material. Among potential clients who purchase stone, it is

important that we raise awareness of the fact that they can reduce their environmental impact by sourcing locally.

Given that the built environment accounts for approximately 50 per cent of carbon emissions in Scotland, the construction sector can make a significant contribution to the Scottish Government's sustainability targets for 2020 and 2050. Greater use of Scottish stone can help us to achieve those targets.

I am pleased to note that Historic Environment Scotland, in partnership with the British Geological Survey, has committed to hosting a Scottish stone forum, twice a year, at the Engine Shed in Stirling. That will bring together the construction, conservation and heritage sectors so that they can learn more about the importance of Scottish traditional materials and promote their use. The Scottish Stone Group has indicated that it will support and attend that event, which is a very welcome early intervention by the sector. Alongside Scottish Enterprise and the construction Scotland innovation centre, hosting the Scottish stone forum will enable Historic Environment Scotland to renew the commitment that it made to the Scottish stone liaison group. It also made a commitment that it would continue to work with public and private sector partners to promote the use of Scottish stone.

Bill Bowman very fairly referred to some of the constraints around public procurement, and he was right to do so. However, by raising awareness of the validity of using Scottish stone, its importance and its environmental advantages, we can make potential public and private clients aware of the merits of using Scottish stone.

On that note, I congratulate Historic Environment Scotland and the British Geological Survey on the work that they are undertaking to produce the building stone database for Scotland. The database, which is due to be launched in the summer, will hold details of the building stones that are used in Scotland—current building stones and the many historical ones. Earlier, Gordon MacDonald went through an extensive list of examples that have been used. The database will link each building stone to the quarry from which it originated and to some of the buildings in which it has been used. The information will be supported by images and links to reference materials. I am particularly pleased that the database will be publicly available, as it will increase knowledge of this important part of our built heritage. It has the long-term objective of helping to maintain and conserve our country's priceless built heritage assets and I look forward to the resource becoming publicly available.

The Scottish Stone Group received support from Co-operative Development Scotland to set up as a

consortium co-operative during 2016. It recently participated in the CDS consortium development programme, which was a programme of support that ran for around nine months, was consultant-led and focused on developing strategic and behavioural aspects of the consortium. I am pleased that the Scottish Stone Group fully recognises the benefits of collaboration to increase productivity and creativity and to influence the Parliament, the Government, local government and other potential clients.

Scottish Enterprise and the construction Scotland innovation centre are fully supportive of the Scottish Stone Group and its aims. Scottish Enterprise will work with the group to market and network with the wider construction industry—architectural professionals and others who need to be aware of the product's potential offering—and support its plans to promote the use of Scottish stone.

It will also facilitate engagement with the construction industry leadership group. I am confident that that will lead to a better understanding of how best to utilise the tremendous variety of our native stone in the construction industry and to develop, where possible, new products that will help with cladding and for other purposes so that we can make sure that we can have modern architecture in historic settings that will blend in with its surroundings.

This has been a valuable debate on a sector that has perhaps not had the attention that it deserves. It has modest employment at the moment but, as members have said, there is great potential for growth. I know that members on all sides of the debate are focused on actions to promote the use of Scotland's natural resources in a way that is sensitive but has the potential for long-term employment opportunities.

I congratulate Brian Binnie of Denfind Stone, Peter Stewart of Tradstocks and Marcus Paine of Hutton Stone on their initiative in forming the Scottish Stone Group. I wish them good luck and every success—as do all members in the chamber, I am sure. As a Parliament, we are all here to support them and to help them to develop the successful Scottish stone sector.

13:25

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Prestwick Airport

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The next item of business is a statement by the cabinet secretary, Keith Brown, on Prestwick airport. Mr Brown will take questions at the end of his statement, and I encourage anyone who wishes to ask a question to press their request-to-speak button now.

14:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide an update on Glasgow Prestwick airport.

Members will, of course, recall the circumstances that led to the Scottish Government buying the airport at the end of 2013. The previous owners were ready to close it down and walk away. In our view, that would have delivered a devastating blow to the local economy, and our decision to buy Prestwick was taken in the knowledge that, with time, perseverance and innovative thinking, Prestwick could be a great success. Moreover, according to various estimates, up to 300 direct and nearly 3,000 indirect jobs were hanging on the airport's future.

Since 2013, we have been clear that the business must operate at arm's length from the Scottish Government and ministers. Appropriate governance arrangements are in place under which the chief executive officer and his team, overseen by the operating company board, are responsible for progressing and agreeing specific commercial deals. There is no role for ministers in specific commercial discussions, and they do not sanction specific deals or agreements between the business and any of its customers. However, as the sole shareholder, ministers are supportive of the business's overall strategic direction.

A five-year strategic plan for 2017 to 2022, which was published by the airport in April 2017 and is available on its website, sets out how the team will grow all aspects of the business and seek out new revenue streams. I expect Prestwick's senior management team to actively seek out all potential business opportunities in order to maximise the use of the airport's assets, reduce its reliance on loan funding and, ultimately, return it to the private sector. As the strategic plan sets out, the efforts include growing passenger numbers; developing freight handling; enhancing maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities; increasing traffic through fixed-base operations; raising income from property rental; and progressing the airport's spaceport aspirations.

Winning that business, especially in relation to passenger numbers, is not easy in a highly competitive aviation market, but the airport team continues to build Prestwick's reputation and the brand. It is also continuing to build relationships with customers and potential customers to secure the new business needed for success.

I think that we are all aware that Prestwick is not a typical airport. Success is not predicated on passenger traffic or any one business area alone, and specialist operations are an essential part of its wider offering. One such opportunity that is being progressed with energy and great enthusiasm is a proposal to offer spaceport facilities. Prestwick will be very well placed to become the United Kingdom's first spaceport for horizontal launch once the UK Government has put in place the required regulatory framework. Indeed, not only Prestwick but Scotland itself will stand to benefit from having a world-class facility on our own doorstep to launch Scottish-built satellites into space, and we will provide support to any area of Scotland looking to benefit from that.

Prestwick is also renowned for its freight operation, with the ability to accommodate heavy, awkward and oversized loads. Although handling dedicated freighters is a highly competitive market, the airport will continue to develop its business in that area. The cargo team has a great can-do attitude, putting the customer first and working in a flexible way that enhances the reputation of the business. Moreover, Prestwick is a prime contender as the Scottish logistics hub for the expansion of Heathrow airport to support the prefabrication and consolidation of components. That is another specialist operation that fits well with Prestwick's wider offering.

Recently, the airport has seen significant improvement from handling aircraft through its fixed-base operations. It is a highly competitive environment, and airports in Ireland and Northern Ireland compete with Scotland to handle military and private flights that require fuel stops while transiting UK airspace. Although military movements in 2016-17 were down compared with 2013-14, when the Scottish Government took over the ownership of Prestwick—indeed, they were just over a third of the number of military movements in 2000—fixed-base operations continue to be an important part of Prestwick airport's offering and form part of the strategic plan.

There is a great deal of interest in the handling of military flights and a desire for more information from some members. The chief executive of Transport Scotland and I have suggested recently to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee and the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee that members should visit Prestwick to

find out more about the airport's operations and plans for the future. I repeat that offer today. The senior team at the airport, which operates at arm's length from Government, will be happy to discuss those matters in an open and transparent way, although they must, of course, respect the need to avoid providing information that would be damaging to Prestwick's commercial interests or would give a competitive advantage to other airports.

On that point, I have reviewed the information that we have not been able to release in response to a large number of freedom of information requests. I am confident that the information that has been redacted is commercially confidential, but if the party representatives in the chamber today want to visit and speak to the operations company, I am happy to ask it to facilitate that and to provide as much information as possible.

The company's annual report, which was published in December, shows that the airport is moving in the right direction. In the previous financial year, passenger numbers were up 8 per cent, aircraft movements were also up 8 per cent, turnover increased by £2.1 million to £13.6 million and, at the same time, operating losses decreased from £8.7 million to £7.8 million.

There is a great deal of support for Prestwick airport and a desire to see it succeed. It benefits from a dedicated and passionate workforce; from being flexible, responsive and available 24/7; and from a supportive local council and supportive local MPs and MSPs.

We have always acknowledged that there is no quick fix, but I am certain that Prestwick can have a positive future and make an even greater contribution to the Ayrshire economy. Although there is still much progress to be made, the business is definitely showing signs of improvement, and the team, with a renewed sense of purpose and ambition, will continue to pursue every opportunity to grow.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, cabinet secretary. As I am sure that you will appreciate, there is quite a lot of interest from members who want to ask questions.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for updating Parliament on the progress that Prestwick is making. As a member of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, I am happy to take up the offer to visit Prestwick and meet the new senior management team for an update. I hope to do that as soon as I can.

There is no doubt about Prestwick airport's importance to Ayrshire's economy, but there is no denying that the airport is still making substantial and significant losses. To date, it has accumulated

more than £40 million of taxpayers' investment. What key performance indicators is the management team at Prestwick airport working towards with regard to turning around the fortunes of the airport?

Will the cabinet secretary give a further indication of when we might expect the airport to be returned to the private sector? I have been a member of this Parliament for two years and we have asked that question a number of times. The answer tends to be the same, which is that the airport will be sold back to the private sector when it is ready for that to happen and when there is a buyer who is ready to pay. How many more years of continuous public investment will there be before the Government comes to a decision that the time is right to hand the airport back to the private sector? It is only right that, on behalf of taxpayers, the Parliament asks such questions of the Government.

Keith Brown: I have no problem with such questions being asked. Jamie Greene and other members have asked those questions and, each time, we have said that we cannot say when we will get the airport back into the private sector. We also said that when we took ownership of the airport—we said that it would be a long-term prospectus for us to achieve that. Obviously, the airport has to become an attractive proposition for the private sector.

Jamie Greene quite rightly said that there have been contributions of £40 million up to the end of March 2018. I am not sure how long he has been familiar with the airport, but if he was aware of its condition when it was bought by the Scottish Government, he would know that there was a great deal of work to be done, as investment in the airport at the required level had not been made for a number of years. By and large, that is what that money has gone towards.

The issue of the KPIs that the airport management team is working to is perhaps a good basis for the discussion that Jamie Greene can have with people at the operations company when he meets them. We have seen the annual report, which I mentioned in my statement, and we have said that the operations company has to concentrate on a wide-ranging portfolio of different potential business opportunities. Passenger traffic is an extremely competitive market and it is sometimes expensive to attract new business. That is why the operations company is focusing and concentrating on the fixed-base operations, on freight—which has been quite successful—and on transiting aircraft.

We cannot give a date for when we expect the airport to transfer back to the private sector, but we are talking to anybody who shows interest in that. Things are moving in the right direction, with

the increase in turnover and the reduction in losses, but it will take time for us to achieve that.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Unlike at other Scottish airports, the trend at Prestwick is that passenger numbers and cargo numbers are going down—the only things that are going up are the number of military flights and the amount that taxpayers are having to pay, because the airport continues to lose money. The SNP Government has increased loan funding for Prestwick airport to £48 million, which is more than double the £21 million that ministers originally said would be needed to return the airport to profit, but it is still losing money. Scottish Enterprise has also provided at least £650,000 directly to Ryanair, which is the only passenger service left at the airport, and there are heavily subsidised landing charges. Is the cabinet secretary sure that that does not amount to state aid? Given the recent decision on Charleroi airport in Belgium by the European Court of Justice, has he taken legal advice on state aid or spoken to the European Commission about Prestwick?

To repeat an earlier question, four years on from buying the airport for £1, can the cabinet secretary tell us when the taxpayers' £48 million will be repaid? Would he at least consider selling 50 per cent of the airport to start the process of returning it to the private sector?

Keith Brown: I will first correct Jackie Baillie: the number of military aircraft movements is not going up. As I mentioned, in 2000—when I think Jackie Baillie was a minister—there were nearly 9,000 military aircraft movements and the figure is now just over 3,500, so it is substantially down from 2000 and it has come down over the past couple of years.

We were clear that there has to be a long-term engagement. At the time, I thought that we had support from the Labour Party for trying to save the jobs at the airport, but that support is not evident from the 32 parliamentary questions that Jackie Baillie has asked before this year or the eight more this year, the endless freedom of information requests and the letters to the airport and me. I am happy to answer all those questions and to be as open as we can be, but it is not obvious to me that we have the level of support that we thought we had from the Labour Party for saving those jobs.

On the point about state aid, of course we take advice. I cannot confirm or otherwise whether we have taken legal advice but, when we bought the airport, we of course checked the legal position of the airport and we always make sure that we are compliant with state-aid regulations.

This is the first time that I have heard the suggestion that we should sell a 50 per cent share

in the airport, but I have to give the same response as I gave to Jamie Greene. For that to be viable, somebody would have to be interested in it. That is why the investment that we have made in the airport, as well as the improving situation in which we are seeing a reduction in losses and an increase in turnover, need to be given time to work through to make the airport an attractive proposition for the private sector.

The Presiding Officer: The parties have had their opening questions, so I ask the 10 remaining questioners to be short and sharp, and the cabinet secretary similarly so.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement. Prestwick has always been in the shadow of Glasgow, and being named Glasgow Prestwick airport has not helped. Thousands of people supported a petition calling for Prestwick to be renamed Robert Burns international airport, and 18 members of the Scottish Parliament signed a motion to that effect that I submitted last month. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, as with John Lennon, George Best and Louis Armstrong airports, naming an airport after a renowned individual can boost its identity and thus help to attract investment, passengers and jobs?

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Call it the Kenny Gibson airport.

Keith Brown: I hear a suggestion from the side that we should call it the Kenneth Gibson airport. Who knows? The sky would truly be the limit if that were to happen.

The name of the airport is an issue for the airport itself—it would take such decisions. As Kenny Gibson well knows, that change has been canvassed over the years. The really important thing is that we have continued to invest in the airport. The easy option was to walk away and leave 300 people without jobs, with a huge impact on the economy, and it seems to be implicit in some of the questions that we should have done that. I know from Kenneth Gibson's question now and at general question time earlier that he is very concerned about the health of the local economy, and that perhaps underlies the suggestion about renaming the airport. As I said, that decision would be taken by the airport. The member might want to write to the management team—the operations board of the airport—or even to take up the offer that I have made and visit them to have that discussion with them.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for providing an advance copy of his statement and for the positive tone of it. I have been and remain supportive of the Government's action thus far and I welcome its support for a

spaceport, unlike Jackie Baillie and the Labour Party.

