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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 14 May 2019

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is the Rev Alan Sorensen, the minister of Wellpark Mid Kirk in Greenock.

The Rev Alan Sorensen (Wellpark Mid Kirk, Greenock): I was rummaging through old diaries recently, and out popped a piece of paper with a list of all the disasters that had befallen me over two weeks. It became the introduction to a talk on the subject of "How God Blesses Us".

It started with my church's annual meeting, which had been so full of heckling that it was almost abandoned; the next day, my wee three-year-old daughter went into hospital for major surgery; her X-rays were lost and it was postponed; my mother was mugged; my sister-in-law borrowed our car to take said daughter over to hospital for the operation and it broke down; her sister drove to the rescue and was in a car crash; and my daughter came out of hospital in plaster and in a wheelchair and came down with German measles, as did her baby sister, so none of us slept for an entire week.

Stay with me, here—believe it or not, there is more to come. My car was broken into; the washing machine got the last rites and, with no money to buy a new one and with a baby in the house, that created a major biohazard. To cap it all—drum roll—the family budgie died.

As I said when I gave the talk about God's blessing, all of that happened to me, supposedly one of the good guys. I have got faith, yet I struggled to make sense of it all.

Some of those events were serious, some not so, but we all have times like that when everything that can go wrong just does go wrong. Faith provides no immunity from suffering. I think that we get that message at Easter, when we see that Jesus ends up on the cross. St Paul, in the Bible, rattled off his list of hardships and yet he said that that was what made his faith stronger. There is a real mystery there; bad stuff can actually help to make us better.

Eventually, I could list good things that came out of that time. It reminded me of the wee inflatable punch-bag toy with a weight in the bottom that we used to whack over and it just bounced back up. I

suspect that that resonates with all politicians, especially those who are in this chamber.

Having a faith does not mean that we do not take the knocks, but it does invite me to believe that, with God, I may be knocked down but I am never knocked out.

Thank you.

Topical Question Time

14:03

Body Image

1. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking in response to the recent Mental Health Foundation report, which suggests that one third of adults in Scotland are anxious about their body image. (S5T-01647)

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): I welcome the recent Mental Health Foundation report and its focus on the importance of a healthy body image. Scotland is at the forefront of tackling that worldwide issue. Body image is increasingly recognised as a factor that can negatively affect people's self-esteem and mental health. That is particularly, but not exclusively, the case for young women, as was highlighted by recent research that we published. We take seriously the report and the acuteness of those issues for young people. This morning, I announced the establishment of an advisory group on healthy body image for young people. Following a six-month review, the group will provide the Scottish Government with specific recommendations for the next steps on how to promote and achieve a healthy body image.

Jamie Greene: I thank the minister for her helpful answer. I also welcome the report and the excellent work that the Mental Health Foundation has done. The survey highlighted the profound impact that things such as social media and online advertising are having on many young people in Scotland. It also alluded to differences in the perception of body image among people from ethnic minorities and people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. It is sad that the survey reported that 38 per cent of adults said that they felt depressed about their body image, and 32 per cent of young people in Scotland thought that images on social media were causing them to worry about it.

I welcome the establishment of the advisory group. Will the minister elaborate on the make up of the group's membership, its strategy and objectives, whether its focus will extend to at-risk adult groups and whether any funding has been allocated the group?

Clare Haughey: It is particularly fitting that we are discussing the issue in Parliament during mental health awareness week and learning disability week.

This morning, I met Girlguiding Scotland to discuss the impact of body image on its members' mental health and wellbeing and to seek its views

on the advisory group. I am happy to give Mr Greene more detail. The advisory group will focus on the following tasks: developing a charter pledge on healthy body image for young people; developing a Scotland-wide definition of what body image means; developing options for how relevant professionals can support healthy body image, including in schools; considering the need for wider public consultation on where actions should be taken; and providing the Scottish Government with specific recommendations and advice on the next steps. The group will link into the forthcoming advice on healthy social media use that we announced a few weeks ago, and it will reflect the issues relating to adolescent females, as highlighted in the report.

We will announce the make up of the group in due course.

Jamie Greene: I thank the minister for the further clarification.

There were a number of other recommendations in the report that we should take seriously, although I appreciate that some of them relate to reserved matters, such as regulation of the industry and the internet. However, I would like to have an understanding of the Scottish Government's position and what steps it can take around improving the reporting of, for example, online abuse on social media, and making recommendations on public awareness of a greater diversity of body types. Does the Government think that it has a role to play in changing people's perceptions in Scotland of the great diversity that exists and the idea that one should never be ashamed of one's own body.

Clare Haughey: Mr Greene raises some interesting points. It is incumbent on us all to challenge some of the perceptions that people—particularly, but not exclusively, young people, and certainly not exclusively adolescent girls—report in relation to their body image and how those affect their mental wellbeing. We recognise the links between unhealthy use of social media and lower mental wellbeing in children and young people. That is why we committed to publishing advice on healthy social media use. That piece of work will link into the advisory group, which will come back to the Scottish Government with recommendations.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The minister will be well aware that people with diabetes face particular mental health challenges arising from body image and physical health. I am sure that she will also know that there was a round-table meeting in Parliament today that highlighted those issues. Does she agree with Diabetes Scotland that it is important that patients have access to psychological and emotional support, as well as to routine examinations relating

to their physical health, and does she agree that patients should be involved in the design of that support?

Clare Haughey: To answer Mr Macdonald's last point about patients being involved, I think that we need to have the voices of lived experience at the heart of all that we do. We have demonstrated that by setting up the children and young people's mental health task force, which is co-chaired with young people, and young people will certainly be involved in developing the social media guidance for young people. Therefore, we need to ensure that we have that lived experience.

I am aware of the specific issue that Mr Macdonald raises, and that is why we have continued to increase our investment in mental health services. There will be an additional £250 million of investment in mental health services over the next five years to improve services for children and young people and adults across the piece and embed the good mental health record across all our public services.

Prison Officers (Industrial Action)

2. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to prison officers balloting on industrial action. (S5T-01646)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): The Scottish Government values highly the dedication, commitment and professionalism of Scotland's hard-working prison officers and other staff. It is to the credit of our front-line prison officers that, despite pressures, our prisons are generally stable and secure environments.

The recognised trade unions have submitted to the Scottish Prison Service their pay proposal for 2019-20, and it is being considered ahead of formal pay negotiations. That process will continue and we would not wish to prejudge its outcome.

As David Strang, former Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons for Scotland, said in the introduction to the 2017-18 annual report:

"We should never take for granted the good order that is maintained in Scotland's prisons and that they are in general stable and secure environments."

Liam Kerr: I thank the minister for that answer. She mentioned good order. The Prison Officers Association Scotland says that officers face rising levels of violence. I have compiled figures from every Scottish Prison Service annual report since the Scottish National Party came to power in 2007, and they show that the number of assaults in prisons has never been higher. It has risen by 50 per cent on the SNP's watch. Does the minister think that that is acceptable? Will she apologise to the prison officers for that appalling statistic?

Ash Denham: No, it is not acceptable. The SPS has introduced a national strategic risk and threat group to oversee the response to violence against staff; in addition, local and national violence dashboards have been developed to support early identification of emerging trends so that the SPS can commission the deployment of a range of tactical options, including things such as national search operations, in order to support prisons in the recovery of weapons and contraband that can lead to or be used in violence.

The SPS continues to seek to develop intelligence and evidence around things such as substance misuse in our prisons, and to understand how they can lead to incidents of violence. A working group has been established to develop operational guidance for all staff in order to support the management of individuals who appear to be under the influence of any substance, and to mitigate the risk of violence.

As the chairman of the Prison Officers Association Scotland noted last week, we have not seen the same levels of violence in Scottish prisons that have been experienced in prisons in England and Wales. However, we are not complacent about that, and we support the ongoing work of the SPS in tackling the violence in our prisons.

Liam Kerr: The minister says that she is not complacent, but the SNP has entirely ignored ideas from the Conservative benches that might stem the violence, such as supplying officers with body-worn cameras. Prisons have been under the SNP's control for 12 years, and the fact that the ballot is going ahead at all is a mark of failure. If a strike goes ahead, it will be entirely the fault of the SNP.

Parliament must be given an opportunity to hear full details of the matter, the failures of the SNP that have led to this point and what the minister proposes to do about both the potential strike and the violence against officers. Will the minister commit today to give a full statement to Parliament?

Ash Denham: The first thing to be absolutely clear about is that the Prison Officers Association Scotland has put in a request for a negotiation around pay, and it has been quite clear that this is not to do with conditions and other factors: it is to do with pay. That is the first thing in the question for me to correct.

We recognise the sometimes difficult and dangerous circumstances that prison officers work in and we are very grateful to them for the service that they give in their jobs. We also recognise the importance of providing a safe and secure environment for those who are in custody, as well

as for the men and women who work in our prisons.

The SPS response to increasing levels of violence within our prisons is continually under review and it is taken very seriously. I reassure the Parliament on that point. The SPS continues to respond to the increasing prison population effectively and it has in place robust contingency measures to ensure that the safety and security of staff and those who are in its care are maintained.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Three other members would like to ask a question. I call Neil Findlay.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Pay, overcrowding and violence are indeed issues that are affecting prison staff. Recently, I have spoken to a number of prison officers who have also raised concerns about the impact of new psychoactive substances within prisons. What is the Government doing to protect prison officers who are being impacted by those substances? There is a very bad outcome from that. That is a real, live, big issue among prison staff and is wrapped up in all the concerns that they have about workload, what they do on a day-to-day basis and their health and safety.

The Presiding Officer: That was slightly tangential to the main question, so can the answer be brief, minister?

Ash Denham: Neil Findlay mentioned striking. I gently point out to him that prison officers in Scotland have the right to strike, unlike their counterparts in England and Wales. An anti-union ban was imposed in 1994 by Michael Howard as Home Secretary and never repealed in 13 years of the last Labour Government. The SNP Government recognised the right of prison officers to be treated as fairly and equitably as workers in other unions in Scotland.

On drug problems, the SPS is working collaboratively with the Scottish Government and other partners to respond to the challenges that drugs, specifically new psychoactive substances, pose to Scottish prisons. The issue of substance misuse in our prisons is taken very seriously and a range of security measures is in place to prevent the introduction of contraband into our prisons.

Neil Findlay: On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Findlay can either make a point of order or ask a subsequent question.

Neil Findlay: That is fine. I did not mention striking in my question. I know that the minister comes with a prepared answer from the civil service, which she has just read out verbatim. That answer had nothing to do with the question

that I asked. Prison officers are struggling daily to address the issue. One of the main aspects related to that is prison mail, because the substances are getting into prison through mail being dipped in them. What is the minister doing to protect prison officers from those substances?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Findlay has had two opportunities to make the point. It is an important point, but it is tangential to the main question, which was about the strike ballot that is taking place. The minister has given a response. If the member is unhappy with the response, there are many ways in which he can follow it up—for example by submitting written questions, or using other opportunities in the chamber.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): In 2017-18, prison inspectors in England and Wales documented some of the most disturbing jail conditions that they had ever seen; they described conditions that have no place in an advanced nation in the 21st century. The situation in the rest of the United Kingdom is in stark contrast to that in Scotland. Of course, as the minister said, that is no reason for complacency. How is the Scottish Government taking forward action to reduce the prison population, including extending the presumption against short sentences?