However, I also note the management team's difficulty in attracting more air passenger traffic to Prestwick. I wonder whether a change of emphasis in the development of the airport is required to create jobs for Ayrshire. I know of a company that is keen to expand its maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities and to create training capabilities for engineers, but more hangar space would be required in order to deliver those and other new opportunities and more jobs in the sector. How supportive can Scottish Enterprise, the management team and the cabinet secretary be about the building of new hangar space at Prestwick airport, where an unmet demand for hangar space exists?

Keith Brown: I thank John Scott for his constructive suggestion. He will know as well as I do that we have seen moves from the airport in that direction, particularly from Chevron, the company that opened an impressive maintenance, repair and overhaul facility on the airfield in 2017. Even before it had taken ownership of the hangar, that company, which comes from the north of England, was able to guarantee that it could fill it right away, so demand is there for such facilities. The company's facility has been extremely successful and, as the member has said, it provides vital revenue for the airport.

I have already mentioned the annual plan. Given Chevron's success, the airport operations company is aware of those opportunities. We expect it to take forward such matters. We do not intervene in commercial decisions and discussions, but if Scottish Enterprise has a role to play, we can make sure that that happens. However, if more can be done—whether in terms of hangar space, other fixed-base operations or freight—we want to encourage that to happen.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): It is no wonder that there are no Labour MSPs left in Ayrshire, given the level of support coming from the Labour Party today.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that Prestwick airport has huge potential for development? Does he agree that it is important that the airport management team are able to pursue viable opportunities that allow the airport to fulfil that potential—including for a spaceport, because Prestwick is surely the stand-out location in that regard?

Keith Brown: Willie Coffey is exactly right to say that the airport has huge potential. The point has previously been made about the competitive environment in Scotland, as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen are doing exceptionally well in terms of passenger traffic.

As I have tried to set out, our different airports can often offer different things. There are huge facilities at Prestwick; there are unique facilities at Prestwick. It has a track record of reliability for weather, which most of us will have known about for many years. As I say, the airport has huge potential. The management team should be as inventive and innovative as possible in looking for new business, and we should be supportive of that endeavour.

I have talked about the importance of the people who work at the airport, whose livelihoods, and those of their families, depend on the work there and on the work of those companies associated with the airport. It is vital that we not only keep, but grow the airport, and that is where our efforts and those of the management team have been directed.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): In response to concerns about US military operations at Prestwick, the Scottish Government has suggested that no one should be surprised about that, given that it has gone on since the time of Elvis Presley's visit. However, the difference is that the airport was not owned by the Scottish public through the Government until recently. Despite what the cabinet secretary said about Prestwick airport's arm's-length relationship with the Government, he told a committee that he had been talking to the airport about specific commercial opportunities. Furthermore, the First Minister told the Parliament earlier this month that, if it was not happy with what the airport was doing, the Government would ask serious questions.

Given that we know that front-line US military operations are operating out of the airport and given the First Minister's comments, will the cabinet secretary confirm whether the Scottish National Party Scottish Government is happy to support US military operations in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere using Scottish public property?

Keith Brown: First of all, it is not just the case that this activity goes back to the time of Elvis Presley coming on a military flight from Germany en route back to the US; the same planning framework has applied for decades at Prestwick. As I have said to Jackie Baillie, it is not the case that there has been an increase in military movements. In 2000, there were about 9,000 military aircraft movements; currently, there are about 3,600.

Any question about questionable military activities in airspace is completely reserved to the UK Government, whether that be about aerospace, defence or security. Such aircraft movements are a legitimate part of the business of the airport, which the airport has sought.

I accept that the member has a concern about the issue, so I repeat the offer that I made in my opening statement—I made the same offer to the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee, as did the chief executive of Transport Scotland. If he wants to, he can visit the airport and ask the management team specifically what they are able to say, within the limits of commercial confidentiality, about the military activity that is going on—I make that plea to the management team as well. However, that activity is a vital part of what the airport does. It has done it for decades and it will continue to do it in future.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Last year, when its management team appeared before the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, we heard that Prestwick airport was not viable without Ryanair, that passenger numbers and movements had fallen and that freight handling had plummeted. The management team told us that they would be able to pay the £40 million loan back to the taxpayer by 2032. With Prestwick still losing £8 million every year, does the cabinet secretary really believe that that is an achievable date by which to return taxpayers' money?

Keith Brown: Not only do I believe that that is an achievable date, I think that it is perfectly possible that that can be done earlier. However, I reiterate what I have said, and what the First Minister and others have said since we took over the airport, which is that the money is a long-term investment by the Scottish Government. The reason for that, as I have mentioned, is that the previous owners, Infratil, did not make the required investment. Anybody who has been to the airport will know that there has not been investment made in its physical infrastructure. However, such investment is necessary in order for it to gain new business.

Mike Rumbles is right, to the extent that there has been a reduction in passenger traffic—in particular, he mentioned Ryanair—but that was happening previously and has been exacerbated by the hiatus in ownership. The passenger side is perhaps the most competitive and difficult area that the airport area is involved in. The other parts of the business, however, are turning around. The loss was not quite £8 million; it was £7.8 million. However, we are seeing an increase in turnover and a reduction in losses.

I had hoped that the Liberal Democrats would not follow the path of the Labour Party with regard to Prestwick airport, and instead continue to support the airport. Of course they can ask questions, but I hope that they can continue at least to make it obvious to the people in Prestwick and Ayrshire that the Liberal Democrats are supportive of the support that is being provided by

the Scottish Government for the future success of the airport.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that Prestwick airport could be an important staging point for tourists to enter the region and explore the south-west of Scotland, including the coastal and inland route that I am working with local stakeholders to promote, and that that would benefit the south-west's world-class food and drink industry?

Keith Brown: The kind of innovation that Emma Harper has shown in her question about getting the benefits of travel to the south-west is exactly what we want to see at the airport. Of course, what she says is true. I remember in the 1980s being on a flight from Canada that stopped at Prestwick, but we were not allowed to get off there and had to go down to London to get off.

There is no doubt that we have attractions in the south-west of Scotland and the west of Scotland more generally, and that we have seen a huge increase in tourism in Scotland. Just this week, the numbers increased to a record level. That situation must form part of the future of a successful Prestwick airport, with the sustainability of more tourist traffic coming to the area and enjoying the benefits of visiting Scotland.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): It is important for the local economy that Prestwick airport's performance be turned around. Investment in the A76, for example, might help to boost tourist numbers.

However, Prestwick airport cannot be turned around on the basis of military flights. In opposition, the Scottish National Party criticised the use of the airport for such flights, condemned military action by the USA and criticised Donald Trump. Is it not, therefore, a bit hypocritical for the cabinet secretary now to turn a blind eye and to stay silent, when he is fully aware of the extent to which Prestwick airport is being earmarked to take more United States Air Force military flights in the future, and when there are reports that his Transport Scotland officials are lobbying for Prestwick to do more business with the Trump Organization and the US Air Force? Can the cabinet secretary tell us specifically whether Prestwick airport has been used for either rendition flights or live missions to Syria by the US Air Force?

Keith Brown: First, Colin Smyth is wrong if he is suggesting that there has been an increase in military flights. I go back to the point that 9,000 military aircraft movements were made in 2000, and 3,600 movements were made in the year just past. It is as legitimate now as it has been over the decades that not just Prestwick, but virtually every airport in the UK, accommodates military flights

and provides fuel for them. It is not easy to see in the comments that have been made by Colin Smyth and Jackie Baillie one iota of support for Prestwick airport, the employees who work there and the airport's continued success in the future. Perhaps if they were to express support just once in a while, when asking legitimate questions, people in Prestwick might take some comfort from that.

The Presiding Officer: I am conscious that five more members wish to ask questions, but we just do not have enough time this afternoon.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am afraid that the minister's position is still directly contradictory, and our opportunity to question him has not given us a chance to resolve that. He tells us today that there is no role for ministers in specific commercial discussions, but he told us last year:

"In the past two or three weeks, I have been talking to management about specific commercial opportunities."—*[Official Report, Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, 8 March 2017: c 15.]*

What chance do our standing orders give us to require the minister to resolve that direct contradiction? A visit to the airport will not answer this: he must answer it.

The Presiding Officer: I appreciate Mr Harvie's frustration and that of other members, because there is a lot of interest in asking questions. However, he will know, as a member of the Parliamentary Bureau, the restrictions on our time. He will be aware, for example, that we have already trimmed minutes off every single member's time in the next debate, and are currently eating into the time that has been allocated for that debate on immigration, which is of importance to everybody.

I am aware of the level of interest, but it is up to Mr Harvie to raise the matter, as a member of the Parliamentary Bureau, or for any other member to raise it with their business manager, in order to pencil in other time. There are other opportunities and ways to ask questions of the minister—written questions, letters, raising the issue in committee, and so on. Mr Harvie is free to bring the matter back to the Parliamentary Bureau for discussion at a future date. However, we have no more time this afternoon.

Population Needs and Migration Policy

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item is a Scottish Government debate on motion S5M-10571, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's population needs and migration policy.

14:57

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I am pleased to have the opportunity to turn Parliament's attention to Scotland's population needs and migration policy. Our discussion paper of that title sets out in stark relief how crucial it is that Scotland has the powers that it needs to deliver a migration system tailored to the challenges that we face—challenges that are very different from those facing the rest of the UK.

Looking at the two amendments, I think that we can have a constructive debate this afternoon, because there is common ground. Like the Liberal Democrats, we think that there are parts of the overall United Kingdom system that have to change, and we set that out in our paper. Like the Conservatives, we understand that any variable migration scheme would need to be developed in partnership with the UK Government. We acknowledge the concerns about variation, but also the support that we have from business groups for tailor-made variation.

A growing population, and especially growth in the number of people who are of working age, is vital for a growing economy. Population growth has been the most significant driver of economic growth in both Scotland and the UK in recent years, ahead of productivity and labour market participation. That has been sustained by people choosing to come here from other countries to live and work.

The evidence is overwhelming, but it is not new. Indeed, I recall Kenneth Gibson MSP championing the need to address Scotland's population challenges back in the very first session of this Parliament. Joint projections by the National Records of Scotland and the Office for National Statistics tell us that in each of the next 25 years there will be more deaths than births in Scotland. More than a third of Scotland's local authorities face depopulation over the 25-year projection, and the age profile of the population will also change. The proportion of the population who are of state pension age will increase by 25 per cent as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement, and people aged 75 and over will be the fastest growing age group, with their number increasing by 79 per cent in 25 years.

Although ageing populations present a challenge across the UK, Scotland's situation is particularly acute, given that our working-age population will grow only marginally compared with that in the rest of the UK, and the number of children being born in Scotland will decline. Unlike the rest of the UK, all the projected increase in Scotland's population over the next 10 years is due to net in-migration.

Let me be very clear: the fact that people are living longer, healthier lives is an achievement to be applauded. However, as our population ages and the proportion of those in work decreases, it is incumbent on us, as a Government and as a just society, to ensure that we are able to maintain public services for those in their later years who have paid into the system all their working lives. These are long-term, enduring demographic issues that all developed countries will have to address eventually, and which Scotland needs to address now.

Children and families are essential considerations, and we have a comprehensive package of support for families. We are ensuring that children who are born today have every opportunity to lead productive lives. The importance of quality early learning and childcare cannot be overestimated. We are expanding the childcare offer and we have the best start grant. We are also developing skills in the workforce and promoting innovation. Just as population is a key driver for growth, so is productivity, and we have closed the productivity gap with the rest of the UK.

Nevertheless, those and other significant efforts in skills and innovation, however groundbreaking, do not fully address the impact of an ageing society. The weight of evidence is clear and cannot be ignored. Migration is a crucial component of Scotland's current and long-term economic and demographic sustainability. Scotland faces different challenges in relation to population, demography and rurality from the rest of the UK. The Scottish Parliament and Government must have the devolved powers that they need to address those challenges with the urgency that they require.

We are not a lone voice here. A consensus has been growing for some time, with every major party now seeing the need for a differential approach to migration. Only last year, Ruth Davidson wrote that post-study work visas should be reintroduced, questioned whether the target to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands is correct and said that including students in the net migration target was

"distortive, counterproductive and sends out entirely the wrong signals."

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I support initiatives such as the post-study work visa, but does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that that scheme and other small schemes like it will not tackle the demographic challenges that we face north and south of the border?

Fiona Hyslop: I am not sure whether Willie Rennie has had a chance to read our discussion paper, but it is extensive and evidence based, and says exactly that. We need to decide right across Scotland what choices to make. I encourage Willie Rennie to read the discussion paper.

The consensus that we are building is growing. In a recent report, the Home Affairs Committee at Westminster stated that the one-size-fits-all UK system is no longer appropriate and that a different approach to migration is necessary. The Institute for Public Policy Research found that the UK immigration system does not cater for Scotland's unique needs. Similarly, the all-party parliamentary group on social integration at Westminster said in a report last year that responsibility for immigration should be devolved.

Like many others from other political parties in Scotland and the UK, we are asking for the arbitrary and damaging net migration target to be abolished or, at the very least, for migration to Scotland not to be counted within it. The case for that could not be clearer. Scotland depends on inward migration to grow its population, but it is UK policy to reduce net migration throughout the UK. Those two contradictory goals simply cannot coexist.

Scotland needs working-age people to settle here in the long term and to raise families here. The net migration target forces the UK Government to focus on short-term work visas solely to address skills shortages. That does not work for Scotland. Indeed, Britain has hit its cap for skilled non-European workers for an unprecedented third month in a row, with the salary requirement leaping from £30,000 to £50,000 for February. That means that the UK is already turning away health workers, software developers and teachers, and that is before the UK leaves the European Union.

The situation of Sine Halfpenny is an example of the current system not meeting Scotland's needs. She is the Canadian teacher who was willing to move from Nova Scotia to Mull to teach, and to teach Gaelic, in a primary school that has struggled to recruit to that post. However, the Home Office told her and her sponsor, Argyll and Bute Council, that her certificate of sponsorship had been rejected as it did not meet the required points for a tier 2 visa.

The short-term nature of UK visas does not address the issue of an ageing society. That is

why we are also calling for the ability to take a different approach to family migration so that we can improve the rights of people in Scotland to bring close family into the country with them. We need families. We need children. We want people to stay, to settle and to contribute.