Ash Denham: Justice officials have established a prison resilience leadership group of senior officials from a range of justice agencies to ensure cross-agency understanding of the challenges of a rising prison population and to seek co-ordinated approaches in response. We continue to strengthen the provision of alternatives to custody, both to tackle the high remand population and to ensure that community sentences can support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending to help keep crime down and our communities safe. An order to extend the current presumption against short sentences from sentences of three months to sentences of 12 months will be scrutinised in Parliament before the summer recess and, subject to parliamentary approval, the extended presumption will come into force over the summer period.

The Presiding Officer: I cannot help feeling that Ms Mackay has followed the same track as Mr Findlay in asking questions and for answers that are tangential. I hope that Mr McArthur will get us back on track with the subject in hand.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Given the prison officers' concerns around overcrowding, and notwithstanding what the minister has just said, the prison population now stands at more than 8,000. Two thirds of prisons are at or beyond capacity. Prisoners are sleeping on mattresses on the floor and are doubled up in single cells. If the maximum capacity is not the real maximum, how

many more people does the minister think can be accommodated before overcrowding becomes an emergency?

Ash Denham: The member is quite right. The problem is a serious one, and the Scottish Government is taking it equally seriously.

The Scottish Prison Service continues to respond effectively to the increasing prison population to ensure that the security and the safety of Scotland's prisons are maintained. In response to the increasing prison population, the SPS has developed detailed contingency plans. We have already agreed a range of actions that the SPS will take to help it to manage the population within the operational flexibility in its estate. Officials continue to work with the SPS to consider further options to manage the current prison population, alongside measures to reduce the churn of people who enter prison on remand or for short-term sentences.

As I mentioned in my previous answer, in line with our programme for government commitment, an order to extend the current presumption against short sentences from sentences of three months or less to those of 12 months or less will be introduced shortly.

Global Climate Emergency

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Roseanna Cunningham on the global climate emergency: Scotland's response. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement. I encourage all members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as they can. [*Interruption.*]

Are you okay, cabinet secretary? It is just a small spillage, not a global climate crisis, but we will have a short suspension.

14:22

Meeting suspended.

14:24

On resuming—

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I am grateful for being given a couple of minutes to get myself a little less soggy. I blame the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans, who put the glass of water right at my left hand.

There is a global climate emergency. The evidence is irrefutable. The science is clear, and people have been clear: they expect action. Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a stark warning: the world must act now. By 2030, it will be too late to limit warming to 1.5°.

Last week, another United Nations body, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, issued a warning about the damage that human beings are causing to the planet. It found that the drivers of damage have accelerated over the past 50 years and climate change is one of the top three causes.

Both those reports highlight that it is not too late for us to turn things around, but to do so requires transformative change. This is not just about Government action and it is not something that only affects Scotland. All countries must act, quickly and decisively. We all have a part to play: individuals, communities, businesses and other organisations. Opposition parties also have a responsibility to look at their own approaches.

Earlier this month, the Scottish Government received advice from the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change in the light of the IPCC report. We acted immediately by lodging amendments to our Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill to set a 2045 target for net zero emissions, as we said that we

would do. If agreed by Parliament, these will be the most stringent legislative targets anywhere in the world and Scotland's contribution to climate change will end, definitively, within a generation. The CCC was clear that meeting that target will be enormously challenging and is dependent on the UK Government fully playing its part; so far, the UK Government has not even committed to following the CCC advice.

Our bill amendments were the first step after the CCC advice, but the Scottish Government has been a leader in this field for many years. This Parliament's Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 made us the first country in the world to introduce legally binding annual targets and to include a fair share of emissions from international aviation and shipping.

We have already almost halved emissions since 1990 while growing the economy and increasing employment and productivity. We will continue to do so and we are doing this through domestic effort alone.

It is important to note that businesses and industry have played an important role and will continue to do so. In response to business feedback, we have recently refreshed the Scottish business pledge, adding a new element to encourage businesses to consider their impact on the environment.

The transformative changes that are needed offer social and economic opportunities, but there will be risks and challenges to overcome. That is why we are the first country to establish an independent just transition commission to provide advice on how our transition can also promote social cohesion and equality. The CCC has encouraged the UK Government to follow our lead.

Our climate change plan, which was published last year, sets out how emissions will be reduced every year to 2032. We have committed to updating that plan within six months of the climate change bill receiving royal assent. That will require us to look across our whole range of responsibilities to make sure that we continue policies that are working and increase action where that is necessary. That will not be easy.

An emergency needs a systematic response that is appropriate to the scale of the challenge—not a knee-jerk, piecemeal reaction. All cabinet secretaries are looking across the full range of policy areas to identify areas where we can go further, faster.

Since the CCC issued its advice at the beginning of this month, we have already announced a change in our approach to airport departure tax; a new, ambitious deposit return scheme; funding to strengthen the rail freight

industry and reduce the amount of freight that travels by road; a new farmer-led initiative to drive low-carbon, environmentally sustainable farming practices; and new funding for e-bikes, which was announced just yesterday.

The groundwork for further action has been laid, with consultations on energy efficiency and low-carbon heat closing in the coming weeks, and we are working with stakeholders to determine where the Scottish national investment bank can have the greatest impact and how its missions should be framed. All of that will be key to our response to the climate emergency.

Reviews of our transport and tourism policies, along with our future rural policy, land use strategy, national islands plan, NHS Scotland sustainability strategy and learning for sustainability action plan will all place a strong emphasis on addressing climate change, as will our infrastructure mission. Our regional development policy will include climate change objectives, following the example of the south of Scotland enterprise agency, the legislation for which is currently under consideration by this Parliament.

Subject to the passage of the Planning (Scotland) Bill at stage 3, the next national planning framework and review of the Scottish planning policy will include considerable focus on how the planning system can support our climate change goals. Carbon management plans will be reviewed across the Scottish Government estate to bring forward the date for reaching net zero emissions to well before 2045.

The CCC has been stark in saying that the proposed new targets will require

“a fundamental change ... from the current piecemeal approach that focuses on specific actions in some sectors to an explicitly economy-wide approach.”

To deliver the transformational change that is required, we need structural changes across the board to our planning, procurement and financial policies, processes and assessments. As I have said, that is exactly what we will do.

Our response to the climate emergency will impact on how we live as a society and on how our economy operates. It must be a shared national endeavour. We all need to think more about how we can make our lives more sustainable, cutting down on waste and excess.

To inform our approach and how Government can support and implement the transformational policies that we need, we will consult widely over the summer to feed into the update of the climate change plan and let everyone have their say on what needs to happen across Scotland in response to the climate emergency. We will co-convene a summit with industry to develop a

shared understanding of what needs to be done, how businesses can contribute and how we can help. We will seek views from key sectors, such as agriculture and land use.

As I said, the CCC has been clear that the UK needs to up its ambition in reserved areas for us to achieve our goals here in Scotland. On 2 May, I wrote to Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy minister Claire Perry, setting out some of the areas where we, and the CCC, expect the UK Government to take urgent and decisive action. Those include carbon capture, use and storage, which the CCC says will be critical to our ability to meet the new targets. The UK Government must identify funding to deliver its commitment to build the first CCUS facility in the UK by 2025 and must commit to more than one cluster across the UK. With our North Sea assets and infrastructure, Scotland is the logical location for such clusters.

I requested an urgent meeting to discuss the CCC advice and the UK Government's response. There has been no answer to that letter or to my request. I reiterate my call to the UK Government to work with us to deliver the transformational changes that are needed to respond to the climate emergency.

In brief, the Scottish Government will be placing climate change at the heart of everything that we do. I can confirm that it will be at the core of our next programme for government and spending review. For those saying that that is not enough, I ask, "What is your offer? How will you help to support a fair and just transition for the people of Scotland? Work with us to bring on board those who are perhaps less convinced about the need for action, look closely at your own activities and those of your organisations and see what more you can do." For those saying that this is too much and too expensive, I say that the evidence shows that the global cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of action. Future generations will end up paying even more if we fail to take action now.

Scotland has always been an innovator. That is one of our great strengths. Responding to the climate emergency will not be easy, but Scotland is not in the business of taking the easy way out. Scotland's response to the climate emergency must be hardwired into our national psyche. We must take this journey together, seize the economic opportunities that are available to us and redefine what world leadership means, not just as a Government but as a country. Scotland has declared a global climate emergency and now Scotland—that is us—must act as one to safeguard our planet for future generations.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members'

interests. I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of the statement.

I welcome the overall narrative of the statement and I can pledge that, as the only Opposition party to have produced a detailed policy document on the environment and climate change, the Conservatives stand ready to work with the Government to tackle one of the greatest challenges of our age.

We have concerns that the landfill ban on biodegradable waste has been botched; that the tree-planting target was not met last year, with just over 7,000 hectares planted; that the household waste recycling target will not be met for 12 years; and that the cycling target will not be met for more than 200 years, based on current trajectories.

The cabinet secretary states that we all need to think about cutting waste and excess. With that principle in mind, will she tell us when a bill on the circular economy will be introduced to Parliament, as was outlined in the 2016 programme for government?

Roseanna Cunningham: I welcome the general remarks that Maurice Golden made at the start of his question. I encourage everyone in the chamber to be part of the conversation on climate change, and to contribute to it as constructively as possible.

Mr Golden raised a number of issues, and I will not deal with them all at length. A bill on the circular economy will be introduced in this parliamentary session. As the member will be aware, the decision on when that will happen is not mine but the First Minister's. However, I assure him that there will be such a bill in this session of the Parliament, as promised.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. There is indeed a global climate emergency, and Scotland must respond to it with the responsibility of a developed nation and recognise intergenerational justice. We must ensure that decisions are integrated across Government and all sectors of society, including civic society, as we act to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. Scottish and UK Labour are committed to establishing a statutory just transition commission, and I hope to see the Scottish Government support that aim in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill.

The cabinet secretary asked what we have to offer. Across the UK, Labour is working on a costed plan for a green jobs revolution. Does the cabinet secretary agree with Scottish Labour that, in order to secure new and transferable jobs here in Scotland, we must have a robust skills development strategy across all sectors? Will she

also tell the chamber how everyone from the North Sea to the far reaches of rural Scotland is to be forearmed for the new technologies and opportunities in manufacturing and remanufacturing that will lead to the net zero economy?

Roseanna Cunningham: Most of what Claudia Beamish has asked about is encompassed in the conversation about just transition that has well and truly started in Scotland, and the country remains ahead internationally in the development of that.

Ms Beamish and I have previously had exchanges about whether a just transition commission should be set up with a statutory basis. The Scottish Government has undertaken to look at the issue again after publication of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's stage 1 report on the bill. Ms Beamish has asked very good questions about our ability to ensure that, across the whole of Scotland, and leaving no one out, we put in place a way to manage the low-carbon transition. That is part and parcel of what I said in my statement about needing to look at the issue right across government, which is our intention.