We also want people who have moved away from Scotland to build their skills and experience but who now want to return to be able to do so, yet the current rules on family migration mean that many UK citizens are unable to bring their family with them if those family members were born outside the EU. That cannot be right.

The Labour Party made that point only yesterday. In a speech, the shadow Home Secretary described the net migration target as "false and unworkable", with Tory migration policy leading to the break-up of families, going against fair and reasonable values and discouraging people from choosing to live in this country at a time when we need them most.

We are also calling for a review of measures that are barriers to business, such as the immigration skills charge. We are firmly of the view that businesses should not be penalised simply for employing the skilled staff they need.

I say to the Liberal Democrats that it is not an either/or between trying to influence UK-wide changes and pursuing tailor-made approaches to Scotland; it is both. I hope that the Liberal Democrats will not ignore the fact that Scotland needs that tailor-made policy, as we suggest.

It is telling that Scottish ministers have no say in the Scotland shortage occupation list, which is the only existing measure that is designed to address Scotland's specific needs. It is vital that Scottish ministers have a say in the jobs that are included on that list.

There is some speculation that the UK Government might move to an even more sector-focused approach to migration. Narrow sectoral solutions will not work for Scotland—this is a whole-economy, whole-workforce, whole-society issue. I hope that the UK will take a broader view.

I want to touch on the post-study work visa, which was beneficial. It is to the credit of this Parliament and the previous Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition that they addressed that specific need. Indeed, it was mainstreamed into the UK immigration system before its withdrawal in 2012. The Smith Commission, with the support of all major political parties, called on the UK Government to reintroduce the visa, but we have had no response—indeed, we have had indifference.

We need to make sure that we develop an evidence-based argument that brings the

consensus from Scotland together to make sure that we can persuade the UK Government of the need for the change. We had a differentiated system in one area when we had the post-study work visa, so the UK Government cannot argue that we cannot have one now. That is particularly the case when employers are crying out for flexibility to make sure that they can tackle some of the economic and recruitment challenges facing them.

The immigration system is already overly complicated. We want to argue the case for reducing complexity and having simpler rules. We should use examples that exist already. The UK and Ireland operate their own migration system with separate visas, without compromising the principle of free movement within the common travel area.

We suggest a new route of allowing people to live and work here on the condition that they remain in Scotland. That would not cut off or replace any other routes within the UK-wide immigration system for people or employers. We now have separate tax codes for Scottish income tax payers—

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Fiona Hyslop: I am in my last moments, and my time has been cut.

It is possible that we can have a differentiated system and if we choose to do that we have the tools to identify migrants, who would be part of an immigration system that was tailored to Scotland's needs. Let us try to work together to achieve that.

It is of concern that the UK Government's white paper will not be published until autumn. We have set out a credible, well-reasoned, evidence-based case in our discussion paper. We will continue to engage with businesses, trade unions, universities and other bodies with an interest in attracting international talent to Scotland, and we will build on the significant knowledge and experience in the area to shape that policy for Scotland.

We believe that people who have chosen to call Scotland their home are vital to us, not just because of their very significant contribution to our economic growth, but because they have enriched our lives and communities, and because Scotland is, and wishes to remain, an inclusive, progressive and outward-looking nation.

I invite everyone in the chamber to look at Scotland's distinctive needs. We need a tailor-made immigration system in Scotland that recognises our needs. There are examples around the world of nations that have adopted differential migration systems. There are no practical reasons why such a system would not work for Scotland.

This is about political will, and that political will is most likely to succeed if we have a united approach when we come to decision time.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the publication of the Scottish Government's paper, *Scotland's Population Needs and Migration Policy: Discussion Paper on Evidence, Policy and Powers for the Scottish Parliament*, which details the unique challenges facing Scotland's population and the potential economic gains if migration was sustained; notes the findings of reports from the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee and the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, which agreed that the current migration system needs to change to reflect local circumstances; notes that the Fresh Talent scheme, which was introduced in 2005 by the Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition administration was both a recognition of the need for a differentiated solution to migration and a demonstration that such a differential approach is possible within a UK-wide system, and supports calls for a debate on the current UK-wide system and for that system to better serve Scotland through an evidence-led approach to appropriate powers for the Parliament, enabling the development of a differentiated, more flexible solution, which is tailored to meet Scotland's specific needs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I call Jackson Carlaw to speak to and move amendment S5M-10571.3.

15:09

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): Beautifully crafted speeches are being truncated this afternoon, so if it sounds a bit lumpy, that is obviously why.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Your speeches are always beautiful, no matter how truncated they may have been.

Jackson Carlaw: Almost 60 years ago, I was born in my Eastwood constituency. Eastwood, where I have lived for the vast majority of the years since, is a community that has been home for many who have migrated to Scotland from the rest of the UK and from the rest of the world, including Europe.

Let me tackle directly some of the myths that are often repeated to me as an MSP—myths founded on concerns that migration alone is responsible for the pressures on our infrastructure and public services, which is simply not true.

Yes, we have a housing shortage, but that is not because of migration. We have seen radical shifts in the way that we choose to live, with far more single home occupancy and longer life expectancy. Homes that might have been expected to appear on the open market two decades ago are now still happily occupied.

Yes, we have busy hospitals and general practitioner surgeries, but that is not because of migration. We have a population that is living

longer but is not always well. Even in the lifetime of this Parliament, we have seen new issues that were not envisaged when we first met, such as dementia and diabetes arising from obesity, present enormous strategic and budgetary challenges to the national health service.

Yes, we have busy schools, colleges and universities, but that is not because of migration. Far more of our young people stay longer at school and proceed into further education of whatever kind.

The suggestion that migration is at the heart of the stresses in our public life and services is a fantasy, and a malicious and self-deceiving one at that. Let me be absolutely clear—I say this personally and on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives—that migration and immigration from wherever are good, necessary and desirable. There is a strong, powerful and unarguable case for migration to Scotland and we are on its side.

Willie Rennie: Has the member made that case to his Cabinet in the United Kingdom, and do its members agree with him?

Jackson Carlaw: I will allow myself to develop the argument, but I say to Mr Rennie that yes, I make that argument vociferously on behalf of the Scottish Conservative Party whenever I get the chance.

I turn to the Scottish Government's discussion paper, "Scotland's Population Needs and Migration Policy". There is much in the analysis of the changing demographics of Scotland, laid starkly for all to see in the paper, with which we whole-heartedly agree. Over little more than a century, Scotland's demographics have changed extraordinarily. Whereas 100 years ago it would have been unusual to see a pensioner, let alone an octogenarian, on our streets, over the next 25 years the number of people aged 75 and over will increase by 79 per cent. The situation was described to me most vividly as a demographic population pyramid, which will be inverted in the next 25 years.

That is the least of it. As Scotland leaves the industrial revolution and becomes embedded in the early years of the successor technological revolution, all manner of change lies ahead. Again, that was vividly described to me by a characterisation of the change over the next 30 years as being every bit as complete and profound as all the change that the world has seen since the battle of Waterloo in 1815.

A constant will be our need to have as entrepreneurial an economy as possible, with an engaged and productive workforce that is capable of sustaining our public services financially and with people. To put it bluntly, our natural population growth will not meet the task.

We need to ask why it is that only 5.9 per cent of the UK's European Union citizens settle in Scotland when, based on our population, our share should equate to 8.1 per cent. After all, we have taxpayer-funded university tuition, taxpayer-funded care for the elderly and taxpayer-funded universal prescriptions.

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): Will the member give way?

Jackson Carlaw: I want to proceed. It is surely not that we offer a less attractive standard of social provision, nor is it a result of Brexit—it long pre-dates Brexit, even though Brexit undoubtedly compounds the challenge.

We have to face up to the fact that, in the words of the Scottish National Party, we have to have a mature discussion on why people leave Scotland, why a smaller percentage choose to come to Scotland and what we need to do over the next two or three decades to change that.

We agree with others about the advantages of the post-study work visa. I welcome the support of others, which underpinned the agreement that has now allowed the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh to be included in the pilot arrangements. We, and Michael Gove, also accept the need for a seasonal workers scheme embracing agriculture and hospitality, which my colleague Peter Chapman will speak to later.

However, the SNP invests heavily in proposals that would remove all the existing restrictions and devolve migration to Holyrood—where it would apparently establish a unique system for Scotland. The discussion paper does its best to make that case, but I do not believe that it convinces. Removing all existing controls to create a carte-blanche regimen is frankly reckless.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Jackson Carlaw: I want to proceed—I really am short of time now.

Although the demographic challenge might well be marginally more acute in Scotland, the issue is, nonetheless, a challenge for the whole UK. Although the potential sectoral employment shortfall in capacity is undeniable, it is undeniable in the same employment sectors across the UK, and the public accepts that. That is why Professor Sir John Curtice's report, "Just 15 Months to Go: What Scotland is Making of Brexit" states that 63 per cent of Scots said that they do not believe that Scotland should have an easier migration system than elsewhere in the UK. It also states that some 59 per cent of Scots believe that EU migrants should have no greater or lesser a status than migrants from the rest of the world. The Scottish Government has spent the past 18 months making

the alternative argument, but it has failed to convince Scotland.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member please give way on that point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you the time back, Mr Carlaw.

Fiona Hyslop: We are not saying that the migration system should be easier. We think that migration should be controlled. We are not saying that we should take away the whole system, and the question that Professor Curtice asked would have been about replacing the whole system. We are talking about a tailor-made system.

Jackson Carlaw: I want to come directly to that point. Let me be clear: the UK must design a future migration system that meets the needs of the UK. That system certainly needs to ensure that, as a nation, we have the required population to meet the sectoral employment needs that we face, that the demographic challenges are met and, importantly, that we continue to allow migration to influence and enrich the shape and tone of our national life.

Let me be generous to the discussion paper again and argue that the seven principles that are detailed on page 19 as being the characteristics of policy and systems on future migration are an equally sound basis for a policy across the UK as they are for a policy for Scotland. If I had the time, I would detail them, but I think that they address directly some of the points that the cabinet secretary made, which are challenges to the UK and which I support.

My final argument concerns the willingness of Scotland and Scots to enforce any variable or unique system. The paper rather coyly suggests that although the Scottish Government would set the policy, it would leave it to the UK Home Office to enforce that policy. I have to ask a question because I think that it is one that others will have: when has any SNP MSP or MP ever supported a Home Office decision to remove anyone from Scotland? I cannot recall such an occasion. Unless a policy such as the bespoke differentiated policy for Scotland that is envisaged is underpinned by enforcement action, it is simply not practical and I do not believe that it could be implemented.

Presiding Officer, I see that I am now out of time. Against a background of unprecedented change, of the emergence of a world of wholly different styles and patterns of work, of social engagement and integration, of transport and communications that we cannot yet foresee but which most of us here will live to see, we need to recognise just how much Scotland will need to change, and how much harder we will need to work to make Scotland the destination of choice

for entrepreneurs, skilled workers and talent in all its representation. Even in an age that is increasingly populated by drones, we must acknowledge and accept that our social and public services will continue to need ever-more dedicated individuals to sustain them. That is why my amendment encourages us all to seek, identify and agree upon an approach in Scotland and across the UK isles, and it is that ambition behind which we will put our support tonight.

I move amendment S5M-10571.3, to leave out from "unique" to end and insert:

"challenges facing Scotland and the rest of the UK's population and the potential economic gains if migration was sustained; notes the findings of reports by the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee and the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration; further notes the concerns of the public and numerous business groups regarding the practicality of significant internal deviation within the UK's migration system, and recognises that any variable migration scheme for Scotland must be developed in close co-operation with the UK Government and within an overall framework."

15:17

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): By the sounds of it, we all agree in the chamber that immigration enriches our lives. However, it is disappointing that the Conservative Party as a whole does not support that position. Jackson Carlaw has a minority view. I am glad that he is making the case, but he needs to make it to people such as Boris Johnson, who, during the EU referendum, made the case that 80,000 Turks would come over the border and flood the United Kingdom. Nigel Farage stood in front of the Brexit breaking point poster and said that all those immigrants would come into this country. Jackson Carlaw needs to make the case to those people and persuade them that they are wrong. So far, he is not succeeding, because his is a minority voice in the Conservative Party.

We face twin challenges on immigration. One is the demographics, about which we have heard quite a lot. By 2041, there will be 10,000 more deaths than births per year. The other is the economy. We have a shortage of workers in key sectors. On the demographics, we need to accept that immigrants are not a burden but an asset to the country. They tend to be healthier, many do not have families here and, often, many go back home once they have done their job. They are not a burden to our society. The Government's figures show that the average annual contribution to Government revenue is about £10,500 per immigrant, and that each immigrant contributes about £34,500 to gross domestic product.

Therefore, we need to continue to have immigration to deal with the demographic

challenge that we will face by 2041, when we will not have population growth but population decline. Immigrants are boosting tax revenues and they pay for the public services that we all rely on.

On the economic challenges regarding workers in the key sectors, we face problems not only in the NHS and social care but in areas such as the agricultural sector, where there are thousands of immigrant workers. In the food and drink sector, there are about 10,000 immigrant workers, which in the past few years has led to that sector growing to be worth £14 billion; it is expected to double in value by 2030. As a result of Brexit, the exchange rate is already driving some of those people away, so we are already struggling to get the workers that we need in order for that sector to thrive. It will not grow if we cannot get the workers in this country.

Then there is the university sector. In my patch, 20 per cent of the staff and about 10 per cent of the students at St Andrews university are from the EU. They are already being repelled by the Brexit vote and the message that we sent out on the back of the Brexit vote, pioneered by many Conservatives.

Fiona Hyslop: Is the member aware of today's figures, which show that we are now seeing a situation in which non-EU migration is higher than EU net migration? A lot of the issues that the member has raised are already being realised in the current immigration figures that came out today.

Willie Rennie: Yes. What is interesting about that is that, in his comments last year on the issue, Anton Muscatelli said that the vote on Brexit is not just repelling people from the European Union but is sending a message to the rest of the world that Britain is not a country that welcomes immigration. It has created uncertainty, and because of the potential lack of access to the European research area, it is deterring people from coming. I know many examples of academics who are choosing not to come here because they do not see this country as part of the European research area and they do not see it as a country that welcomes foreigners. That is what the Conservative Government is pioneering with its hard Brexit.

The real problem is that, during the referendum, people were promised that immigration would go down. People were promised that there would be fewer foreigners in our country. That was the aim of Boris Johnson's claims and that was the aim of Nigel Farage's poster—to get people on side on the back of immigration.

We now know the potential real cost to the economy of cutting immigration—and Jackson Carlaw agrees with us on that. Now that we know the real cost, there is a risk that we will face a

choice of either meeting the aspirations of people who voted for Brexit and damaging our economy, or doing the opposite. That is what is potentially dangerous about this issue. We need a proper debate about it across the United Kingdom because it is a UK-wide issue—I disagree with Fiona Hyslop when it comes to that point.

Across the UK, the farm sector needs about 80,000 agricultural workers to work as pickers at seasonal times of the year. In Scotland, the sector needs between 10,000 and 13,000 workers, so the dependence on those people is quite significant, both north and south of the border.

Large numbers of people are leaving the NHS, not just in Scotland but across the United Kingdom, because of the Brexit vote. They are going back home.

Dr Allan: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

The dependency ratio is growing faster in Scotland than it is in the rest of the UK, but the predicted end point of the dependency ratio is still 67 dependents per 100 people of working age. In Scotland, it will go up from 58 to 67 and in the UK it will go up from 61 to 67, so the problems are very similar north and south of the border.

It depresses me that every time it faces a problem in this chamber, the SNP comes forward with the answer that we need more powers for this Parliament. We need to lead the debate across the UK to tackle the problem across the UK. Cutting ourselves off and looking after our own problems will not solve the wider issues across the UK. That is why I oppose the SNP's motion. Let us lead the debate across the UK to make the change across the UK in order to get an immigration system that works for the whole of the UK.

I move amendment S5M-10571.2, to leave out from first "notes" to end and insert:

"believes that immigration has proven valuable to the economy, population and public services, including the NHS, in all parts of the UK; further believes that immigration and freedom of movement within the EU has enriched the country; notes that, while the Fresh Talent Initiative addressed a specific need, its scale was not sufficient to solve the population and economic challenges that exist in Scotland, and other parts of the UK, and that larger-scale, substantially differentiated approaches would pose a risk to the Common Travel Area, and considers therefore that what is required is a new UK-wide debate on the benefits of immigration and for the UK Government to cease its divisive rhetoric, abandon its arbitrary immigration cap and produce a statement on the benefits of workers from overseas, similar to that produced by the Scottish Government's Chief Economist in January 2018."

15:23

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome today's debate. Migration always has the potential to be open to misinformation and exploitation. We must deal with the facts of migration, talk about its importance to Scotland, and face the reality of population decline and the impact that it could have on our economy, our public services and our society.

Although there are amendments before us, both the Liberals and the Conservatives seem to recognise the significance of the problem that we face. It would be a positive move if the Parliament could reach a consensus on the need for a more honest debate about migration and a mature approach towards how we resolve it, and that includes working with the UK Government and finding solutions that maintain the cohesion of the UK.

There might be suspicions about others' motives, but there is a degree of common ground in the Parliament, and the motion gives us an opportunity to reflect that. I do not agree with every conclusion of the Government's paper, but I agree that if we do nothing we will experience significant challenges in maintaining, never mind growing, our population.

At the end of last year, the Institute for Public Policy Research published "An immigration strategy for the UK: Six proposals to manage migration for economic success". The report was a helpful contribution to the debate, which noted that immigration policy has too often been driven by political ideology, playing to prejudices and easy assumptions.

The IPPR set out options for addressing geographical imbalances. Crucially, it argued that the Home Office should retain responsibility for issuing visas and that non-labour migration should remain under the purview of central Government. That is the nub of the debate, if we are to reach agreement. How do we maintain a UK-wide system that provides the necessary flexibility for the UK nations and regions?

The reality in Scotland is that we need people. Population decline would have a serious impact on our economy, society and public services. We need people to settle in Scotland, to boost our population. Twenty years ago, Scotland was facing real difficulties, and without positive migration, Scotland's population would be in decline.

The 75-and-over age group is projected to be the fastest growing age group in Scotland. That presents huge challenges for our working-age population. Last year, Audit Scotland published a report on NHS workforce planning and noted that the NHS has an increasingly ageing workforce.

Some 38 per cent of staff are over 50, compared with 34 per cent in 2012. That issue is common across many sectors.

However, we have had recent population growth, which is attributed purely to positive migration. Whatever migration system we decide on, we must continue efforts to attract people to come here. We will be competing in an international market for skilled labour and we need to ensure that Scotland is attractive, welcoming, and rewarding.

I understand the caution that some people express about a differentiated system. Any additional powers must be justified and there must be a demonstrated need for any change to the migration powers of this Parliament. We could make progress on how the occupational shortage list operates, on our representation on the Migration Advisory Committee and on tailoring current visa arrangements to support our economy.

It is crucial that any changes maintain the cohesion of a UK migration system. They must maintain free movement within the UK, and they must be compatible with the UK system. This cannot be about disrupting the UK migration system. That might sound challenging to achieve, but there is much that we can do to tailor the current system and make it more responsive to Scotland's needs, without our having additional powers, although I accept that there is an argument for having more flexibility.

The fresh talent initiative demonstrated such an approach. However, a cross-party group of members of the Scottish Parliament was frustrated when we were unable to advance the approach under the coalition UK Government, which did not engage fully with the issue—if it had done, it would have understood that our proposals would not impact negatively on the UK system.

The experience shows that we need to consider seeking greater flexibility in the system to respond to pressures that we face in relation to skill shortages and population decline. An evidence-based, robust case that is reasonable and that stresses the Parliament's on-going commitment to a UK-wide system could lead us all to an agreement.

The greater challenge is how we navigate a UK-wide system of migration post-Brexit. We are still waiting for a UK immigration bill, which is likely to restrict migration further and to focus on EU migrants. If the UK leaves the EU without a single-market arrangement, freedom of movement will come to an end. We will be in a very different landscape from the one in which we currently operate.

I have concerns that if we move to an exclusively sectoral approach or one that is overly restrictive, our system will not recognise the benefits that are gained from people coming here to work and then settling here, raising a family and being part of a community. That is an important aspect of addressing Scotland's demographic challenges.

We need to be alert to future challenges, and we recognise the need for flexibility. Although so much is currently unknown, it is important that the Parliament is prepared to deal with this serious challenge.

15:28

Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I want to start by picking up on some of Willie Rennie's comments, because I thought that his speech was going well until we got to the end of it. If this debate is not an example of the Scottish Parliament leading the debate on immigration, what is it? However, there is only so much that we can do when we start a conversation but get nothing back from the other side. I find that really frustrating.

Scotland needs inward migration. It is as simple as that. We know, from the recently published "Scotland's Place in Europe: People, Jobs and Investment", about the demographic challenges that Scotland faces. It is predicted that there will be more deaths than births every year for the next 25 years. We have an ageing population, and without migration we will struggle to grow our working-age population.

We need an immigration system that looks at all the constituent parts of the UK rather than just at the UK as a whole. We can see the increasing pressure on key sectors in Scotland and what the impact of a bad immigration policy will be on our agriculture, public services and wider economy. It is expected to cost us more than £10 billion by 2040.

I wish that Ross Greer's amendment had been accepted, because he tried to make a valuable point about migration providing significant social, educational and cultural enrichment to our society. All too often, we think about the facts and figures without looking at the wider picture of what they represent.

What do we need in Scotland? We need a differentiated system that recognises our distinct needs. The effects of Brexit and the restriction on free movement are already being felt in spite of the fact that we have not yet left the EU. We are seeing it in key sectors of our economy, such as agriculture—other colleagues will talk about that later in the debate—and in other areas where Scotland takes the lead. For example, Dundee is

one of Europe's leading digital economies. Chris van der Kuyl, the head of 4J Studios, a video games company that has helped Dundee to develop that status, illustrated the issues that the industry is facing just now. He said:

"It is happening already. When we talk to people about the impact of Brexit they are already getting nervous about coming here ... It is really starting to impact some companies' ability to hire".

That is important because, as he goes on to say:

"In a global business it's all about attracting the best talent."

It is short-sighted not to address that issue in a way that has been shown to be achievable in other countries.

In her report to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee on options for differentiating the UK's immigration system, Dr Eve Hepburn explored some of the systems that are already in operation elsewhere. In Canada, two systems exist. The Canada-Quebec accord puts responsibility for immigration into Quebec in the hands of the Quebec Government. It can decide the total volume of migrants, the selection of potential candidates and the management of sponsorship arrangements.

Quebec's situation was historically very like that of Scotland, as it had a declining population with low fertility rates and outward migration. The system has been proven to work. Quebec's population increased by 200,000 between 2011 and 2016, from 7.9 million to 8.1 million, all as a result of immigration.

Spain has systems in place for Catalonia and the Basque Country. After being granted a statute of autonomy to delineate powers on immigration, Catalonia authorises its own working visas for migrants who are employed there, with the Spanish Government making the final decision on permits. A second system covers the Basque Country.

Australia has a number of regional migration schemes that are broken down into subclasses, including the regional sponsored migration scheme, the skilled nominated visa, the skilled regional state/territory sponsored business owner visa, and the working holiday visa.

In Switzerland, individual cantons have separate policies. Vaud is an example of a canton that, like Scotland, welcomes migration and the benefits that it brings to the economy and the region as a whole.

Differentiated systems are working in other countries, and they can work here. We had a taste of it in Scotland with the fresh talent scheme, which was a successful post-study work scheme that ran for three years before being

mainstreamed into the UK system and dropped by the UK Government in 2011. Universities Scotland estimates that the ending of that policy cost Scotland £254 million up to 2015 and lost us 5,400 students. It is claimed that the UK now has one of the least competitive policies for post-study work in the English-speaking world. The Smith commission recommended that that be reviewed, so the only thing standing in the way of that is the UK Government and the lack of political will to make it happen.

The only place in existing legislation that gives any consideration to the needs of Scotland is the Scottish shortage occupation list. Although the Scottish Government can contribute to that list, it is essentially no more than a consultee, as it has no formal role in the determination of the occupations that are considered to be in shortage.

We are now at a critical stage in discussing the issue while the immigration bill is being drafted. Scotland is more dependent on migrants for growth than other parts of the UK, but UK policy is to reduce net migration.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry but you really must conclude there. Time is tight.

Mairi Gougeon: I am going to, Presiding Officer. We need any new system to recognise our needs in Scotland and, more importantly, we need the political will on both sides.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but I will have to be quite hard on members. The statement took a lot of our time out and we have virtually no time in hand. You have all been warned. Try to cut your speeches down to five minutes. I know that you are all capable of it.

15:34

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I will try to cut my speech as I go, so I apologise now for the clunkiness of some of my comments.

I would like to bring some of my personal experiences to the debate today, because it is about migration and immigration, which in turn are about people and where they choose to live, work and travel to. I come from a family that largely emigrated to Canada, starting in the 1950s, when the first of them went over on a boat in search of a new and better life. Many of them never came back. In fact, our clan is as strong as ever, over there.

I, too, was one of the many thousands who left Scotland as a young man and headed for pastures new. In my 37 short years, I have lived and worked in many towns, cities and countries, including London, Bristol, Spain, Sydney and Ontario—and even, at one point, King's Lynn.

Much of the rationale for differentiated immigration systems was shown in the previous contribution, in which the examples of Canada and Australia were cited. Having lived and worked in both those countries, I like to think that I can bring first-hand experience to the debate and put to bed some of the myths about how such systems work. I recall that when I was living in Australia and my visa ran out, officials gave me just three days' notice to leave. I had to pack up my life, quit my job, empty my apartment, leave my friends and a relationship and get on an aeroplane to come home, never to return.

Packing up one's things and moving countries is a big deal for people. It is a huge risk, and people do it for a variety of reasons—economic, social or cultural, for adventure and sometimes just out of curiosity. That is certainly what drove me to move overseas and set up a new life.

Therefore the debate about a country's ability to choose what skills it needs and what economy it wants to create is an important one. I tried to intervene on the cabinet secretary in her opening remarks. I appreciate that time is tight but, from those remarks, I am still entirely unclear whether it is the SNP's view that there should be no cap on immigration at all, or that there should be no migration targets. I want to press that point, because I would like the cabinet secretary to state it, if that is the case. Surely the whole point of a tailored system is that inherent in it is the ability to choose the type of skills that we want to come into the country, by having control over them.

The debate is about the suggestion that, in the UK, there could be differentiated immigration policies. It is fair to have that debate. Many people are opposed to Brexit in principle, but it opens up discussions on subjects—future immigration policy is certainly one. The cabinet secretary also opened by saying that there is consensus about a tailored system, but the definition of "consensus" is just as subjective as the subject that is being debated.

I would like to draw on comments by business and academia, whose opinions I value and trust. The Federation of Small Businesses expressed concerns about the effects on business of a differentiated scheme, such as the costs of managing and operating it. The NFU Scotland, which represents our farming communities, also seems to prefer a UK-wide solution that would take into account the needs and asks of Scotland. Scotland Food & Drink—many of whose members, I suspect, rely on a large migrant workforce—is also worried about companies that work across the UK and how visas for their workers might be implemented.

Dr Allan: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I will, if it is brief.

Dr Allan: I thank Jamie Greene for giving way. Without merely trading examples, I say that he should be aware that only this morning I met the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, which urged me—and, indeed, Parliament more widely—to lobby for a differentiated solution. Will he join me in doing so?

Jamie Greene: The devil really is in the detail of what such a differentiated solution would look like. At the moment, far more questions than answers are raised about how on earth we would enforce it. If there were to be a Scottish work visa, north of Berwick, how would that work in practice for people who enter the UK south of the border, and vice versa, if they have a permit to work in Scotland only? The suggestion raises substantial questions that we simply do not have time to go into in detail. We should have the debate, do the research and have the argument, but we should do so properly and not just jump on the bandwagon of asking for the sake of it.

I appreciate, too, that there is desire for change. I come from a part of the world that was once the home of the electronics industry. Anyone who knows the area will remember IBM and National Semiconductor. Their sites now lie empty. Where should young Scots go when they want to fulfil their ambitions? Should they do what I did?

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I do not really have time—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid not. The member is in his last minute.

Jamie Greene: Should young Scots up sticks and move south of the border or overseas, or are we providing them with enough highly skilled jobs here?

In my final moments, I will say this. Let us future proof our Scottish workforce so that the jobs of tomorrow can be filled as industry changes. We do not need a new migration policy in order to do that: we can do it today, in schools, with the right skills and the right teachers to teach them. Let us start with the basics. Let us protect our existing single market in the UK and ensure that Scotland is an attractive place to come to, work in and live in. Let us have the debate—but let us have it for the right reasons and with the right motives.