We must understand that some of the technologies to which Ms Beamish referred may not yet be in the right place for us to be able to count on them for sure, and I am aware of others that might not happen until around the 2030s. However, as a Government, we must ensure that, across the board, our approach is in the right place. I know that the member and I will continue to have interesting, friendly and robust conversations on the issue.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I am very pleased that the Government is listening to the Greens and committing to putting climate at the heart of its next programme for government and, critically, the spending review that will take place in a couple of years' time. However, the climate emergency cannot wait for the next spending review. I make it clear that the Greens will not commit to negotiations on the next annual budget unless it has climate change and a green new deal at its heart. Will the cabinet secretary identify when the Government will come forward with robust plans for a green new deal, as was recently agreed to by Parliament?

Roseanna Cunningham: I do not think that Mark Ruskell would expect me to answer questions that pertain to Derek Mackay's portfolio, in which the specific aspects of the next budget sit. Although I appreciate his confidence in my ability to be the cabinet secretary for everything, I regret to say that I am not. I should have said first that Mark Ruskell has a birthday today. He is celebrating by asking me about the budget and a

new green deal, so I am not certain that his life is entirely rock 'n roll.

We are committed to delivering balanced budgets that support Scotland's climate change targets, as well as other priorities. I am absolutely certain that people will expect me to say that. I hope that the Greens, along with all parties in the chamber, will participate in any discussions and negotiations about the next budget, which is still a few months away. Nevertheless, as I have indicated, with climate change being at the heart of the next programme for government, I think that Mark Ruskell can expect there to be some interesting discussions to be had.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of her statement. We support much of the narrative and I commit the Scottish Liberal Democrats to engaging constructively with the Government and all other parties in addressing the climate emergency that has been declared.

I note that the cabinet secretary was averse to focusing on the individual policy elements of meeting that challenge. Does she accept that there is a need to set more ambitious targets, particularly in relation to transport? Part of that might be about setting an early target for the Government and public bodies to phase out the use of diesel and petrol vehicles given that, for example, only 1 per cent of the police vehicle fleet falls into that category, and only one in 20 council vehicles do likewise.

Roseanna Cunningham: It is the case that transport is the largest sectoral contributor to Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions and therefore it must play a central role. We already have the most ambitious agenda in the UK for decarbonising transport, and that includes our commitment to phasing out the need for new petrol and diesel cars by 2032. Our existing plans for transport will see the greatest emissions reduction in absolute terms of any sector over the lifetime of the climate change plan.

The member might be interested to know that a review of the national transport strategy is being done and we are in the process of readying the draft strategy for public consultation from July 2019. Newly commissioned research will be done to further build the evidence base.

The member talks about transport in individual policy areas. He raised the issue of police cars in the area of justice. One of the things that we must now understand is that, whereas until now, people have thought that there are three or four key cabinet secretaries that need to look at the issue of climate change, all my colleagues, even those who have not, until now, really thought of themselves as being in the front line of the issue,

will have to consider that they are. Questions such as the one that Liam McArthur asked today will be important, even for those cabinet secretaries who might not have considered that climate change was an issue that would land on their desk frequently.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): How important is it that the UK Government commits to the targets that the CCC has advised it to set? The reserved areas in respect of facilitating pathways—for example, decarbonisation of the gas grid and investment in carbon capture—will be important for Scotland's ability to reach its targets. This morning the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee heard about electricity tariffs from Chris Stark of the CCC. I appreciate that the cabinet secretary has written to her counterpart in the UK Government. What is her response to my point?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is a key question. A fairly significant aspect of the CCC's advice is that our 2045 net zero target depends on activity at Westminster.

I have written to the UK Government to request an urgent meeting, and that a collaborative approach be taken to implementing the UK CCC advice. I hope that Conservative members will use their channels to encourage an early response to that.

A number of the issues that have been raised by the CCC are ones that Westminster will have to look at. They include the fully operational carbon capture, use and storage facilities that I mentioned earlier; accelerating action to decarbonise the gas grid; consideration of the balance of taxes across different heating fuels; redesign of vehicle and tax incentives to support industry and business investment in zero emissions and sustainable transport choices; a commitment to adhering to future European Union emissions standards, regardless of our position in relation to the EU; and VAT reduction on energy efficiency improvements in homes. I am disappointed to have read today that VAT on solar panels is to be increased from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, which is the wrong direction to be going in. The final issue for Westminster would be to ensure continued support for the renewables industry, which that VAT increase does not suggest is at the forefront.

I understand that the evidence from the CCC this morning emphasised the importance of there being accelerated UK-wide action if the more ambitious Scottish targets are to be achievable.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): This morning, in the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee evidence from the Committee on Climate Change, Chris Stark, the CCC's chief executive officer, indicated

that there are already advanced conversations about how the UK Government might support farmers and the agricultural sector in tackling climate change, through policies such as public money for public goods. There is little indication of what approach will be taken here. Will the cabinet secretary, as a matter of urgency, put pressure on her colleague Fergus Ewing to outline how her Government plans to support farmers in their actions to tackle climate change?

Roseanna Cunningham: I am sure that if Finlay Carson was to talk to Fergus Ewing, he would hear from him that I am continually putting pressure on him.

The Scottish Government is already doing a number of things to support agriculture with climate change. The farming for a better climate initiative is about soil-regenerative agriculture. The agricultural science and technology group was launched in 2018 to share, disseminate and encourage adoption of advances in agricultural science. In the soil and nutrient network, farms take a before-and-after look at protecting and improving their soils. The farming and water Scotland programme is aimed predominantly at farmers to help to reduce diffuse pollution, but it has, nonetheless, an impact on climate change. The industry-led carbon accumulator tool called carbon positive is a platform that will, when it is fully developed, allow farmers to measure and get credit for reducing emissions and sequestering carbon. I know that that is an issue that farmers are anxious about, and they do not often get credit where credit is due.

There are also some interesting new technologies coming on stream. If Finlay Carson has not read the WWF-commissioned research by Vivid Economics, I strongly recommend that he do so, because it shows a very positive way forward for agriculture in Scotland, and would probably go a long way towards allaying farmers' fears about the future.

I attend monthly meetings between the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the devolved Administrations. I have to say that one of the things that would help would be the UK Government putting a little meat on the bones of the so-called shared prosperity fund that it has been promoting. Beyond the three words "shared prosperity fund", we are unable to assess exactly what it means. That fund is money that will end up being available to farmers, but nobody knows what is happening.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Speaking further of meat, will the Scottish Government participate in international research collaborations that are designed to identify breeding changes for bovines that should,

ultimately, reduce their methane emissions while protecting their meat yield?

Roseanna Cunningham: I am not entirely sure that I mentioned meat, but I suppose that that is, given that meat is a fairly significant part of the food production sector in Scotland, an appropriate question. We will as a Government be able, I hope, to continue to participate in international research collaborations that are designed to do exactly what Stewart Stevenson asked about. The Scottish research institutes are internationally powerful in respect of the work that they do.

We have stated in the past that our aim is to find answers that are beneficial for the environment, for Scotland's farmers and for our wider food and drink industry. That has not changed. However, I need to flag up the negative impact of Brexit on research. It will not help: it looks as though routes to international collaboration are beginning to get rather dicey as a result of Brexit.

I commend to the chamber much work that is already being done. If members have not visited the greencow project at Scotland's Rural College, for example, I strongly advise them to do so.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): What plans does the Government have to engage properly with citizens across the country to ensure that the measures that are taken are not regressive, and that everyone can share the benefits?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is an important question. I do not want to rehearse what I have already said about the just transition commission, which is engaged in that work, but I have flagged up the intention to engage with the public. We have already done a considerable amount of work on that this year. Obviously, behaviour change is critical to meeting Scotland's climate change targets and to progress towards a carbon-neutral society, so public engagement will be vital.

In November 2018, we announced that we had concluded a review of our current public engagement strategy in line with statutory requirements. We are now revising that strategy to ensure that our approach to climate change engagement and behaviour change is commensurate with the ambitions that are set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill. There will be a series of public workshops across Scotland; I will be happy to advise members about when and where they will take place, if they wish to participate in them.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary outline how tackling the climate emergency can also help to tackle the other emergency of 230,000 weans growing up in poverty in Scotland, given that all Scottish Government ministers will, I am sure, be mindful of the statutory targets to end child poverty by 2030?

Roseanna Cunningham: Angela Constance flags up the need for the issue to be looked at across the whole of Government. It is clear that both ambitions are incredibly challenging, but together they offer an opportunity to take a close look at how we operate as a Government in Scotland, and at how to build a fairer and more sustainable future.

The challenges have to be seen as opportunities to make the difficult decisions that need to be made, and to address change on the required scale. Again, the work of the just transition commission is absolutely crucial. It is currently travelling around the country hearing from communities and people who are likely to be affected and people who are likely to effect the transition. Its report on how we can ensure the economic and social benefits of leading the world towards carbon neutrality will be vital.

The actions that are needed for us to become a net zero emitter by 2045 will transform our economy and society, but the Government is, of course, also engaged in a wide-ranging energy efficiency programme that is directly tackling fuel poverty, which is a fundamental part of the concerns that Angela Constance has addressed.

The transition has to be fair for workers, businesses and communities, and it has to be absolutely fair for children. If we do the right things in the right ways, we can achieve fairness for everybody.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I refer members to my interests in renewable energy and housing, as set out in my entry in the register of members' interests.

This morning, Chris Stark focused on the lack of climate change policy for housing. Given that it is now a year and four days since the Parliament supported my amendment on an energy performance certificate target date of 2030, will the cabinet secretary finally acknowledge that the time has come to make that Government policy?

Roseanna Cunningham: I will make the obvious comment that Alexander Burnett would expect me to make: the housing minister will have more detail about that, which is what Mr Burnett is no doubt looking for. However, we are already acting to reduce emissions associated with heating our buildings. I have talked about the energy efficiency drive that we are introducing across Scotland. We await details on how the new UK future homes standard that has been announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer will work. Building regulations are, of course, devolved to Scotland, and the energy standards for new homes in Scotland, which are set via carbon emissions targets, are currently more challenging than the standards elsewhere in the

UK. It will be interesting to see how we are able to work with the UK proposals, but we do not yet know how they are intended to be implemented.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The secretary general of the United Nations has praised the target proposals that the Government of New Zealand has set out. How do the Scottish Government's target proposals compare with them?

Roseanna Cunningham: I was struck by the UN secretary general's lavish praise for New Zealand's proposals to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, which include most gases but not emissions of methane from biological processes, such as agriculture, which comprise a much larger portion of emissions in New Zealand than in Scotland. Our proposed net zero target date of 2045 covers emissions of all the greenhouse gases that the Kyoto protocol covers, includes a share of international aviation and shipping emissions, retains statutory annual targets and will be achieved through domestic effort alone. I hope that, if the UN secretary general has such lavish praise for the New Zealand targets, he will be blown away by the Scottish targets.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): It is disappointing that the cabinet secretary did not mention buses in her statement. To achieve lower emissions, we need more people to travel on buses and we need to build more low-emission buses. To help with that, how does the Government propose to use the Transport (Scotland) Bill to curb the power of bus companies and give communities more influence over bus routes and fare setting?