15:39

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): This feels a wee bit like groundhog day. We are the best part of two years on from the fateful Brexit vote, and still we have no resolution on what migration will look like after we leave the EU. I find myself rising

in the chamber yet again to highlight its implications for a key economic contributor in my constituency—the soft fruit sector.

In the time since I first raised the matter back in late June 2016, little has changed—apart, that is, from the growing evidence of the negative impact that Brexit and the accompanying uncertainties are having. Despite lobbying by the sector and Scottish Government support for its efforts to have Westminster recognise its need to access a seasonal migrant workforce, we are no further forward. Michael Gove may have promised Scots fruit farmers news on a way forward by the end of next month, but then he went in front of the English NFU and admitted that the decision is outwith his control.

Farms in my constituency are utterly dependent on people from other countries coming to pick the fruit that they grow—many of them come back year after year. However, the anti-immigration rhetoric that characterised the Brexit debate, coupled with the falling value of the pound, has already led regular returners either to opt for pastures new or to draw up plans for a future away from Scotland.

As is noted in the Scottish Government's discussion paper that was published before the February recess, many businesses have expressed concerns about the impact that is already being felt—concerns that are rightly shared by the SNP Government. The evidence of the impacts goes beyond anecdotal evidence. As I laid out in a debate in November last year, the co-operative organisation Angus Growers, which is based largely in my constituency, needs 4,100 workers annually. Last year, 347 seasonal employees either did not arrive or left early. As a direct consequence, the farms took a combined £660,000 hit. Angus Growers and the wider sector are bracing themselves. The 2018 season is fast approaching, and next month is when the EU workforce returns. Last year set a trend, and no one seriously expects to see it being reversed.

I will share some bang-up-to-date supporting evidence from the major farm in the Angus Growers collective. On that farm in 2016, 296 of the workforce out in the field were returners from the previous year. In 2017, that number dropped to 267. The total that is confirmed for the coming year stands at 212, which represents a drop of almost 19 per cent in just 12 months. That simply cannot be allowed to go unchecked—not for Angus, not for Scotland and not, indeed, for the rest of the UK.

A recent report in *The Guardian* revealed that a soft fruit farmer in Herefordshire is to move some of his company's raspberry and blueberry growing to China, which will lead to 200 seasonal jobs being lost. Citing the lack of clarity from the Prime

Minister on the UK Government's immigration policy, Angus Davison said:

"We are already out of time".

Mr Davison has written to Theresa May, saying that

"Unless a seasonal workers scheme is put in place, you must expect to see the steep decline of this significant rural employer and source of food."

Do we want to have to import from China food that can readily be grown on these islands, just because the UK Government is unwilling to recognise the needs of an industry? Is that to be one of the achievements of Brexit?

Of course, migration concerns are not restricted to agriculture and seasonal workers. The Scottish Government's analysis paper estimates that Scotland's gross domestic product will decrease by 4.5 per cent by 2040 if migration levels are reduced to the UK Government's target levels. That is equivalent to a fall of almost £5 billion in GDP. Across the whole UK, the impact would be smaller—a 3.7 per cent reduction. If the UK Government were to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands, as some people have suggested, Scotland's GDP would fall by 9.3 per cent, compared with 7.6 per cent for the UK.

I welcome the fact that the Scottish Government has developed proposals and a bespoke solution for Scotland in order to seek to address the matter. That is a sensible and necessary move, given the inertia at UK level. There is an indisputable need to plan for the UK Government failing to come up with a sensible UK-wide migration policy, which looks increasingly likely. As MSPs, we need to come together and pursue what is in Scotland's best interests. Is not that what we were all elected to do?

15:44

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to debate migration, and I welcome the Scottish Government's analysis paper and approach.

As, I think, I have told Parliament before, my mother emigrated from Glasgow to Hong Kong, where I was born. I then made the journey in reverse. In that respect, it could be said that I am a migrant to Scotland. Of course, Scots can be found in every corner of the world, and we in turn welcome people from across the world to this country.

However, there is no doubt that Brexit has huge implications for all of us, and there are some areas in which we can only begin to estimate the impact on our economy and on individuals. That said, although this is a time of huge uncertainty, we can be clear about Brexit's impact on the labour

market. Some 181,000 EU nationals live in Scotland. The majority are Polish, followed in succession by Irish and Spanish nationals, but I will talk about specific sectors in a moment.

As we know, Scotland's population is projected to decline if we do nothing. We are also, unfortunately, ageing; indeed, our population is ageing more rapidly than the population elsewhere in the UK. As a result, we absolutely depend on inward migration to meet our population growth target, so if that migration is absent and EU nationals are unable to come here, our population will inevitably decline, which will have severe negative impacts on our economy. It will lead to labour shortages in key industry sectors and in public services that we hold dear.

Let me touch on some of the most affected sectors. As we have heard, the soft fruit industry relies on seasonal labour and the majority of its employees come from the EU. The industry has grown substantially over the past 20 years and now contributes more than £1 billion to the economy, so we simply cannot afford to lose it. The same applies to farming more generally.

However, that is not the only concern for our fruit growers; another is how we can deliver that fruit in order to add to our exports. In what is already a very constrained sector—Scotland is short of 11,000 lorry drivers—the impact of losing the foreign driving capacity that partly fills the gap will be severe.

The hospitality sector will experience the double whammy of losing not only EU employees, who make up a significant element of the workforce, but EU visitors to this country, which will have a material effect on the industry and the country's GDP.

I also point out that EU nationals comprise 9 per cent of students and almost 25 per cent of research staff in our universities. We risk losing talented European staff and academics: no one can tell me that that will not be bad for the education sector and the economy.

There will also be an immense impact on our NHS. There has been a 96 per cent drop in the number of nurses wanting to come to Scotland, vacancy rates are up and one in five doctors is thinking about leaving. Brexit and the Tories' lack of a response on migration are contributing to driving doctors and many other essential professionals out of the country.

What can we do? We should have a differentiated immigration system that is linked to specific sectors, but I take Claire Baker's point that it needs to be flexible and go wider. I point out, however, that we have had a differentiated system before: the fresh talent scheme was introduced by

the Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition, and we could have such a scheme again.

I agree with the seven principles that have been set out by the Scottish Government but, frankly, we need to get on with this and deliver practical action with a bit more urgency. Brexit is round the corner. I very much welcome the tone and tenor of Jackson Carlaw's approach, but I absolutely urge him to use his influence—but soon—on the UK Government so that it comes to the table and creates a differentiated system that actually works for all of Scotland.

15:49

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

Probably around this time last February, I gave a speech on the potential impact of Brexit on Scotland's economy. I gave that speech a cursory look as I was preparing for today's debate and found that I could have recycled it and delivered it again, word for word, without any fear that any of my questions in it for the UK Government would be irrelevant or out of date. I rarely quote Theresa May, but the phrase "Nothing has changed" seems to be particularly relevant.

We are still in the dark about what will happen to our labour market as a result of Brexit, and about what plans there are to protect it. I say that having come straight here from the frankly odd experience of viewing the UK Government Brexit papers that the Scottish Office has finally delivered to the Scottish Parliament for MSPs to view in a secure room. It would not be fair to say that I know more now than I did before I went into the room, except to say that it looks as though UK Government officials, at least, are owning up to Brexit being an economic disaster. I say that they are owning up, but I cannot prove it because we cannot reveal any details. We have signed a pledge to say that we will not divulge anything that we read, so the public will know nothing of what is in the report—scant though it is.

Scotland has benefited enormously from migration—permanent and temporary—of citizens of other EU countries. I am in no doubt that ending free movement will have a detrimental impact on our economy, society, individuals and families. I represent a constituency that depends on that migration to sustain our agriculture, tourism, fishing, hospitality, health and care sectors. In particular, we have been fortunate in the north-east that many Polish, Lithuanian and Estonian people have settled there.

Due to the fortunate position in which we find ourselves as the energy capital of Europe, some other sectors have found it difficult to compete for workers in the north-east. In one of Billy Connolly's stand-up routines, he tells the story of the

Glasgow schools opening their gates and everybody going straight to the shipyards. Much the same happens in Aberdeenshire, where the schools open their gates and everybody goes straight offshore or into oil industry service jobs.

That means that the more traditional north-east sectors including farming and fish processing have struggled to recruit. That was certainly the case in Mintlaw, where the fish processing factory had to close its doors a few decades ago due to its inability to recruit locally. However, now, because so many eastern European people have come to work and settle in the town, Macduff Shellfish (Scotland) Ltd is thriving and exporting millions of pounds' worth of shellfish all over the world.

A couple of weeks ago, as part of a visit by the Education and Skills Committee, Ross Greer and I met about 10 female students from other EU countries at the Peterhead campus of Nescol—North East Scotland College. They are training to be mechanics, accountants and nursery teachers. All had settled in Peterhead for years and wanted to continue to contribute to Peterhead life, but many of them told us that family and friends who had been hoping to join them were now changing their minds.

Rural areas like mine are more reliant on European Economic Area workers than non-rural areas. The interim report by the National Council of Rural Advisers said that, without migrant workers, many businesses would be "unviable". The SRUC—Scotland's Rural College—report that was published this week echoed that.

My colleague Graeme Dey mentioned the soft fruit sector: soft fruits are grown around Oldmeldrum, which is in my area. I was particularly struck by evidence that was given by Angus Soft Fruits to the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee in 2016. It said:

"We could scale right back and match our production to the local labour. Or we could move abroad."

From Graeme Dey's speech, which gave more up-to-date information from the soft fruit growers in Angus, it looks as though their worst fears have already been realised, and Brexit has not even happened yet. Imagine there being no Scotland-grown summer strawberries or raspberries. Aside from the huge impact on the local economy, I cannot say that I am excited about buying force-grown imported strawberries that taste like neeps.

The needs of Scotland are completely different to those of the UK as a whole: it is time that we had an immigration policy that reflects that. After viewing the Brexit documents in Queensberry house an hour ago, I am clear on another thing. We all know that the team at the Scotland Office has been increased in the past two years and, like many people, I am at a loss as to what on earth

will be found for those civil servants to do, since we already have a Scottish Government. Here is an idea: the Scotland Office should use its army of civil servants to carry out a Scotland's regions breakdown of EU migration, so that we can understand more fully the potential shortfall, and get a fit-for-purpose differentiated immigration strategy in place that takes into account the specific needs of regions of Scotland. That is not just necessary, but urgent.

15:53

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The paper by the Scottish Government is a welcome contribution to the debate on migration and population in Scotland. It recognises in particular the economic contribution that migrants make to Scotland and how migration has shaped our country's history.

However, the contribution of migrants to Scotland cannot be reduced to just economics, as the unselected Green amendment mentions and as the paper itself ably addresses. People who choose to come and live in this country contribute in many ways, including socially and culturally.

Large numbers of migrants to Scotland, from the EU and further afield, work in areas as varied as the creative industries, agriculture and higher education. More than one in three of the staff of some national performing companies are EU27 citizens, as are almost a quarter of university research staff. Without their contributions, would our university sector still be world leading or would Edinburgh remain a global cultural centre?

Migration also speaks to the kind of society that we want to be and to our collective identity and values. Thankfully, in Scotland, we have not witnessed a political race to appear tougher on migration, with parties stamping "Controls on immigration" on mugs or chiselling it into stones. The contrast between the political debate here and that at Westminster is stark. However, to those members who are speaking today and who know that their party colleagues in Parliament and in Government at Westminster take a very different approach, I ask what they are doing to challenge that. Standing here and challenging it is one thing, but challenging it directly in their party and making change is another.

The Government at Westminster has deliberately set out to create, in its words, a "hostile environment" for migrants. It has created an inhumane system in pursuit of statistical goals that are ultimately detrimental to the country as a whole. That is policy making at its absolute worst. Employers, public services and even landlords have been turned into the enforcement arm of the Home Office by being obliged to run immigration

status checks on people. That not only risks migrants being turned away from housing or employment due to landlords' or employers' concerns about remaining legally compliant, but gives free rein to racists to justify discriminating against others, and we have already seen evidence of that with housing in particular.

Several months ago, I met EU citizens in Scotland at the Language Hub in Glasgow, who told me about the fear and anxiety that they have experienced since the European referendum because they do not know what their future status will be. They have had to disclose their nationality to access the NHS and they have seen advertisements for flats that say, "No EU nationals."

However, they do not face the worst of UK immigration policy. Just yesterday, a long-running investigation by BuzzFeed exposed insights into the human suffering and misery that the Tories' hostile environment has created. BuzzFeed has found that efforts to tackle modern slavery are being undermined by the Government's aggressive obsession with deportation and it has revealed a case in which a victim of child sex trafficking, who is now in his 40s but who was trafficked into the UK as a child, had finally been granted official recognition as a victim of slavery but was still slated for deportation. Incredibly, only one in 10 recognised victims of slavery is granted leave to remain in the UK. That is only the most recent revelation of the harsh reality of the UK Government's immigration and asylum system; there are many more examples of families torn apart and child refugees deported as soon as they hit 18.

It is imperative that powers over migration, and where possible asylum, are devolved to Scotland not just for the sake of our economy—although that is vital—but to ensure that those making their lives here are treated with the most basic dignity and compassion that we believe they deserve.

We need to stop the harm that is being done to vulnerable people and the damage that is being done to our economy, society and culture. We need to ensure that the needs of Scotland are met. Argyll and Bute, which is in my region, is identified as one of the most fragile areas, with an ageing and declining population. Its population is projected to decline by 8 per cent between 2014 and 2049. Scotland's migration strategy needs to encourage people to settle in such areas to bring the benefits of migration to them and to ensure that many rural communities continue to exist at all.

We know that devolved approaches to migration work. As the motion highlights, the fresh talent scheme operated in Scotland with great success. However, at the time, the scheme worked in co-

operation with a Home Office that was much more open to progressive migration policies than the current Home Office. We also know of examples from other countries. The Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee took evidence on devolved migration systems that highlighted the success of examples of extensive devolution in Australia and Canada in particular, as well as various other schemes across the world, including in Switzerland, which Mairi Gougeon mentioned.

The UK Government should take action on the issue now; given the profound risk that the UK Government's Brexit plan poses to Scotland, action must be taken now. There are actions that we can take here, immediately, with the competencies that we already have. It is great that the Scottish Government is consulting on the electoral franchise, for example. The right to vote must be expanded to all those who live in Scotland, including all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The right to vote should be based on residency, not nationality. I look forward to making that case as the consultation moves on.

We say it often, but it really cannot be said enough that Scotland is a welcoming country and an outward-looking and internationalist one. However, we need the powers to make that aspiration a reality, and it is time for the UK Government to listen.

15:58

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): It is heartening that, despite the best attempts of some populist parties and some sections of our press to frame public opinion against immigration, we as politicians have united today to talk up the positives of immigration rather than build on the anti-migrant rhetoric that seems to be ever more prevalent. The progressive narrative of today's debate is entirely understandable, as there can be few of us in the chamber who are not descendants of migrants; indeed, I can trace my ancestry back to Ireland and Russia.

Scotland—and the wider UK for that matter—has benefited massively from immigration. Migrants originating from within and outwith the EU make a vital contribution to our economy and our culture; they ensure that we have the workers to meet the needs of our businesses and public sector.

In my Rutherglen constituency, we are fortunate to have friends and neighbours from across the globe, including from Poland, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Ireland, Germany and Italy. However, our EU migrant workforce is under severe threat with Brexit and the associated curtailment on freedom of movement.

The economic impact of a Brexit-driven reduction in migration is estimated to result in a decline in Government revenue of 3.5 per cent in Scotland, but 2.7 per cent in the rest of the UK. From those figures, we can conclude that Brexit will disproportionately affect Scotland, so one could argue that we require a different arrangement to protect our economy, which is so heavily reliant on inward migration.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests: I am a registered mental health nurse and hold an honorary contract with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Through my profession, I know first-hand how my colleagues in the field of mental health, the workers in our hospitals and accident and emergency services and those in our GP surgeries all play a vital role in supporting the health needs of our population.

Sadly, the UK Government's position—or lack thereof—on guaranteeing EU citizens' rights is having a detrimental impact on the flow of inward migration, especially in relation to our NHS. No matter what Ruth Davidson may have said on television at the weekend, no deal has been struck on securing those rights.

Figures collated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council show that the number of new nursing applications from the EU fell 96 per cent since the Brexit vote in 2016—from 1,304 in July 2016 to a mere 46 in April 2017—and that is even before we begin to take into account the effect of ending freedom of movement when we leave the EU.

The Tories are quick to argue that an exodus of EU health workers has yet to take place, but I remind them that neither has Brexit. We must maintain inward migration to Scotland, including the existing free movement with our EU neighbours, to help to increase Scotland's population and to keep our NHS from reaching crisis point. As Janet Davies, the chief executive and general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said:

"if there is a Brexit cliff-edge in migration, it will be the NHS going over it."

Although immigration policy remains reserved, the Scottish Government will advocate for and attempt to influence change in the UK migration system to ensure that Scotland's needs are met—as far as they can be—within UK policy. For example, as we have heard, the Scottish Government will advocate for the reintroduction of the post-study work visa, the scrapping of the arbitrary net migration target and the ending of the scandal and heartbreak of Skype families, by improving the rights of people in Scotland to bring close family into the country with them.

Those changes at UK level would greatly benefit Scotland, but there is an overwhelming case for

the Scottish Government to be given the power to tailor its own immigration policy. The UK Government's one-size-fits-all approach to migration is no longer appropriate. Scotland is a different country with different needs, so it is time for a different approach.

Expert after expert, study after study, committee after committee consistently tell us of the benefits of Scotland having its own distinct immigration policy. From this Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee and the subsequent report by Dr Eve Hepburn to the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee, the evidence shows that reforming our immigration system would better reflect the diverse makeup of the different parts of the UK.

It is clear that the need to address disparities between the UK-wide immigration system and the different labour and skills shortages in the constituent parts of the UK will become even more pressing after Brexit. If the Tory Government will not accept our specific population needs, and if it does not make the necessary changes to address those needs, it should think about giving the powers to the SNP Scottish Government, which will.

16:04

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):

The opening words of the Scottish Government's "Scotland's Population Needs and Migration Policy: Discussion Paper on Evidence, Policy and Powers for the Scottish Parliament" are:

"Scotland is a progressive outward looking nation ... migration strengthens our society and our nation benefits from the skills, the experience and the expertise of those individuals who have chosen to live, work and study in Scotland. Future migration systems should ensure that Scotland can welcome people within Europe and from elsewhere who want to study, live, work and raise their families here."

Those are words that none of us would disagree with.

Scotland needs immigration, but so does the rest of the UK. The movement of people enriches both societies and those who move. Migration is good, but it clearly cannot be a free-for-all. It can fill labour gaps—Jamie Halcro Johnston will touch on that—but I hear all the time in my subject area of housing that there is a skills shortage and that builders are getting older and not enough young people are taking up their trades. Attracting people from abroad can help, but we should be training youngsters from here to be brickies, plumbers and electricians; and we should be doing something to attract them to become architects, surveyors and planners.

There is much in the Scottish Government paper to agree with, particularly its seven principles: that migration policy should address the needs of all Scotland, attract the best talent, protect workers' rights, enable families to be together, focus on what people can contribute and not what they can afford, and be controlled. The second and the last principles are particularly important. Scotland needs to be attractive, but saying it is attractive is not enough: we must make it so. Whacking up taxes on middle earners does not do that, and we will see the results of that in years to come. The last principle is also crucial, because migration should be controlled—the question is at what level of Government.

The Scottish Government paper was written through the prism of Brexit and the yellow lens of nationalism with the intention of driving a wedge between Scotland and the rest of the UK. That was to be expected, but it is not sensible and mature government. Should Scotland have its own immigration policy? We might as well ask whether Newcastle, Merseyside, or the West Midlands should have their own. Or why not break it down within Scotland and ask whether Glasgow, Aberdeen or Dundee should have their own policy? It is difficult to see how applying different immigration rules to different parts of the UK would not complicate the immigration system, harm its integrity and cause difficulties for employers with a presence in more than one part of the UK.

Anyway, Scotland's issues are not unique. As Doctor Madeleine Sumption of the migration observatory at the University of Oxford told the Scottish Affairs Select Committee last month:

"There are other areas of the UK that are experiencing population decline, or would be experiencing population decline if it was not for migration."

The Scottish Chambers of Commerce told the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee's inquiry on immigration that devolution of immigration powers to Scotland is not necessary and that we should look at sectoral and geographical issues. We should be able to find solutions. The Law Society of Scotland's briefing came up with a useful idea, which is that

"Scottish representation on the Migration Advisory Committee would be beneficial. Active review of the Scottish Shortage Occupation List would also be welcome to ensure the list genuinely reflects skill shortages in Scotland and can be updated and amended as necessary to meet the needs of the Scottish economy."

We should look at that idea.

The SNP might think that it speaks for Scotland in everything, but it does not. It is out of tune with the country on immigration, because the people do not want a different immigration system here. As Jackson Carlaw mentioned, polling by NatCen

found that 63 per cent of Scots did not believe that it should be easier for EU migrants to come to Scotland compared to going to the rest of the UK and that only 24 per cent agreed that it should be easier to come here. We need migration—it is good—and I back the amendment in Jackson Carlaw's name.

16:08

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): As a passionate internationalist, I am proud that Scotland has been for centuries an international nation. Today, international links are as important as they have ever been to the high-tech, manufacturing, and food and drink industries, to the social care sector and to so many other sectors of our economy. Such links are vital for the Scotland of today and tomorrow and for the challenges that we face together. However, what is also vital is an openness to attract skilled labour and motivated individuals. The free movement of labour is paramount for the present and future of our economy and society.

For centuries, Leith in particular has been one of Scotland's gateways to the world, from Roman times to recent times. That is why I hope one day to see a migration museum in Leith, at the old customs house.

Edinburgh Northern and Leith has one of the highest migration levels in Scotland, from new Leithers selling products 100 years ago to migrant programmers driving Edinburgh's financial technology boom in the 21st century. From hospitality to culture, from public services to commerce, Leith demonstrates a truth that prevails across Scotland: we not only benefit from migration but require it to support our everyday lives and the standard of living that we have become accustomed to.

In the NHS, for example, medical professionals from around the globe have played a vital role and are highly valued for the labour that they provide to our NHS, as they have been for decades. In the creative industries, artists from around the world choose Scotland to create their performances, music, installations and pieces of literature, and we all benefit from that. More than 12 per cent of those employed in the food and drink sector—10,000 people—are EU nationals, and 13 per cent of those employed in the tourism sector—24,000 people—are EU nationals. As has been touched on, the construction industry attracting workers to come here from elsewhere is absolutely vital if we are to tackle the current housing shortages.

That is why we need flexibility to set different policies here in Scotland. Let us be clear: UK immigration policies have for many years failed Scotland by focusing, perhaps understandably, on

the south-east of England. Brexit will undoubtedly, according to all the analysis, make that worse. There will be labour shortages and negative economic impact, because each EU citizen in Scotland contributes an average of more than £10,000 in tax revenue. By 2014, lower migration alone would reduce our GDP by 4.5 per cent, which is equivalent to a fall of almost £5 billion.

In terms of our population, the number of deaths expected in the years to 2040 will vastly exceed the number of births, so action is required to maintain and grow Scotland's working-age population and to help support the ageing population—and it is a welcome fact that people are living longer. It is clear that the UK Government's plans to reduce migration would not support Scotland's economy or our population needs. That is factual analysis.

Let us remember that all Scotland's population growth over the next 25 years is projected to come from migration. We are reliant on it. Therefore, for the sake of Scotland's economic security, and considering Scotland's population projections, there is an overwhelming case for Scotland to have the power to tailor migration policy differently.

It has been insinuated that Scotland is not an attractive place. It is. Edinburgh was rated second in the world for quality of life. The problem, and one of the main barriers, is current immigration law and policy, and Brexit will make it worse. The Scottish Government's proposals to give our Parliament a greater say on UK migration policy, to support our needs, are sensible and increasingly necessary.

There has been no clarity from the UK Government on what migration policy will be post-Brexit. That is astonishing. If Westminster does not want to provide adequate vision or values when it comes to migration, it should give this Parliament the powers to do something more effective and ethical, to keep Scotland internationalist and outward looking, secure and competitive, and to take our country forward.

16:14

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I will cut straight to the chase. Anyone who thinks that we can plug the gap only by upskilling the existing population is not looking at the facts. For every other member, apart from Graham Simpson it would seem—I am not quite sure what Jamie Greene was saying—EU migration has been a positive story for Scotland. However, that is not what I came here to say today. I know that EU migration has been a positive story for Scotland from the point of view of cultural enrichment, but we are talking about our economic success.

Whether someone is for or against increased or liberal EU migration, it is essential that we deal with the issue.

Like Gillian Martin, I could recycle another speech just for today. I have argued consistently that we need a differentiated policy on immigration—not a separate policy—that recognises that the facts on the ground in Scotland are different. They may be different in Newcastle for all I know, and they may be different in other regions, but if we are one United Kingdom—and I still believe in that—there has to be a policy that recognises the needs of every part of the UK. Five per cent of our workforce are EU migrants and they are key to certain sectors. Modelling by the Scottish Government has shown that

“each EU migrant working in Scotland contributes an additional £34,400 to GDP per year”.

In addition, as others have said, the EU migrant population is younger than the rest of the population. If we do not recognise the facts on the ground, there is a lot to lose.

Sixty-three per cent of Scots would accept freedom of movement in order to get a trade deal that was beneficial for Scotland. That does not mean that there is not public concern about immigration—it would be wrong not to acknowledge that. However, as politicians our job is to ensure that people see the positive impact of immigration and realise that our country's economy depends on it. As the IPPR has said, net migration targets published by the Home Office have forced the Government to crudely drive down the overall numbers, often in contradiction to the objectives of other UK departments. The figures that were announced today are, for the first time, under 100,000.

However, we are in a new context now, and a new immigration policy for a Britain outside of the European Union needs to be designed to address some of the country's core weaknesses. Those weaknesses are not just here in Scotland but across the UK. That includes addressing geographical imbalances that exist across the nations and regions. Geographical flexibility is a necessity to address the distinct and differentiated problems that Scotland faces.

Like others, I took time out this week to read the sectoral analysis of the impact of Brexit. I went to the Donald Dewar room and tried to take in as much of the 19-page document as I could, and all the graphs that accompanied it. The central message for me was pretty clear: whichever deal we look at, the picture for the country is bleak. We need to address that. I am not reading from the document, by the way, in case members think that

I stole it. I had my mobile phone taken off me, so I could not do that.

I read about the impact of Brexit on the university sector. Currently about 21,000 students and a quarter of research staff come from EU countries. Last month, the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee was told that Brexit would have a significant impact on Scotland's universities and would result in a huge drop in EU student numbers. Professor Andrea Nolan, the convener of Universities Scotland, said that Scotland would

“lose out pretty big time”

and recommended that there should be a much longer transition period to try to deal with that. Perhaps that is for another day.

In my opinion, the harder the Brexit, the tougher it will be on Scotland's economy and population. Current migration policy does not address Scotland's needs, particularly in relation to population growth. It would be wrong to expect Scotland to rely on a system that might serve only London and the south east. We believe in EU migration not just because we are a progressive country, but because there is an economic imperative.

In substance, the Tory amendment to the motion seems okay, but the fact that it says that

“any variable migration scheme for Scotland must be developed in close co-operation with the UK Government”

suggests that the Scottish Tories do not support a differentiated position. Like others, I urge the Scottish Tories—who have played a constructive role in the Brexit negotiations so far—to speak loudly to the UK Government for a differentiated position for Scotland. That would serve the country well.

16:19

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): It is rather fitting that we have the granddaughter of an Italian immigrant in the chair for this part of the debate. Before Linda Fabiani took the chair, we had Christine Grahame, who is also someone who was not born in Scotland.

I am one of those yellow nationalists that Graham Simpson tried to demean in his contribution. I am a proud nationalist and a proud internationalist. Being an English-born Scot is something that I am very proud of, certainly when it comes to debates about immigration and emigration.

Jamie Greene, who has unfortunately left the chamber, was incorrect in what he said about IBM and National Semiconductor. He was correct to say that National Semiconductor is no longer

there, but it was bought over by Texas Instruments and, the last time I looked, about 200 people were employed on that site. It is not the empty site that Mr Greene asserted it to be.

Mr Rennie was rather disingenuous in his speech. This Parliament and the Scottish Government have been attempting to lead the debate on immigration and emigration, and on the whole issue of Brexit. Unfortunately, Mr Rennie needs to have a UK Government that is prepared to listen and talk to the Scottish Government about Brexit and population matters.