Roseanna Cunningham: Members will not imagine that, in a 10-minute statement, I could discuss every single aspect of the issue, and that goes for buses. A great deal of work has been done with bus companies. James Kelly will be aware of the difficulties—particularly in the Glasgow area—in persuading bus companies to take up the support that is available to them to convert vehicles. We continue to try to have such conversations with bus companies; my colleagues on Glasgow City Council who are taking forward the low-emission zone are keen to resolve the issue. I encourage all bus companies to be part of the conversation and to access the support that is available, as some have in other parts of Scotland.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The cabinet secretary highlighted industrial clusters. As she is aware, Scotland has such clusters, which are large sources of carbon dioxide. I would be grateful if she could outline how existing expertise in those industries will be used to develop whole-system decarbonisation systems, such as carbon capture, utilisation and storage.

Roseanna Cunningham: A considerable amount of work is being done with industry, which is a key partner in everything that we do. Industrial decarbonisation will be extremely important for us as we move forward. That is one reason why I have said previously in the chamber that the Government cannot do this alone; a deal of buy-in is required from other sectors. The industrial sector accounted for 28 per cent of net Scottish emissions in 2016 so, in truth, it must be at the table.

We are engaging with industry. We have focused on a network of representatives from Scottish sites and trade associations, and we published the discussion paper "Decarbonising Scotland's Industrial Sectors and Sites", which makes the case that industrial decarbonisation is an investment opportunity. The paper underpinned a facilitated workshop on 30 April with an expanded network of industrial stakeholders. We are very much part of a conversation with industry. Many parts of the private sector are keen to engage on that level.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the statement on the global climate emergency.

Finlay Carson: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Before I asked my question of the cabinet secretary, I failed to refer members to my registered interest as a member of NFU Scotland and a former farmer. Thank you for the opportunity to raise that, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you.

Sheep Farming

15:00

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): We have, for understandable reasons, eaten into some of the time for this statement.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Understandably, the previous item ran over its expected time. Can you give me an estimate of when this item of business might finish, so that we can make appropriate arrangements?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes. It is very kind of you to ask that question, but it is not really a point of order, because control of the debate is in my hands. However, I am prepared to tell you—because I am that kind of person—that we have about eight minutes in hand, but I do not want members to abuse that.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Oh!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You see! I should not have told you. I can already see that Mr Mountain wants to lengthen his question.

This next item of business is a statement from Mairi Gougeon on supporting sheep farming in Scotland. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): There can be few sights that resonate more with us than spring lambs in the Scottish countryside. Thankfully, the weather this year has been much kinder to our hard-working sheep farmers, crofters and shepherds, and most would acknowledge that that has allowed for a good lambing season.

We have a lot of sheep in Scotland—there are about 2.6 million breeding ewes on 13,000 holdings. In total, there are about 24,500 farms, crofts and smallholdings now with sheep.

Of course, the concept of sheep on our hills was once controversial, but, ironically, they now help us to keep people on the land, with many farms and crofts using land that is not productive for other purposes to rear sheep.

We are also seeing a more diverse sector, with more traditional and native breeds making a comeback. If anyone has watched “This Farming Life”, they will be aware that breeds completely new to Scotland are beginning to feature.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform has just said, all sectors will have a role to play in addressing

the climate emergency, and farming is no exception. The sheep sector is already doing so—its grazing systems produce high-quality meat with low inputs. However, we must go further and faster, and I will fully involve the sector to develop new tools and production methods to better address climate change.

Working with farmers to make change happen is crucial and has underpinned how we have taken forward the key recommendations for Government from “The Scottish sheep sector review”, or the Scott review.

Our approach to traceability and provenance is key to that. We have introduced electronic tagging to create a robust recording and traceability system through markets and abattoirs. The data is held in ScotEID, which is an electronic identification system. That allows keepers to maintain their own information and makes compliance with the necessary sheep tracing legislation easier.

The system’s effectiveness enabled the Scottish Government to win a dispensation from the European Commission, to allow for incomplete reads to be acceptable in the common agricultural policy cross-compliance regime. That represented a significant win for Scotland.

The European Commission is proposing to change the rules through a new animal health regulation. The proposed changes would have been difficult for the particular circumstances of our sheep sector, which can often involve movements during a sheep’s lifetime in Scotland and across the United Kingdom from birth to fattening to finishing.

There has been a significant period of engagement with the European Commission to make the case for our current excellent sheep traceability system in Scotland to continue. I have corresponded with and met Commissioner Andriukaitis, and Scottish officials have worked closely with their UK Government counterparts to secure their support as well. In particular, I thank Alyn Smith and Catherine Stihler for their work as MEPs, alongside key stakeholder bodies, on the issue.

The European Commission’s consultation is live and I strongly urge Scotland’s sheep farmers and crofters to respond to it. They need to make their views known in support of the current wording of the new regulation.

Last year, the Scottish Government supported the sector’s efforts to persuade the European Union to introduce an allowance for alternative methods of ageing lambs for the purposes of removal of specified risk material—a key control for BSE.

The new method would have removed the need for manual dentition checks on lambs, replacing it with a much simpler date-based cut-off, saving the industry in Scotland and across Great Britain millions of pounds.

The Scottish Government and Food Standards Scotland have worked with the industry to develop an implementation plan and protocol. It would have given effect to a key recommendation of the Scott review, so we amended legislation and were preparing to go ahead.

However, as a result of Brexit uncertainty, the UK Government did not want that change to go ahead. It was concerned that continuing to argue for a differential position for Scotland and Great Britain would impact adversely on the UK's application for third country status. In short, our sheep farming sector in Scotland was seen as expendable.

We have continued to press the issue, but the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently determined that it could not prioritise it, as we have in Scotland. Nor could we go it alone, given that that would mean that Scottish sheep farmers would be subject to different systems across the UK, adding complexity that would make sales in other parts of the UK impossible. Therefore, I have reluctantly agreed that we shall not be proceeding with that change until next year.

Of course, none of the everyday challenges of sheep farming compare with the overwhelming risk that Brexit represents. The reckless attitude of the UK Government and its failure to take no deal off the table threaten to make the export trade in sheep meat completely unviable. We may now have a stay of execution until 31 October, but no deal remains a very real risk.

No deal would result in our lamb exports being subject to the EU's full most favoured nation tariffs of 40 per cent or more. That would increase the price for EU markets, have the potential to cause domestic prices to fall by around 30 per cent and reduce competitiveness. Therefore, officials across the UK continue to work on a proposed compensation scheme for the sheep sector to address the potential fallout. Our preferred option is a headage scheme.

Although we welcome undertakings from Michael Gove that the UK Government will pay all the costs arising from a no-deal Brexit, the UK Government must now make clear how much money it will make available for a compensation scheme. The best option, of course, is for our sheep sector to be able to sell its product, so we continue to explore how to keep markets open and grow new ones.

More people in Scotland and the UK buying Scotch lamb would help. Last year, we gave Quality Meat Scotland £200,000 to support its campaign to promote Scotch lamb. The impact was significant, with a 27 per cent increase in spend per buyer on lamb during the promotional period. We want to build on that success, so I can announce today that this Government will provide Quality Meat Scotland with an additional £200,000 to support marketing activity in the coming year, to help it to continue to promote Scotch lamb to people here at home.

Additionally, after years of pressing, we have persuaded the UK Government to repatriate the meat levy. Amendments have been made to the UK Agriculture Bill to allow that to happen, but to get the UK scheme established, it is vital that the bill makes progress at Westminster; it has been parked for months now. With the help of key stakeholder bodies, whose input was vital, we will help to deliver an additional £1.5 million to support our quality meat sector including Scotch lamb, so I want to deliver a clear message to Michael Gove: get on with it.

Protecting livelihoods is also one of the reasons why we are supporting efforts to address livestock worrying and predation. Reports of attacks are increasing, and those of you who have seen photographs in the press and on social media recently will no doubt have been shocked as me. I am fully supportive of Emma Harper's proposed bill to update the law on that issue.

We have commissioned research to gather more evidence on the scale of the problem and to explore the impacts on animals and on farmers, their families and businesses. We continue to support campaigns by SPARC—the Scottish partnership against rural crime—and NFU Scotland to raise awareness and encourage more responsible dog control in areas where there are livestock.

As we saw last year from the terrible impact of the beast from the east weather on lambing and the toll that that took on farmers, families and communities, climate and landscape are key components of successful sheep farming. That is why we established the sheep and trees initiative in 2016 to provide support to improve the productivity of hill-farming enterprises.

Trees planted in the right place can provide important shelter and extend out-wintering, thus improving productivity while maintaining flock size on a reduced grazing area. The initiative is working; since 2016 more than 400 crofters and farmers across Scotland have been awarded £70 million in forestry grants to help them to integrate new woodlands into their farming enterprises.

Although more than 80 per cent of applications for grants to create more woodlands are now from farmers and crofters, the role of agroforestry and diversified and low-carbon land use will only increase as we respond to the climate emergency. We will support the sheep sector to play its part, as we do already through CAP payments.

Many sheep farmers will have benefited from this year's loan schemes. The less favoured area support scheme, in particular, made sure that farmers and crofters got additional support in early spring. In April, we started making 2018 LFASS payments, and I advise that, next week, a further tranche of payments, worth approximately £15 million, will begin to arrive in bank accounts. Around 2,600 farmers and crofters will receive money, which means that nearly 8,100 farmers and crofters will have been paid since April, with more than £39 million directly supporting remote rural and island communities.

Only Scotland provides that additional help to our most marginalised farmers and crofters, many of them in the sheep sector. This Government remains absolutely committed to getting financial help to those who need it most.

We value the significant contribution that Scotland's sheep sector makes, not just to the rural economy but to our landscape, our culture and our heritage. Brexit threatens to remove sheep from our hills and people from our land. We cannot let that happen. I want to assure everyone in Scotland's sheep sector that this Government will continue to support them. We will always stand up for their interests and we will keep making the case for Scotland to stay in the EU, as the best way to protect their interests.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow about 20 minutes for questions and answers, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the minister for early sight of her statement. I refer members to my entry on farming and crofting in the register of members' interests.

We welcome and share the general statement of support for sheep farming that the minister has made this afternoon, given the sector's critical role in Scottish agriculture. However, the minister's statement was not without some moments of hysteria. The claim that the UK Government views sheep farming as "expendable" must count as one of the wilder claims that the Government has made in this chamber. The claim flies in the face of comments that Michael Gove and others have made in support of upland farming in Scotland. Given the Government's CAP payment fiasco and the cuts to LFASS that it continues to administer, it

is pretty rank hypocrisy to accuse others of failing to support sheep farming.

The Scottish Conservatives readily acknowledge that the agriculture sector requires to reduce its emissions to combat climate change. Farmers and crofters understand better than anyone else the importance of farming in an environmental and efficient manner. We believe that a long-term transition must be undertaken in a way that is fair and just, with farmers seen as the solution and not the problem.

Many sheep farmers will have read with some anxiety the report of the Committee on Climate Change and its references to having less beef and lamb in our diets and reducing our consumption of those products. Given those references and the Scottish Government's new commitment to net zero emissions by 2045, what reassurance can the minister give to Scotland's sheep producers that they are not expendable?

Mairi Gougeon: On Donald Cameron's comment about farmers being part of the solution, of course they are. They are custodians of the land, and it is vital that we work with them.

In the statement that she just made on the climate emergency, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform talked about a number of projects. I have visited a variety of initiatives that are looking at what we can do to tackle climate change and implement activities that can be replicated across Scotland. I recently visited one such project, which is part of the farming for a better climate programme. The initiative is to do with soil regeneration and involves five farmers in the north-east, who have a variety of farms. The knowledge that is developed will be vital to other farmers in Scotland.

I must address the point about LFASS payments. It is a bit rich of Donald Cameron and the Tories to talk about cuts to LFASS, when we have protected payments that have been done away with in the rest of the UK. We have protected LFASS payments as far as we possibly can—*[Interruption.]* I absolutely take umbrage with his comment; it is completely false to say that we have overseen cuts to LFASS when we have done the exact opposite and have made protecting LFASS payments as far as possible a priority of this Government.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Our farmers and crofters need stability and simplicity if they are to be able to plan ahead. A new subsidy regime must be in place as soon as possible, to give the industry a stable basis from which to innovate, tackle the challenges of climate change and meet the new targets.

Will the minister say when the new group of rural advisers will come forward with a blueprint for

a new regime, so that our farmers and crofters can meet their new targets?

While we are talking about stability, it would also be helpful to know when LFASS payments will be made at 100 per cent, rather than the 80 per cent that is currently paid.

Mairi Gougeon: The Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, updated the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee on a number of those issues when he appeared before the committee a few weeks ago, especially in relation to the commitments on LFASS payments and the work that we are doing on that to try to find a solution.

The stability and simplicity that Rhoda Grant spoke about are key to our policy. That stability—knowing what they can expect for the next five years—is exactly what we want to provide to farmers, and to rural Scotland. We have more detailed plans than exist in the rest of the UK—it is vital that members remember that.

Rhoda Grant also made a point about the new group that will be established. The cabinet secretary referred to that during his committee appearance. We are obviously keen to establish the group and get it going, because we recognise that we need to go beyond the policy that we have set for the next five years. We agreed to do that in the parliamentary debate in January and again recently. Work on that matter is progressing.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): It is disappointing to hear that the United Kingdom Government did not support moving from the unwieldy dentition method of ageing lambs to date-based cut-off, which the sheep sector in Scotland wanted. How did the UK Government arrive at that position, what influenced its thinking, and were the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations consulted in any meaningful way before DEFRA announced its decision?

Mairi Gougeon: I thank the member for raising that point. A key recommendation that came from the Scottish sheep sector review related to driving abattoir profitability. The uncertainty around Brexit was definitely the key factor in the UK Government's failure to take forward the proposal. Probably like most things that are Brexit-related, the UK Government's co-ordination with the devolved Administrations on the proposal has been challenging. On 4 March, we were advised by DEFRA that it wanted to postpone the move; the response from ourselves, the other devolved Administrations and stakeholders showed that that would not be a popular move and would be the wrong decision. Both myself and my Welsh counterpart wrote to Lord Gardiner, who is the responsible UK minister, and there was some

limited engagement before DEFRA took the final decision to postpone on 29 April. Scotland's voice and interests were not listened to and its needs were not taken into account. When it comes to making decisions, the UK Government rarely, if ever, puts Scotland's needs and interests first.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Peter Chapman, I note that 11 members wish to ask questions; even giving members additional time, that will be very difficult. I want you to go straight to a question, Mr Chapman—no preamble. That goes for everybody who follows.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): LFASS payments are due to be cut by 20 per cent this year and 60 per cent next year. The cabinet secretary has repeatedly stated that he will limit the cuts to 20 per cent, but we have seen—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me. That is called a preamble. Question, please.

Peter Chapman: Is that another worthless Scottish National Party promise? Can the minister give us any reassurance today that any progress has been made on mitigating—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Chapman. Sit down, please.

Mairi Gougeon: That is simply not the case, and Peter Chapman will be aware that the cabinet secretary said as much when he appeared in front of the committee a couple of weeks ago. The payment is 80 per cent this year, and we are committed to finding a solution. Members will not find anyone else in the rest of the UK who is as committed to that funding as we have been, to looking at LFASS as we have done and to making that a priority as we have made it.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The climate change plan suggests that practices such as traditional livestock grazing, which reduces the need for synthetic fertiliser, can help with carbon storage. Can the minister tell us what is being done to promote a positive vision of how farming can benefit, and benefit from the need to address, climate change? Is it really either sheep or butterflies—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you for that question. I am trying to keep them short from everybody.

Mairi Gougeon: My colleague was referring to the rather flippant comment that was made by Andrea Leadsom. When it comes to sheep and butterflies, in Scotland, it is definitely not a choice. We are looking at a wide variety of initiatives for soil regeneration, some of which I outlined earlier, and other vital projects are under way, such as our climate change champions.

I referenced the programme “This Farming Life”, which aired on the BBC a few weeks ago. It looked at the practices that Lynn and Sandra are implementing on Lynbreck croft, near Grantown-on-Spey, and the work that Bryce Cunningham is trying to do at Mossgiel farm with his soils and dairy herd. From those projects, we can create a wide variety of policies and, hopefully, lead by example, replicating them in other areas.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I appreciate that it is an important debate, but I could do with a bit of co-operation all round in keeping questions short.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Would the minister be willing to commit to developing a standardised carbon audit process to be used by farmers across Scotland, recognising their future contribution?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Beamish. That was spectacularly right.

Mairi Gougeon: I would consider doing so, and I would be happy to meet Ms Beamish to discuss the matter further.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will the Government help to protect lamb exports to the EU, particularly through speedy export health certification? That will be important when we leave the single market and customs union, as the UK wishes to do.

Mairi Gougeon: When we thought that we were facing the prospect of a no-deal Brexit, just last month, the sector identified export health certification as a key priority, and we are trying to find a solution to the issue. In order to do so, my officials have been working with the Animal and Plant Health Agency and local authorities to ensure that there will be adequate certification provision in the event of a no-deal Brexit. As part of that work, the APHA has been investigating the potential for flexibility and efficiency through the introduction of certification support officers, who could facilitate the signing of export health certificates.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The minister says that Brexit threatens to remove sheep from our hills and people from our land. What steps is the Government—including the minister and her colleagues—taking not simply to sustain populations in rural communities but to increase them?

Mairi Gougeon: I thank Mr Finnie for raising a vital point. I had a meeting with the Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development, Ben Macpherson, to discuss exactly that issue. It is another big fear and a big obstacle and challenge that we face in the light of Brexit. The potential changes to immigration that we see will

do untold damage to people in Scotland, particularly in our rural areas, which are set to suffer the most. The issue is very much on our minds, and we are seeking to discuss it because we want and need to see people living and working in rural areas. We will do everything that we can to make that happen.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Will the minister confirm whether sheep farming interests will be represented on the group that the Government is convening, which will recommend the new bespoke system of support for Scotland in the post-Brexit years—if, indeed, Brexit actually happens?

Mairi Gougeon: Yes.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister commit to hearing feedback from my consultation on livestock attacks by dogs, which ends tomorrow, and is she open to working with me to create a piece of legislation to protect our farmers from such an emotional and costly experience?

Mairi Gougeon: I offer my personal thanks and the thanks of the Scottish Government to Emma Harper for taking forward an important issue and an important bill. I look forward to hearing more about the feedback that she has received through her consultation, which I believe has received about 700 or 800 responses so far.

Recently, we have all seen pictures in the media and on social media of the damaging effects that livestock worrying causes not just to animals but to farmers, their families and their businesses. I am happy to work with Emma Harper on her proposed protection of livestock (Scotland) bill as she develops it.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests as a partner in a farming partnership.

I am disappointed that the minister is telling Michael Gove to get on with his Agriculture Bill when the Scottish Government is not getting on with its bills. When will the Scottish Government publish its two agriculture bills?

Mairi Gougeon: That is simply not the case. The matter was discussed by the cabinet secretary at the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee when he updated the committee members on those bills, to which we will make technical changes before they are introduced.

We have devolved Administration meetings every month, and we have been pushing every month to see what the timetable is for the UK Agriculture Bill. We see vital things such as the red meat levy, which could make a massive impact in

Scotland, but we have no idea about the timescale and no idea when that levy will come forward.

When it comes to direction and what we are doing, we have far more detailed plans in Scotland than exist anywhere else in the UK.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Given that Michael Gove is in the air, I ask the minister whether she agrees that it is shameful that Michael Gove, the UK environment secretary, has shafted Scottish hill farmers on the matter of convergence money. EU convergence money of £160 million was triggered only because of the low rates paid to Scottish hill farmers.

Mairi Gougeon: I could not agree more with that comment. The only reason that we received the money in the first place was the farmers and crofters in Scotland. What did the UK Government do with that money? It spent it everywhere else but not here.

The Tories have the cheek to talk about LFASS payments. Well, guess what? The convergence money could have gone a long way in helping to support our sheep and hill farmers, and it could go a long way if we were able to get it back. That is why the review is so important. A massive injustice was done to Scotland and to Scottish hill farmers years ago, when the UK Government took the decision to shaft us on £160 million of funding. We want that money to be returned to Scotland, and we want it to go where it is needed—to Scottish farmers and crofters, who were the only reason that we got it in the first place.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I say to both Mr Crawford and the minister that I am not terribly happy with that word. [*Interruption.*] It is for me to decide whether I am happy with it, and I am not happy with it.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Without legislation, farmers and crofters face a potential cliff edge in 2020 when it comes to rural payments. Will the minister at least tell members when the Government will publish the specific rural support legislation that is required to provide for future payments?

Mairi Gougeon: That legislation will be brought forward when we require it and when that needs to be done. Following a no-deal Brexit, we would still be able to give farmers the payments that they were due, so that is not a risk for us at the moment.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): In her statement, the minister mentioned culture and heritage. In the light of Scottish Natural Heritage's decision to remove sheep from Dromore farm, in my constituency, what will the Government do to protect the hefted sheep flocks

and traditional hill farms in the south of Scotland? Once they are gone, they will be gone.

Mairi Gougeon: I do not know about the specific instance that Finlay Carson raises, but I will be happy to meet him to discuss the issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio question time. I thank all members, because we got a move on and we got everybody in, including a latecomer: Mr Carson.

The Place Principle

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-17265, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on adopting the place principle.

15:28

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): I am delighted to open this debate on the place principle. Fundamentally, it is an approach that seeks to ensure that we, as policy makers, make better decisions that have people and community at their heart and deliver positive outcomes. It explicitly recognises the importance of place in shaping opportunity for people and providing a sense of connectedness and belonging. The principle understands that the places that we live and grow up in shape our lives and influence our life chances.

There is probably little to disagree with, but, as in so many other areas of public and social policy, although the place principle sounds positive and commands respect and support, it also challenges and can test, because it seeks to help people to overcome policy silos and organisational boundaries and encourage better collaboration, resource utilisation and community participation in order to improve outcomes and tackle inequalities.