I generally welcome the publication of the Scottish Government's paper. As we hurtle ever faster towards the inevitable car crash that is Brexit, it is time for wider Scotland to fully engage in the debate about immigration and emigration.

It is clear that a differentiated migration policy for Scotland is crucial. Migration, if for the sake of this debate we consider it to be related solely to the movement of people for employment purposes, is pertinent to Scotland's development as an inclusive, fair, prosperous and innovative nation, because we benefit from having a diverse workforce. It is therefore essential to our economic prospects and our demographic sustainability—considering that the migration observatory at the University of Oxford has projected that Scotland's population will fall in the coming decades—that Scotland continues to attract the level and nature of migration that it needs.

There has been a long history of emigration from and migration to Scotland, which has shaped our country. People from overseas who come to Scotland to live, work or study help to strengthen our society and we welcome them. In my constituency of Greenock and Inverclyde, we have examples of both immigration and emigration.

The introduction of the fresh talent initiative in 2005, which has been mentioned in the debate, was welcomed. Unfortunately, the UK Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition Government ended the scheme in 2012 as part of a series of changes to the immigration system that were intended to limit abuse and to create a hostile environment for illegal migrants.

This is the year of young people, yet ironically it is our young people's future that is at stake. Their right to live, work and study across Europe is at risk of being removed in a process in which few of them had any say.

The Scottish Government has repeatedly stated that it wishes to remain in the single market and customs union post-Brexit. Thankfully, Jeremy Corbyn finally seems to be warming to that idea after frequent calls from the SNP—and even from his Labour counterparts in Scotland and Wales—to stand up to the Brexiteers. That shows the

terrible way in which Labour has approached the Brexit mess thus far.

The consensus behind the introduction of the fresh talent initiative in Scotland exists for its reintroduction today; that was reflected in the Smith commission and in cross-party work that has been done since then.

Scotland is a progressive, outward-looking nation. I do not want to lose that. I want Scotland to be that welcoming nation still. I want Scotland to be a country that people choose to come to live in and which people choose to go from to experience other countries but then, hopefully, come back.

We need to create as much certainty as possible and reduce the uncertainty that Brexit is creating. For all Scots, whether they are new Scots or those who were born here, we need to have that differentiated system.

16:25

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I refer members to my entry in the register of interests in relation to farming.

For months, industry leaders and the Scottish Conservative group have been asking the Government to drop its persistent desire to create a different immigration system for Scotland from that of the rest of the UK. A number of members have spoken about food production; my comments will mainly be about the need for agriculture and food processing workers.

Many experts and industry figures see the SNP's plans for a differentiated system as unnecessary at best and damaging at worst. We fully realise that the farming and food and drink industries are highly reliant on EU workers. Without their skill and hard work, we would not have seen our food and drink industry grow into the multibillion-pound industry it is today. At any time, between 5,000 and 15,000 non-UK seasonal workers are employed in Scottish agriculture.

It is not just a Scottish problem. The labour needs of a daffodil grower in Devon are exactly the same as the labour needs of a strawberry producer in Angus.

Fiona Hyslop: I do not deny that there will be challenges in different sectors in the rest of the UK, but the fundamental difference is that between now and 2041, the natural change—the difference between births and deaths—in Scotland will be negative, while in England the natural change will contribute to a 39 per cent growth in its population. That is the basic difference. Does Peter Chapman acknowledge that?

Peter Chapman: Maybe the SNP needs to look at some of its other policies to see why people do not want to come to this country to work.

As I said, the labour needs of a daffodil grower in Devon are exactly the same as the labour needs of a strawberry producer in Angus, and very often the same people will do both jobs as they move around the country following the work as the season progresses. Scotland's soft fruit and vegetable sectors rely on seasonal workers from the EU.

Then there are those who are employed full time. Fifty per cent of staff in our Scottish red meat processing sector are non-UK, a third of the staff in the dairy sector are non-UK and more than 80 per cent of the vets in our slaughterhouses are from the EU. However, the status of those long-term workers is now secure and settled. The Prime Minister made it abundantly clear in her open letter to EU citizens currently living in the UK that the Government fully supports their right to stay. Those who have settled here, work hard and pay their taxes have made a huge contribution to our economy. They have always been welcome and they are welcome now.

I have met Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on several occasions and I have always impressed on him our need for foreign labour. He, in turn, has always expressed an understanding of our needs for labour and he is working hard to ensure that a seasonal agricultural workers scheme is in place for 2018. Mr Gove said that the need is "compelling." [*Interruption.*] There you are—we are working hard on your behalf.

Dr Allan: Will the member give way?

Peter Chapman: No, not now.

Brexit will see us control our borders, not close them.

Instead of working on a separate system for Scotland, driving more wedges between us and the rest of the UK, the SNP Government should be working with the UK Government to ensure that the new system meets the needs of both Scottish and UK agriculture and food processing.

In response to the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Select Committee, NFU Scotland agreed that simple UK-wide systems for the recruitment of seasonal workers were the best way forward, while avoiding problems at the border.

The Food and Drink Federation Scotland also criticised the extra red tape that a separate immigration system would lead to in relation to attracting workers and allowing them to follow the work around the country. How can Scotland have an open border with the EU if the rest of the UK wants a controlled border without some method of

stopping immigrants simply flowing from Scotland into England? The potential damage to our internal single market, which is Scotland's best and most important market, becomes obvious.

By far the biggest market for Scotland's top-quality produce is the rest of the UK, as 61 per cent of all trade in 2016, worth £45 billion, was with the rest of the UK, compared with only 17 per cent of trade, worth £12.7 billion, with the whole of the EU. We want to maintain the same trading opportunities with our EU partners post-Brexit, but our internal market is key.

There is no doubt that immigration and open borders were big issues during the Brexit referendum, especially in England and Wales. We understand that Scotland needs continued immigration.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): You must close please.

Peter Chapman: Can I just make this point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Very briefly.

Peter Chapman: Why do only 5.9 per cent of immigrants settle in Scotland, when our population share suggests that the figure should be 8.1 per cent?

16:30

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): It is not worth having a conversation about that last speech, because it was full of total inaccuracies and silliness. That is the reason why I am incredibly concerned about the bickering and the bigotry that surround the immigration debate. We have seen disturbing images and incredibly dangerous actions and we have heard disturbing rhetoric from members of the UK Government of which Peter Chapman seems to be so proud. If left unchecked, that will completely wipe out the fantastic gains and positive outcomes that we, as a nation, have absorbed from people who have chosen Scotland as their home.

The Scottish Government analysis paper is taking the lead and is something that we can all get behind—well, maybe most of us can. As our population ages, the continued availability of labour from across Europe is essential in order to meet our economic and social needs and to address the potential skill shortages in all sectors of the labour market.

Since the year to mid-2007, Scotland has relied on positive net migration for population growth more than any other constituent part of the UK. Over that period, 88 per cent of Scotland's population growth came from migration, with only 9 per cent coming from natural change—more

births than deaths. In contrast, 53 per cent of the UK's population growth came from net migration, with 45 per cent coming from natural change. That is the difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

All projected population increases for Scotland over the next decade will be due to net immigration. If there were no future EU migration, Scotland's working-age population would decline by 3 per cent over the next 25 years, while the number of pensioners would increase by a quarter. That would spell disaster for the Scottish economy and our ability to fund and staff quality public services. For example, 8 per cent of Edinburgh's population are EU nationals. If 8 per cent of Edinburgh's population disappeared overnight, a huge problem would develop.

Immigration policy and practice need to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament, which is an argument that has already been won. The UK model, as it has operated to date, leads to stalemate and, as we have heard from many examples, helps no one—not the people who choose Scotland as their home, not businesses and not the economy. What is the point of an international student at university here being forced to leave once she has qualified? The reintroduction of the fresh talent initiative and the post-study work visa initiative is one way of encouraging well-qualified people to stay for at least a couple of years, in which they could establish themselves on the career ladder, and I would hope that they would then stay for good.

Although Theresa May might let the Scottish Government tinker around the edges of a reserved matter, that is simply not enough. We need to have the power to decide on a framework that meets our particular needs. We have heard a lot about those needs in many great speeches from across the chamber this afternoon.

In the run-up to the EU referendum, senior figures in the leave campaign, such as Michael Gove, promised that increased powers over immigration would come to Scotland should the UK vote to leave the EU. Those pledges, like many others that were made in that campaign, including those that were on the sides of buses, have, predictably, been quickly forgotten.

Ross Greer highlighted a serious problem: the horrifying decisions that are made by the Home Office. I urge members to read the "Destitution, Asylum and Insecure Immigration Status in Scotland" report by the Equalities and Human Rights Committee of this Parliament to see how horrifying some of those Home Offices decisions are.

The first priority has to be to get assurances—not vague suggestions—from Theresa May; there

needs to be clear and certain security for EU citizens who move here prior to March 2019. The increase in the number of EU nationals being detained for spurious reasons shames us all and the hunger strikes at Yarl's Wood detention centre today should worry us greatly—that is the impact of Home Office decisions.

The impact is a bit close to home for me. DFDS in my constituency handles the bulk of fish and seafood product transport across the EU. It is incredibly worried—so worried that it is meeting Scottish Government ministers next week to discuss it.

We need and we want immigrants to be treated fairly in Scotland, with the same access to jobs and public services as everybody else who lives here, whether they are indigenous or not, because we know that they already contribute more. We want people who want to be part of this wonderful nation, who want to help us all move on in the world, to extend and develop our skills and to have friends from across the globe. I want Scotland to say to these people, "You are welcome."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches. We are really pushed for time, so keep to a strict five minutes, please, Mr Rennie.

16:36

Willie Rennie: Stuart McMillan referred to the fact that Deputy Presiding Officer Linda Fabiani is of Italian origin, Jackie Baillie is from Hong Kong, Jamie Greene is from Canada and, apparently, Clare Haughey is Russian; I can trace my family back to Australia. It seems that the only person in the chamber this afternoon who is a true Scot is Jackson Carlaw.

I want to read out a section from a briefing that I received from the Red Cross:

"Adult refugees have a legal right, under UK and international law, to be reunited with their children and partner, if they are still overseas. But children over 18 cannot join their parents in the UK, and refugee children are not allowed to sponsor their parents to join them in the UK."

That is having a huge, dramatic and traumatic effect on families and today we need to send a message to the UK Government that it needs to be much more sympathetic towards bringing families together through the immigration system. It would reduce that trauma and make for happier families and for more good people in this country. I hope that we can send that message.

It was good to hear from Jackson Carlaw—increasingly a lone voice among the Conservatives, including those in this chamber, but a welcome voice nonetheless. I hope that he continues to make the case for immigration at a UK level. I think that Christina McKelvie was quite

right about the dangerous images that were used during the referendum campaign by Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson. That is why immigration is at the heart of the Brexit debate—it is the unspoken tension at the heart of Brexit. If we follow through on the promise that was made to the Brexiteers—to the leave voters—we will damage the economy. If we do not follow through on that promise to reduce immigration, we will protect the economy but we will break the trust of those very voters who voted leave. That is the tension at the heart of the Brexit vote that we need to expose.

I want that UK-wide debate because we have a chance to reverse not just the damaging trend around immigration in this country but the damaging trend around Brexit. I hope that we will speak up in a united way to make that case. That is why I am opposed to what the SNP is proposing today. Of course I support schemes such as the fresh talent scheme—we had that scheme when we were in government—but what the SNP is proposing today is on a much bigger scale. It is the principle of having a different immigration policy for Scotland, which I cannot support.

Dr Allan: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

Clare Haughey and Gillian Martin, among others, repeatedly said that Scotland is unique and that we have special needs. I disagree. I have looked at the figures as well. In relation to the demands on the NHS, the farming sector, the food and drink sector and the university sector, there are demographic challenges across the United Kingdom.

We are an ageing society across the UK. That is what we need to try to tackle and that is why it is important to reverse the trend in the immigration debate because if we do not do that, we will end up with problems not just in Scotland but in the rest of the UK. I believe in the integrity of the United Kingdom. We need to protect the single market—that is incredibly important.

What depresses me is that every single argument in the chamber from the SNP is reduced to an argument about the constitution. I reject that—I think that this is much bigger than the constitution. This is about immigration—this is about saying, “What kind of country are we?”

Graeme Dey *rose*—

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not now.

I accept what Mairi Gougeon said about leading the debate, but we do not do that by cutting ourselves off from the UK debate and looking for our own solutions. We need to engage fully in the

UK debate, and we do not do that when we reduce the debate to constitutional issues. That is what I get depressed about.

Graeme Dey *rose*—

Willie Rennie: Graeme Dey, who is trying to intervene—I am sorry, I will not accept an intervention, because I have a short amount of time—made a powerful case in support of a UK approach when he talked about the English farmer who is shutting up shop and moving his soft fruit business to China. That made my case for me. This is a UK-wide problem. If we are to grow the food and drink sector, not just in Scotland but across the UK, we need to deal with the problem across the UK.

There has been significant investment in soft fruit—I see it in the farms in north-east Fife, where heated polytunnels have extended the season and produced a huge amount of economic growth for our country. That is replicated throughout the country, which is why I want a UK-wide approach.

Small schemes such as fresh talent will not solve our demographic problems. What will solve our demographic problems is changing the minds of the leadership of Jackson Carlaw’s party in the UK Government. That is the way to do it, and that is what I will do.

16:41

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): We have heard many excellent speeches in today’s debate. We also heard from Peter Chapman and Graham Simpson.

I am a bit confused by Willie Rennie’s speech. He is a member of a federalist party, so I would have thought that he would understand that there can be variation. Perhaps he can explain that another day.

Scotland’s demographic problems have been well documented. We have an ageing population, fewer younger taxpayers, more older pensioners, low population growth and low productivity, all of which are causing economic concern. If the Government’s population growth targets are to be met, we need to rely on net inward migration of something like 9,000 people a year. With Brexit approaching—or here—such a level might be difficult to maintain if there is no clear understanding of the system that will replace the existing arrangements.

As the negotiations head for the next phase, talks must make rapid progress, to ensure that our friends, neighbours and colleagues who have come to Scotland and the UK to live and work have their rights secured and protected, just as the rights and security of UK citizens across the EU must be respected and protected. Some 1.3

million UK citizens live abroad, and their rights require to be protected, too.

Stuart McMillan: Neil Findlay said that rapid progress is needed. How confident is he that there will be rapid progress, given the delaying tactics of the UK Government thus far?

Neil Findlay: I am not confident at all.

Talks must make rapid progress for workers in a range of sectors. Our NHS and our social care system have major skills shortages. If we combine the failings of workforce planning with a further drain of people because of Brexit, we will have an even greater problem on our hands.

Graeme Dey and others mentioned the agriculture and food sectors. Pauline McNeill mentioned academia. The construction industry was mentioned, as were oil and gas and other sectors.

However, the debate on immigration should never reduce people to commodities. We should not see migrants simply as economic units of production or cogs in the wheel of profit generation. These are human beings, who have skills and families and dreams and ambitions, and in any system they should be accorded respect and dignity and their rights should be recognised. We have a duty to make people feel welcome and valued. Ross Greer touched on that in the context of the asylum system, and he was right to do so.

The principles of dignity and respect for rights should guide the development of any new system. We could look to other nations to learn how flexibility could be brought into the system. Mairi Gougeon talked about the devolved approaches in Canada, Spain and Switzerland, which take account of different priorities. We should look to such places as we consider how we develop a system for the future.

Scottish Labour wants a fair and well-managed migration system that protects people from the exploitation of their labour and safeguards their human rights. The choice is not between freedom of movement and closed borders; that is simply not the case. I hope that we have all had enough of the simplistic rhetoric about immigration—it is a complex issue and there are many considerations in the development of any new system.

At the heart of our approach to Brexit is jobs and workers' rights. There should be no race to the bottom, no deregulated sweatshop economy and no pulling up of the drawbridge. There should be a fair and transparent immigration system that is administered as simply as possible.

I am surprised that no one has said that all this should not come at a cost to other countries. We cannot just talk about immigration in terms of how it benefits us, because that is not an

internationalist perspective. We should also address our population's failure to grow and the policies to develop that. Populations are declining across Europe, so we are now in competition for people and we do not want people to come here at the expense of the development of other countries. That is not an internationalist perspective.

Although today's debate is focusing on migration, we should come back to the issue of how to increase our population so that we are no longer completely reliant on attracting the skills, talent and young people of other nations to address our demographic problems. Perhaps the minister will come back to that in a future debate, because it is a serious issue. However, on immigration, we support the Government's motion today.

16:46

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Throughout past centuries of Scotland's history, there have been many periods of inward migration. Migration has helped to shape modern Scotland and it is right that we recognise the contributions to our society, economy and communities of those who have chosen to make Scotland their home. We have also seen modern Scotland being shaped by the movement of people within our own borders, from the country to the towns as we industrialised, from cities to the new towns as the slums were cleared, and through the struggles of depopulation in regions such as the Highlands and Islands.

The UK is now approaching the end of the first half of our two-year journey towards leaving the European Union, with its associated implications for immigration. That requires a coherent political response that reflects the outcome of the referendum in June 2016 and the interests of the UK and its constituent parts.

During the debate on migration that I participated in back in November, we heard the Government say that Scotland's demographic profile is different from that of the rest of the UK, and Clare Haughey repeated that today. That obscures the wider point that those of us who represent rural Scotland know well: within Scotland, we have many distinct demographic profiles that are just like those in the rest of the UK. We have seen that issues are not primarily geographical—which is unsurprising in an integrated economy—but sectoral. We can identify a need in rural Scotland for seasonal workers, but that need is just as keenly felt in rural parts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Dr Allan: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I should like to push on, if I may.

Increasingly, geographical distinctions in our economy are issues of scale rather than type. In my region, a number of sectors, such as the hospitality and tourism economy, employ high numbers of EU and non-EU migrant workers, but the Highlands and Islands are far from being unique in that. Migration policy will not be crafted in my region, but I have little doubt that people who live there will judge future policy on the basis of what they see in their own communities.

Although we welcome the benefits of migration to Scotland—there is little doubt that we will always welcome the brightest and the best to our shores—it is clear that it has been used for many years as an excuse to avoid considering the needs of our labour market in greater detail. No economy is immune to the skills gap in the short and medium term, but a successful economy can only be sustained if we educate and train people for existing and emerging employment needs.

For too long, however, migration has been a sticking plaster to avoid matching some of the most necessary skills to our labour needs. Key public services, such as the NHS, have relied on trained nurses and doctors coming to Scotland to plug the gap that has been created by our own apparent inability to train and retain staff.

Dr Allan: Will the member give way on that point?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I will let the minister in in a second.

That has an impact on the countries that people come from. In those circumstances, the Scottish Government looks to other countries and hopes that the relevant skills can be found, but we know the consequences for areas outside of the cities and the central belt, as well as the consequences of the lack of real planning for the future.

Dr Allan: I agree with the member's point about the importance of filling skills gaps, but will he not concede that, even if we had 100 per cent full employment in Scotland, there would still be a need for immigration?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: As my colleagues are saying to me, nobody is denying that there will be immigration to this country, but it will be controlled and based on what we need here.

When I was in the Western Isles recently, I heard of a problem that health and social care have been presented with. Many older people on the islands are Gaelic speakers first, and when they develop dementia and associated conditions they revert to their first language. Unlike many other parts of Scotland, the islands cannot rely simply on migration to fill the necessary skills gap,

so they have looked instead at their own local populations and adapted their skills policies accordingly.

There have been a number of thoughtful and interesting contributions from around the chamber today. My colleague Jackson Carlaw spoke passionately about some of the myths surrounding immigration and its recent—and fascinating—history in his own constituency. He also addressed the narrow nature of the Scottish Government's analysis and referenced some of Professor Sir John Curtice's analysis of public opinion, and he spoke about the burden that higher taxation will place on businesses hoping to recruit from outside Scotland. He addressed some of the concerns around enforcement in an increasingly collaborative and mobile domestic economy, as well as the principle of creating restrictive second-class citizenship in the UK.

Claire Baker and Ross Greer spoke about the need to attract people to Scotland. On that, I can agree with them. Jamie Greene—who we now know is formerly of King's Lynn—echoed that point and raised a number of important issues around the fact that economic growth is key to attracting people to Scotland. He covered some of the reactions of businesses and other stakeholders to the proposal for differentiated immigration structures in the UK, which is something that the cabinet secretary and Gillian Martin also covered. He spoke of the potential impact on the UK market and the complexities that differentiation could have.

Graham Simpson made important points about skills and the role of the Scottish Government in attracting talented people to live and work here. He looked particularly at the construction industry in relation to housing, reminding us that there will be a number of sectors that an effective immigration framework will have to reflect.

Willie Rennie spoke about the needs of seasonal workers. It is worth noting that NFU Scotland suggested that it wanted a UK-wide approach to immigration.

Peter Chapman spoke about the numbers involved, the significance of non-UK workers in the agricultural sector and his involvement with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove. He addressed the need for a UK-wide solution to the issues faced by Scottish agriculture, and the threat of placing additional burdens on business while harming our UK single market. He made clear the need for the Scottish Government to focus on other aspects of Brexit, such as the future of agricultural support.

Members from all sides of the chamber value the contribution of immigration to Scotland. Our interest in attracting skilled and able people to

Scotland is best served by a “controlled, transparent and efficient” system that is points based and reflects our needs. Those are not my words, but the words of the Scottish Government’s own white paper on independence. There is scope for parties across the Parliament to work with the UK Government to seek a positive outcome as we leave the EU—

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

Jamie Halcro Johnston: —but that will require a constructive approach from all who are involved and an acknowledgment that a unified UK solution is the way forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Alasdair Allan to wind up the debate and take us to decision time.

16:53

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): I welcome the debate that we have had this afternoon and the contributions from members from around the chamber, which have—with one or two egregious exceptions—been helpful.

In November 2017, Parliament discussed the evidence that the Scottish Government had provided to the Migration Advisory Committee. That evidence set out very clearly, as many members have done today, the positive impact that EU citizens have made on Scotland’s economy and communities, and how they have filled gaps in our labour market.

However, in November, Parliament agreed that the current migration system needs to change. There was more consensus on that point than we often find in the chamber. I will quote Jackie Baillie from that time, although her remarks were echoed in what she had today:

“We should have a differentiated immigration system that can be linked to specific sectors. We have had a differentiated system before with the fresh talent scheme, and we can do so again.” —[*Official Report*, 14 November 2017; c 65.]

Therefore there is consensus that goes back some time on the need to tailor solutions for Scotland. As we heard today, in 2005, Labour and the Liberal Democrats recognised that Scotland had different needs and therefore that a different migration policy in some areas would be the right thing. It has been recognised by most members today as the right thing, too. The fresh talent scheme was both a recognition of the need for a differentiated solution to migration for Scotland and a demonstration that the approach is possible in a UK-wide system.

Jackson Carlaw, who made a very considered contribution today, has clearly read our paper and recognised that it is possible to achieve such things within the UK immigration system. A number of members, however, seem to think that our paper proposes an entirely new or separate immigration system for Scotland.

Scotland has different needs. Let me be clear about that, because some members today have questioned that point. Of course there are similarities between the challenges that are faced by specific sectors in Scotland and those that are faced across the rest of the UK. I heard strawberries and daffodils being compared this afternoon, as a member tried to make that point.

However, the most glaring difference is around demography. I have already made the point that, even if we had 100 per cent employment in Scotland, not only would we still have skills gaps, but our demography would still represent a problem for us. Although there may be differences between my position and those of many Conservative members, there were enough positive contributions from Conservatives to keep an intelligent and useful conversation going with them—although Graham Simpson has to be exempted from that conversation.

Neil Findlay: Dr Allan, who is the minister for Europe, mentioned demography. I do not know whether he has been to Georgia, but in order to encourage population growth there, the head of the Orthodox Church personally baptises every third child. I do not want to give Nicola Sturgeon any ideas, but does that not show that other countries are thinking innovatively about how to grow their populations?

Dr Allan: As the eldest of three children, I do not know how to answer that question. I will have a conversation with the Orthodox community in Scotland to see whether something can be done, but that question is so far off the field that I am not going to answer it.

A number of members commented on Scotland’s historical migration situation and the fact that we have, for a couple of hundred years, been a country of massive emigration rather than net immigration. People left Scotland to build futures in other parts of the world. That is changing, which has had a positive impact on our demography. However, population projections show that, in a scenario in which there was 50 per cent less EU migration, Scotland’s working-age population would decline by just under 1 per cent. The figure for the UK would be 5.3 per cent growth in the working-age population.

Scotland faces unique challenges that are linked to our demography and our rurality. The facts are clear: Scotland’s needs are different, but the UK

Government's focus appears to be on short-term migration. Indeed, there were a number of points in the debate when I felt that false oppositions were being set up between action here to solve our problems and policies that could be sorted at UK level. To pick up on the points that Willie Rennie made about leaving such matters to the UK Government, I note that there are many things that it could do now that would help to address our challenges. For instance, it could abolish the net migration target, change the rules on family migration and abolish the immigration skills charge. There is a list of things that it could do—which, we argue, it should do—but that is not a reason for us not to have a clear position in Scotland on what we would like to do here, if we had the opportunity.

Current migration policy, as set out by the UK Government, does not recognise Scotland's needs. Scotland depends on inward migration to grow our population, but the UK policy is to drive migration down to an arbitrary target—a target that almost everyone but the Prime Minister recognises will be counterproductive and unhelpful.

We have a long history of not only providing information on the issue but of examining that information when it is provided. Today, we have heard mention of statistics and of the fact that decisions to be taken on the advice of the Migration Advisory Committee rest with the Home Secretary. We should take into account the evidence that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities provided to the Scottish Affairs Committee. It set out its concerns, in which it noted that

"We have a long ... history in responding to the MAC and have to date had little success in influencing the Shortage Occupation List ... for Scotland and the rest of the UK."

Our discussion paper takes into account concerns and goes further than merely suggesting changes to UK Government policy by setting out how a more regionalised approach could work, with devolution of some aspects of migration within a UK framework. Developing a tailored migration system for Scotland is deliverable: the question is whether the political will exists to do it.

It is also worth mentioning the many organisations that have given evidence, including the FSB, which Mr Greene mentioned. In fact, in its evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee in the House of Commons, the federation made it clear that the Scottish Government had put forward a very convincing case to show why Scotland's needs are different, and has called for

"exploratory discussions ... between UK and Scottish Governments on the feasibility of devolving aspects of the immigration system."

The debate is coming to a close. I will end where I began by saying that there is more consensus on the issue than one or two members today have given credit for. We need some solutions to be taken forward at UK level in the immediate future, but we also need aspects of immigration policy to be tailored to the needs of Scotland and its demography. I hope that all but one or two members will come away from today's debate having understood that.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): That concludes the debate on Scotland's population needs and migration policy.

Financial Guidance and Claims Bill

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of a legislative consent motion. I ask Keith Brown to move motion S5M-10568, on the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 22 June 2017, relating to core functions of the Single Financial Guidance Body (SFGB); provisions that will make it a criminal offence to pretend to be giving financial guidance on behalf of the SFGB, and the introduction of regulation of claims management companies by the Financial Conduct Authority to Scotland, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Keith Brown*]

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-10571.3, in the name of Jackson Carlaw, which seeks to amend motion S5M-10571, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's population needs and migration policy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)

Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 26, Against 82, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-10571.2, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend the motion in

the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (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)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 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)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (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)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 4, Against 104, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-10571, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)

Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)

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

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 78, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the publication of the Scottish Government's paper, *Scotland's Population Needs and Migration Policy: Discussion Paper on Evidence, Policy and Powers for the Scottish Parliament*, which details the unique challenges facing Scotland's population and the potential economic gains if migration was sustained; notes the findings of reports from the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee and the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, which agreed that the current migration system needs to change to reflect local circumstances; notes that the Fresh Talent scheme, which was introduced in 2005 by the Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition administration was both a recognition of the need for a differentiated solution to migration and a demonstration that such a differential approach is possible within a UK-wide system, and supports calls for a debate on the current UK-wide system and for that system to better serve Scotland through an evidence-led approach to appropriate powers for the Parliament, enabling the development of a differentiated, more flexible solution, which is tailored to meet Scotland's specific needs.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-10568, in the name of Keith Brown, on the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 22 June 2017, relating to core functions of the Single Financial Guidance Body (SFGB); provisions that will make it a criminal offence to pretend to be giving financial guidance on behalf of the SFGB, and the introduction of regulation of claims management companies by the Financial Conduct Authority to Scotland, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

Meeting closed at 17:05.

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

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