Sometimes, knocking down silos and disregarding boundaries is difficult. Better decisions and better outcomes through collaboration centred around place, however, are prizes worth working hard for. Place-based approaches and community empowerment are not new concepts, but what we have with this approach and with the agreement and support of our colleagues in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is an opportunity to ensure that we can put people and place at the heart of better decision making, enabling more places in Scotland to flourish.

The place principle asks that all partners responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place work and plan together to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places. Crucially, it recognises that local decision making and delivery, informed by the people who live and work there, are key to the social, economic and physical success of places. We agreed the place principle with COSLA, and our joint focus now is on implementing the principle to create the impetus for ambitious and effective place-based approaches right across the country. We want to see a Scotland in which everyone can play a full part in society, with empowered communities—be

they town, village, city, rural, island or urban—able to shape their individual and collective futures, wherever they are across the country and whatever their size.

All of us in the chamber can add to the collective leadership required to make the place principle a reality, because we all have a role to play in improving outcomes, addressing inequalities and supporting local economies in and across our communities.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Back in the real world, communities are experiencing cuts to youth work and cuts to environmental services, roads are in a poorer condition, places are more heavily littered and fly-tipping is on the increase. In the theoretical debate about place making—very interesting though it is—will the minister reflect on the reality out there in the real world?

Aileen Campbell: Back in the real world, we have the collaboration and co-operation of COSLA and a host of different partners—not forgetting, most importantly, communities themselves—who want to make the place principle a reality. We are playing catch-up with communities, who want us as decision makers to make better decisions based on place. I remind Mr Findlay that the budget and resources that the Government has given to local authorities have increased and are a fair settlement. The place principle is about making sure that we use the resources wisely and effectively. In the real world, that is what people out there expect their politicians to do.

Implementing the place principle is about asking questions across all spatial or geographical scales. What is this place for and how do people use it? As we seek the answers, we need to commit to engaging with and involving local people and communities in determining where and how we invest finite resources and make the most of our combined assets. People and communities are often challenged by multiple disadvantage. Addressing a single issue, although welcome, will never resolve the deep-rooted issues that are often interlinked and permeate many facets of people's lives. The place principle gives a common focus and the potential, collectively, to develop preventative, sustainable solutions that enable us to tackle complex, multiple inequalities and disadvantages in a particularly effective and targeted way.

Adopting and scaling up that approach will enable us to make good on the challenge set out by Campbell Christie. He noted that, in order to deliver good public services with positive outcomes for people and communities, we must reform how we work, empower when we can, maximise the impact of the resources and be strategic in how we achieve our goal of reducing inequalities. That means working with our

communities in partnership, building on their assets and not doing things to them. That is because, as we all know, when people feel that they can influence what happens in their communities and can contribute to delivering change, communities are energised to achieve huge benefits.

That requires the discipline of a more joined-up, collaborative and integrated approach to services, land and buildings; improved cross-government working; improved collaboration between communities and the public, private and third sectors; and the efficient and effective use of our collective energy and resources to make the most of their impact. The place principle supports the effective and efficient use of our collective resources by redirecting available investments and resources to where they can make a positive difference. That extends to how partners collaborate in participating with the local community.

The place principle can help spark activity and action across different sectors—transport, health and the private and third sectors—and across types of actors and unusual partners. The challenge will be in the quality of our collaboration in planning decisions and investments. If we grasp them in the right way, there are opportunities ahead to ramp up and get on and deliver the place principle and the challenge laid down by Christie.

Driving our work across Government, local government and beyond are the national outcomes set out in Scotland's national performance framework. The framework is important because it articulates a shared vision for the type of Scotland that we all want to work towards and measures success against more than just a growing economy or gross domestic product—its measures of success are wellbeing, thriving communities and happiness.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) rose—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we hear Mr Rowley's intervention, I say to members that there is time for interventions—you will get your time back.

Alex Rowley: I do not know whether the cabinet secretary is trying to rewrite the Christie report, because one of its key messages was about preventative spend: it said that more preventative spend was needed. The cabinet secretary has not mentioned that.

Aileen Campbell: I mentioned the need for a "preventative" approach. I am certainly not seeking to rewrite the Christie report. I totally subscribe to the Christie principles, and I think that the approach that I am outlining fits well with them and will enable us to make good on the challenge that

Christie set out for us. He also made it clear that we needed to reform public services and to maximise the resources to improve outcomes for, and to empower, our communities. The place approach enables us to do all those things.

The national performance framework sets out the outcomes that we need to work towards and, with its focus on place, it provides a chance to make good on our vision. As well as setting out the direction, it permits innovation and imagination. The place principle can act as an enabler of the national performance framework locally by making it applicable to where and how people and communities live and work. It seeks to drive forward an economy that works for everyone, that provides opportunities to all and that creates sustainable and inclusive growth so that no one is left behind. In doing so, it recognises the potential and assets that exist.

The importance of building on the assets of all our places and communities to drive inclusive growth can be seen in our support for our city region and growth deals. So far, we have committed around £1.7 billion to those transformational investment programmes across Scotland, which are aimed at delivering real benefits for communities in the form of jobs and other economic opportunities.

It is important that our public services are responsive to the circumstances that are experienced by different places across the country. It is equally important that those who work to assist businesses to create and protect jobs are focused on the asset base and the economic potential of our varied local places and distinctive regions.

As well as tackling shared challenges across their regions, such as child poverty, the new multipartner regional partnerships that have been inspired by the growth deal experience are looking to identify long-term opportunities and key areas of growth. As that work progresses, the need for the place principle will become ever stronger as a way to blend our economic ambitions with our social justice ones. We cannot talk about tackling in-work poverty if we do not seek to ensure that those catalytic deals and regional partnerships enable people to access jobs with decent pay.

The place principle is about tailoring approaches to the needs and opportunities of different areas. That is why, in recognition of the different economic challenges that are faced by the south of Scotland, we are establishing south of Scotland enterprise. That new agency, which will be operational next year, will embed place-based support for businesses and communities at the centre of its approach.

When the First Minister launched our programme for government last September, we embarked on a programme of work to develop a vision for how our homes and communities should look and feel in 2040 and the options and choices for getting there. Since then, we have engaged with a wide range of housing interests on a number of themes, one of which was place. It is clear from that engagement that place-making approaches are supported strongly by a wide range of individuals and organisations.

It will be important for Government and stakeholders to consider the essence of the place principle as we develop our vision for housing to 2040 and the milestones for getting there, but we also need to make the approach real and tangible. Fort William is on the cusp of a scale of investment that is potentially transformative for residents and visitors. Building the vision for Fort William around the place principle presents a great opportunity to illustrate how aligning national and local investment, coupled with wider public sector leadership on place, along with the support of local community interests, can stimulate positive place-based outcomes for that community and the wider area. Approximately 20 key projects have been identified to be implemented in the next five to 10-year period, including transport improvements; a new hospital; a science, technology, engineering and mathematics facility; port expansion; and other cultural, commercial and tourist-related investments.

There are many other examples across the country that exemplify the practices that are inherent in the place principle. We are supporting the children's neighbourhoods Scotland programme, which brings together people, resources and organisations to work together to improve the lives of children and young people, through the tackling child poverty fund. It builds on the learning from similar international initiatives in the Netherlands and the US. Recently, the Granton partnership agreed to adopt the place principle to help its partners to test how, collectively, they combine resources and work with the local community to plan and make decisions and investments to revitalise the local economy and community. Our focus now and in the future needs to be on learning from what works and using practical examples to illustrate how the place principle can be adopted across the country.

Members of the Scottish Parliament are uniquely positioned to support local partners and communities to take advantage of the opportunities that this approach brings. The approach represents the sensible marshalling of resources to maximise their impact instead of doing a road here or housing there and then working out how to ensure that folk will benefit from that.

As parliamentarians, we are each privileged to represent constituencies and regions across Scotland. We know the unique and diverse communities that we serve and we know the demographic, fiscal, and environmental challenges that are facing Scotland. We also know that there are too many who suffer inequality, made worse by politically motivated austerity.

Making socioeconomic decisions through the lens of place and guided by the principle of getting alongside our communities will enable better decisions, empowered communities and more impactful use of resources. It is an approach that our constituents demand that we take and it can enable us to make more progress on the ambitions of Christie and the vision that we have set out in the national performance framework. However, it is an approach that we need to scale up and I am looking forward to the views, opinions and contributions of colleagues so that we can all work together to make the place principle the way that we do business here in Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that the places where people live and grow up shape their opportunities and make them feel part of a community; agrees that local decision-making and delivery, informed by the views of the people who live and work there, are key to the social, economic and physical success of places; welcomes the cross-sectoral development of and support for the Place Principle; agrees that the Place Principle supports public, private and community sectors to develop a clear vision for services, assets and investments to maximise the benefit from their combined resources; acknowledges the partnership work of the Scottish Government and COSLA in agreeing and adopting the Place Principle, and acknowledges that everyone has a role to play in improving outcomes and addressing inequalities in and across communities.

15:41

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

This morning, I read the weekly briefing from Unison Scotland, my trade union, and I noted that, on this debate, it says the following:

"The place principle states 'A more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives.'"

It goes on to say that

"These are fine words, very fine words—indeed all they lack"

are words in favour of

"the delights of motherhood"

and apple pie. In other words, what is not to like about the place principle?

However, Unison then makes the point that

“Principles and budgets are however different things. It’s in the detail of the latter that the seriousness of the former is to be judged. An examination of the public realm in Scotland would surely be the starting point. That the ‘efficiencies’ and ‘improvements’ of recent years that have seen so many towns and villages lose Police Stations, libraries and public toilets as well as other”

reductions in public services

“might suggest that fine words are being preached here, but not practiced.”

That is the view of Scotland’s largest public services trade union, and it is in line with our amendment. I say to the Government and to all MSPs that if they fail to recognise the impact of austerity on local services and communities, they are walking around with blinkers on when it comes to those issues.

For example, last week I was contacted by a lady from Lochgelly who has mobility problems and uses a mobility scooter. She said that although the good weather is coming in, the state of some of the pavements makes it very difficult for her to get around on her mobility scooter. That demonstrates that wellbeing, quality of life, physical and mental health, social and cultural life and sustainability are influenced by the quality and design of the places in which we live. That lady from Lochgelly is entitled to all those things. However, to move from rhetoric to the reality, I say that the need for action on the state of the pavements is being halted by cuts to council budgets. The council is struggling to fill in the potholes, never mind fix the pavements.

Let us not live in a bubble in Parliament; the reality is that in every community across Scotland, such issues exist. We cannot gloss over the impacts of austerity.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Is Mr Rowley suggesting that potholes have happened only under austerity?

Alex Rowley: I am saying that we need look only at the evidence of the cuts to council budgets over the past decade to see the impact that austerity is having and, therefore, the major barrier to realising some of the nice, kind words of the cabinet secretary.

Aileen Campbell: The debate is about trying to make better use of the resources and public funds that we have in order to make good on the Christie principles and on the notion of prevention. However, in a host of ways, the Labour Party has always failed to come up with anything credible to contribute on marshalling resources. The Labour Party was absent in the budget debate—granted, you were an exception. We have treated local government fairly and we are seeking to work with it to ensure that we take decisions about places

such that people can feel the sense of wellbeing that probably all of us agree they should have. Does the member not accept that Labour needs to produce positive ideas about how we tackle some of the vicious issues that he has described?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before you respond, Mr Rowley, I remind the cabinet secretary not to use the term “you” and to speak through the chair, please.

Aileen Campbell: I apologise, Presiding Officer.

Alex Rowley: The Labour manifesto “For the Many Not the Few” sets out a plan for £70 billion-odd of investment coming to Scotland over the next decade. That is the kind of investment that we need. I am happy to work with other parties. I know that the Conservative Party supports austerity, but I am happy to work with other parties to look for investment. That is the level of ambition that we need for Scotland, and that is the ambition that John McDonnell, as shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, is putting forward in that manifesto.

Let us not live in a bubble in this place. The reality is that, in every community across Scotland, problems exist with potholes, pavements and cuts to local services. We cannot gloss over the impacts of austerity: nor should we, for austerity is not an economic choice, but a political choice that is supported by politicians here. The late Martin McGuinness said:

“Austerity is devastating ... communities. The working poor, public sector workers, the disabled and the vulnerable are the hardest hit by this bankrupt and ideologically driven policy.”

The place principle is a useful framework that recognises that communities must be central to decision making, and that the most sustainable and beneficial outcomes are achieved when policy and practice integrate health, housing, environment, transport, community and spatial planning. However, let us not use such frameworks to mask what is really going on, because if we do, the only people whom we will be fooling will be ourselves—not the communities that we represent.

The Jimmy Reid Foundation and UNISON report “The Contribution Local Government Makes to our Communities and the Local Economy” is now a year old, but it is more relevant than ever. It states that changes such as cutting library and leisure centre opening hours

“may on the face of it seem an incremental change”

but

“these changes can prevent some individuals in communities accessing valuable services. Poorer households are more reliant on a range of public services so feel the cumulative impacts of multiple small cuts. For those on low incomes, especially, these small changes may

have a sizeable impact and present significant or outright barriers to accessing services”.

An analysis by Labour that was published in December found that there has been a £22 million reduction in spending on libraries over the past six years. According to official figures, a total of 69 libraries have closed across Scotland since 2011, including 30 in 2017, which was up from 15 in the previous year. The impact on cultural services has been far reaching, with more than £5 million having been cut from funding for museums and galleries. Almost £20 million has been cut from budgets for sports facilities, while more than £30 million has been cut from budgets for community parks and open spaces.

In Fife, many really good projects that were built around the principle of social prescribing have disappeared as the funding has dried up. The place principle will never translate into meaningful community participation if cuts are made not only to the services that people rely on but to the services that enrich their lives and make them feel part of the community.

A recent survey by Unison found that council workers identified a lack of front-line staff as being one of the biggest challenges that face Scottish local authorities. More than two thirds of those who were questioned said that local residents did not receive the help that they needed when they needed it, and 51 per cent were not confident that vulnerable people were safe and cared for.

During the passage of the Planning (Scotland) Bill, the Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland said that between 2009 and 2016, local authorities lost, on average, 23 per cent of planning staff, and that over the same period, planning services' budgets were cut by an average of 32.5 per cent.

I accept that people genuinely want to use the place principle to make the changes that are necessary, but I say to members who are present in the chamber that if they do not recognise the impact of failed Tory austerity on communities in Scotland, they will not wake up to what needs to happen, and to the levels of investment that need to go into our country in order to ensure that we achieve the ambitions that the cabinet secretary has set out.

I move amendment S5M-17265.2, to insert at end:

“; recognises the negative impact of austerity on local services and local communities, and understands that a more joined-up, collaborative and participative approach to services requires sufficient resources to empower local people and those working in local services.”

15:51

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):

In 2012, when I was appointed to my local council's planning committee, I was given a publication entitled “Placemaking and design” which, I was informed, contained the good policy that would guide my decision making. The maxim that beauty is in the eye of the beholder often came to mind when I was a planning committee member. I certainly learned to look at things differently, and was supported by the information in that book and the wider information that I was given.

I also received sage advice from Robert Maguire—one of the 20th century's leading architects—who settled in the Scottish Borders after his retirement. Over good food and wine, Bob talked to me about how detail and beauty in architecture need not be lost in the process of creating practical and cost-effective spaces. He was famous for his designs for churches and student accommodation, which were all about inspiring communities and bringing them together.

Human beings have always seen design as important, Bob would tell me. For centuries, architects claimed that their designs would reshape society through the power of their art, which is a lovely—if unsubstantiated—notion. In the 1400s, Italian Renaissance era architect Leon Battista Alberti claimed that balanced classical forms were so influential that they would compel aggressive invaders to down their arms and become civilians.

US architect Frank Lloyd Wright believed that, when done properly, architecture would save his country from corruption and turn people back to “wholesome endeavours”. The Swiss-born French architect Le Corbusier claimed that the power of his designs for Villa Savoye would actually heal the sick—a claim that was so inaccurate that he avoided court only due to the commencement of world war two.

However, we know that boring buildings and large grey landscapes have been found to cause higher levels of stress. Without variety and stimulation, the human mind becomes confused and is reminded just how far out of its natural habitat it is. So, although there is no definitive answer to the question how architecture can impact society, it is widely understood and accepted that it will always serve more than a functional purpose.

The broad strokes of the place principle have a good pedigree, and they point to a considered and locally empowering approach to planning and public services. However, there are some aspects of the Scottish Government's interpretation of the

principle on which I would appreciate clarification of how the approach will work in practice.

The Scottish Government has defined “place” as being where

“people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose”.

Places can be streets, villages, cities, regions or even whole countries. I have questions about how well such a definition will hold when placed under the weight of reality. When scarce public resources are distributed, planning will involve different places at different levels: streets, parts of towns, or whole towns. If the principle is to be of practical worth, it will have to outline how different places will interact in terms of planning and distribution of resources. It will have to determine how the needs and desires of some streets are weighed against those of others, and how those interact with the needs and desires of the whole town.

The Scottish Government states that the place principle will not be prescriptive and should be viewed as an approach to planning and resource distribution, rather than as a set of rules that should be followed to the letter.

The Improvement Service has already created a checklist for councils to consult on place-based working: I hope that it will not, in time, become just a rubric for councils to adopt as an official part of planning policy.

I support decision-making being taken at the local level, and am an ardent believer in the idea that communities themselves know what is in their best interests. In many ways, that makes me a supporter of the theory behind the place principle. I hope that we will see more clarity on how the principle will help councils to distribute resources when places have opposing or contradictory desires and needs.

Linked to that, I would like to know how the principle will support the representation of different places when council decisions are being made. I would like to avoid overreliance on the new place standard tool, and instead see a face-to-face and holistic approach to place representation that is in keeping with the values of localism and subsidiarity.

I also hope that the minister will outline how application of the place principle by councils will be monitored. Without some form of monitoring, it will be all too easy for the reasonable principles of local representation and a joined-up approach to planning to be neglected.

I am in favour of many of the values that underpin the place principle, but I want to ensure that the Scottish Government can put theory into

practice and deliver a strong policy that empowers communities to choose what is right for them.

15:56

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank the Scottish Government for bringing the topic to debate this afternoon. The Greens are happy to support the motion, and we support the place principle, although we do not support the assumptions that underpin the proposed outcome of inclusive and sustainable growth. However, I will leave that to one side for the moment.

We are rather sceptical about the vague nature of the agreement that has been struck between the Scottish Government and COSLA. Although it is no doubt worthy, it merely appears to request that the bodies responsible for delivering services and managing assets work together to enable outcomes, which is a proposition that I thought had been agreed years ago.

The motion talks about local decision making, but there is little possibility of that when there is no real local government in Scotland, compared to other countries, such as Finland, which has a similar population to Scotland, and which has 330 municipalities with real power for communities to shape the place they live in, including substantial fiscal powers to raise the finance to pay for the things that the community wishes to do.

As the McIntosh report said way back in 1999:

“It could be said that Scotland today simply does not have a system of local government in the sense in which many other countries still do. The 32 councils now existing are, in effect, what in other countries are called county councils or provinces.”

COSLA itself observed in 2013:

“Scotland is one of the most centralised countries in Europe. It is no coincidence that our European neighbours are often more successful at improving outcomes, and have much greater turn out at elections.”

I concede that, in recent years, we have seen a policy shift in community engagement across Scotland, thanks to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and to the Christie commission on the future delivery of public services that preceded the act. However, as Alex Rowley pointed out, it talked about preventative spend and a lot of work remains to be done on financing and accounting for preventative spend. I have seen many projects in my region that have not secured on-going funding, despite having proven that they have managed to save other agencies substantial sums of money.

I see no real prospect of this so-called place principle having the kind of impact that is envisaged in the motion. We need a completely new approach to local governance and we await with interest the outcome of the minister's

deliberations on that. Tentative steps, such as participatory budgeting and local place plans, while welcome, are timid in comparison to the kind of powers that exist at the local level in any normal European country. That is why we need, for example, to return control of local taxation to local councils, and to reverse the centralisation that was undertaken by the UK Tory Government over non-domestic rates and by the Scottish National Party Government over council tax.

Planning has already been mentioned. The Parliament has been scrutinising the Planning (Scotland) Bill and we will return to it next month. MSPs from all parties have been lodging amendments, all of which are designed to improve the places in which we live and work. It is evident that MSPs from all parties appear to agree that we need to strengthen the powers and responsibilities of communities. However, it remains the case that the planning system still appears to be massively dominated by powerful private interests and that genuine public-led development and planning is as remote a prospect as it has been for many decades.

The Greens were elected to this Parliament on a manifesto to revitalise local democracy. By adopting the place principle, we are moving in the right direction.

Neil Findlay: How many of the people who come to Mr Wightman's surgeries, or email or write to him, talk about the cuts to local government? Is it a significant part of his mailbag?

Andy Wightman: Yes. People come to me talking about the pressures faced by local government and the cuts that are taking place across the country. I agree—it is in a bad place. Part of the reason for that is that we have had a decade of a Government insisting on telling local government how much it can raise in tax. We want to turn the whole thing round, which is why, in budget negotiations this year, we have, I hope, started a process of revitalising local government and giving it greater fiscal freedom. It will take a long time, though.

We agree that the place principle is a useful starting point, but if we are to truly embolden local democracy, we must devolve decision making and budgets to a much more local level.

16:01

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate, which, judging by the contributions so far, will be fairly positive.

As every member will agree, Scotland's communities are a rich source of energy, creativity and talent. Each of our communities is made up of

people from diverse backgrounds, with different skills and experiences, and all of them have something to contribute to improving Scotland physically, socially and economically. If we work together, that will help to create the real-world experience described by Mr Findlay.

As convener of the Local Government and Communities Committee, and through my constituency casework, I know that people and communities can often feel that they are sidelined when it comes to making or contributing to local decisions. In my opinion, it is the people who live and work in a community who know what is best for that community, and they are key to improving local places when they are involved in local decision making and delivery. Indeed, that is why the Scottish Government has implemented a number of community empowerment policies. Whether it is the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the community choices programme or work to encourage councils to use participatory budgeting, the Scottish Government recognises that people should play their full part in their local area and shape their own futures.

Central and local government have a huge role to play in encouraging communities to work together. It is through collaboration and partnership that we will realise Scotland's full potential, improve outcomes and address inequalities in and across communities. Fundamentally, the place principle provides the collective focus to support inclusive economic growth and create places that are both successful and sustainable. As the principle lays out,

"Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities."

As part of that, the place principle calls on

"All those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place ... to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive ... growth and create more successful places."

Research has shown that when people and communities feel empowered, there is greater participation in local democracy and increased confidence and skills among local people; more people volunteer in their communities; and there is greater satisfaction with quality of life in their neighbourhood. There can be no doubt that many challenges that affect disadvantaged communities are deep rooted and can be better solved collaboratively, than by individual partners working in isolation, or by a top-down approach, where the community is told, "This is what's going to happen to your local area," and does not have the appropriate buy-in at the appropriate time.

A community-led organisation in my constituency is undertaking great work, but sometimes feels powerless when it comes to local decision making. Pollokshaws community hub recently held a community consultation on the future of the Pollokshaws shopping arcade. The arcade, which is due for demolition, is at the heart of the community-led push for local regeneration. The hub held two open days where the community could look at designs for a new shopping centre and a selection of public realm examples from across the UK and beyond. The process was started by community activists who felt that the local authority, other agencies and the private sector can take singular decisions about their community, sometimes with little or no consultation with the community itself.

Glasgow City Council is, of course, doing great work to include local groups such as the Pollokshaws community hub, which has been a recipient of funding through participatory budgeting. However, through the place principle and providing a shared understanding of the place, even better collaboration and community involvement are encouraged, and that can overcome organisational or sectoral boundaries.

Place-based approaches can provide a better way of enabling local communities to influence, shape and deliver long-term solutions that will benefit communities in Pollokshaws and across Scotland. A holistic approach, as offered by the place principle, is increasingly recognised as the best way to consider issues relating to the local economy, physical infrastructure and the social aspects of place.

To sum up, the place principle provides a coherent focus for many differing agendas. I encourage all public bodies to follow the lead of the Scottish Government and COSLA and adopt the policy to bring the many ideas about services, investments, resources and assets together under one roof to help to shape a better place.

16:05

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate.

Our happiness and wellbeing depend to a great extent on the place in which we live. We should have places where we belong and feel safe, and whose physical elements cater to our needs. After all, a place is important not only in terms of its physical layout or amenities, but in the very fact that it is where people live, socialise and meet others.

In developing places that are fit for all, it is the local authorities, which provide the services and look after local assets, that should lead the way with the principles of localism and empowering

communities at the forefront of their minds, from our biggest cities to our smallest towns and villages.

In Edinburgh, we heard more last week about a 10-year plan for the city, including further tram routes to replace some bus services as well as plans for pedestrian areas and even lifts to link different parts of the city. Although those plans are in their early stages, they will no doubt generate their fair share of debate, given previous debacles in the city concerning public services. However, there is an ideal opportunity to test the place principle, including a public consultation process that has a far and deep reach into the heart of our communities. Consultation too often scratches the surface and pays lip service to the need to ask people what they think without taking that on board or producing results that are reflective of the wider population. I am sure that that is a lesson for the Parliament as much as for local authorities. I hope that the City of Edinburgh Council will make that effort before it embarks on such ambitious plans.

It is not just places that change over time; people do, too. I will reflect on the fact that people's needs also change and that the views and needs of those people should continue to be represented. In preparing for the debate, it struck me that various groups, many of which we as members of the Scottish Parliament will have met, represent specific needs or specific groups of people in our communities.

I am pleased to have worked with Dementia Friendly Pentlands, which is a group of people who volunteer in communities in the south-west of Edinburgh. To me, those people resemble the spirit of the place principle, as their goal is to give people who live with dementia a stronger local presence by building communities that are safe, supportive, strong and resilient enough to support dementia sufferers and their carers. They not only help people to feel more included through initiatives such as the palm cafe in Balerno, they also run the community conversations project, in which people with dementia and those who look after them are asked what they think their communities can do to become more dementia friendly. Having gathered those views, they disseminate them to the local community—for example, by educating people through the dementia-friendly business scheme; carrying out environmental and signage audits in the Pentlands area; and feeding in to community transport consultation processes.

To me, that resembles exactly what the place principle is all about: a joined-up, collaborative approach to services that takes into account everyone's needs, including those of dementia sufferers. I pay tribute to all the volunteers who

work as part of Dementia Friendly Pentlands and thank them for the work that they do.

16:09

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I will highlight excellent community-led work that is taking place in my constituency. It has been a privilege to support such efforts in the communities that I represent. As I have done before in the chamber, I praise the work of the Royston strategy group. I was pleased to hold a members' business debate on the regeneration of Royston way back on 24 June 2014—that was some time ago. In that debate, members praised the community-led nature of the expected regeneration that the strategy group championed, which was to be driven through local housing associations and the Rosemount Development Trust. A major community consultation followed, and a partnership with Kevin Murray Associates led to a vision document for the community.

Many community asks still need to be progressed and delivered, but there have been successes, which it is important to put on the record in the context of the debate. Roystonhill will have a new community hub, for which £1 million will come from the Big Lottery Fund and £575,000 will come from the Scottish Government's regeneration capital grant fund. The community will take back control of the derelict land that is known as the triangle site, for which Copperworks Housing Association has got £419,000 from the Scottish land fund.

Those key asks followed a place-based community-led consultation, and they have been delivered. It is significant that the local authority had no regeneration plans for Royston, so the community got on and designed its own plans, and now it is delivering. Surely that is a place-based community-led success, which shows what can be achieved.

If we offer a voice and hope, we must offer the prospect of delivery. We should not give false hope, which is why I wanted to give a concrete example of how success can be achieved.

In partnership with Springburn community council, we established the Springburn regeneration forum in March 2017. I pay tribute to the community council and Helen Carroll in particular for their sheer energy to improve the area. Springburn did not have a regeneration plan from the local authority; there were sizeable regeneration plans for surrounding places, such as Red Road and Cowlares, but no attempts were being made to regenerate the town centre.

When we fast forward to today, the regeneration forum has secured about £40,000 to open a new

community hub in Springburn shopping centre, run a variety of projects and worked with Kevin Murray Associates to run two days of charrettes as part of a massive community consultation to develop Springburn's community-led vision. I thank the Scottish Government for putting more than £20,000 into the pot of cash to make that happen; I also thank NG Homes for putting in £10,000, Glasgow City Council for putting in £10,000 and several others for giving money. I thank the shopping centre, Springburn Winter Gardens Trust and others that gave support in kind.

On 28 May, we will feed back the findings of the charrettes to the wider community. We will create expectations when our vision is fleshed out, and that challenges all of us—including the local authority, the Scottish Government and other funding partners—to find a way of delivering the vision. I am sure that we can do that. The £50 million town centre regeneration fund might be crucial in attracting much investment to Springburn.

The place principle is vital if we are to deliver a strategic community-led view of what our town centres and communities should look like. In my constituency, I have seen that happen in Royston, and I see it emerging in Springburn. As MSPs and local delivery agents, we all have a key role not in leading regeneration but in building capacity in our communities to let them lead the regeneration. We must deliver for them.

16:14

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I am sure that many of us love the places that we live in; we are connected to them and to the people who live around us. Across Scotland, communities have often been fashioned around workplaces, many of which have long gone—whether they were mills, mines and steelworks, or places in the fishing and farming industries. They shaped the landscape, the infrastructure, the culture and, most notably, the people.

To the west and east of my region, the earth provided coal, shale, clay and stone. Working the land required hard graft, and it led to many people losing their life or having shortened lives. That environment still shapes the people. We have or have had infrastructure such as miners welfare clubs, working men's institutes, libraries, football pitches, dog tracks, pigeon doocots, women's guilds, the co-operative, traditional housing, miners rows and the like. Those were features in many of those communities, and although some of them may have gone, what has not gone is the sense of community and the pride of being from that town or village.

I love where I live; I love the communities where I work and socialise. Each village has an individual culture and its own idiosyncrasies.

All us here are in the very fortunate position that we can afford to choose where we live and set up our home, have our family or, indeed, retire to. Many people are not able to do that—in a market system, choice is often available only to those who have an income that allows them to exercise that choice. Many have to make do with what they can find—if they are lucky, they might be allocated a home by a council or housing association, or they can afford to rent privately. Others have to share a house or flat. Too many live a transient life, moving from town to town or from area to area just to keep a roof over their heads. Some live their lives on the street, in hostels or in tents of cardboard or canvas.

For people in those circumstances, parliamentary debates about place, the design of services or the urban realm and theoretical discussions about concepts of empowerment are light years away from anything that they are experiencing day to day. Sometimes in this place I think that I live in a parallel universe—I know that some people might think that I do, too. This is definitely one of those days. People out there are not stroking their chins or reading books about planning concepts or trends. Many of them are wondering where they will sleep tonight, whether they will have enough money for a hostel, how they will feed themselves and what medical support they can get for mental ill health or addiction.

Of course, I accept that quality design in relation to places where we live has a huge impact on the wellbeing of people in our communities. We all want to see clean, tidy streets, welcoming parks, high streets with bustling shops, houses that are built to last and which are warm and affordable, local services that are adequately staffed and doctors' surgeries with appointments available, but that is not the reality for many people.

Of course, good design can create a welcoming supportive environment, impacting on wellbeing and community cohesion. That is not new; it is not rocket science. However, I say to ministers and SNP back benchers that that cannot be done on a wing and a prayer against a backdrop of year-on-year brutal cuts—in my region alone, there is £100 million of cuts to West Lothian Council. That is why I say that we live in a parallel universe.

In recent months, we have seen reports about health inequalities rising and life expectancy falling. Members need only look at the streets of this city, yards from this Parliament. Homelessness is increasing; drug deaths are at record levels. That is the harsh, cold reality of life in our towns and cities today. We will need more

than principles that service providers can opt out of to tackle it. I ask the Government, when we are talking about all this nice stuff, can we address the hard facts of what people in our communities are experiencing? If we do not do that, they will look on this place as a complete irrelevance to their lives.

16:18

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I welcome this debate and the dialogue on the place principle. Listening to some colleagues in the chamber, one would think that life was perfect before the SNP Government came to power in 2007. Life certainly was not perfect for many people—*[Interruption.]* It was not perfect for many people in my community, or in the community that Mr Findlay represents.

The collective focus on supporting inclusive economic growth and creating places that are successful and sustainable is not just a well-intentioned target but a commonsense approach. That collaborative approach to designing the principle is welcome, but it should have happened many years ago.

Thankfully, the silo mentality of working in some parts of the public sector started to change some years ago, and that has certainly moved forward since 2007. Today, we heard the statement from Roseanna Cunningham, our Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, highlighting again the issue of the climate emergency that we face. The cabinet secretary said that the Scottish Government—the cabinet secretaries and ministers—will be looking at all current activities to examine what we need to do to help our climate. Whether it is on climate change, health and social care partnerships or the place principle, such work can only improve our country and the opportunities for our population.

The various funds that are available, such as the town centre fund, the regeneration capital grant fund, the vacant and derelict land fund, the investing in communities fund and the Scottish partnership for regeneration in urban centres fund are important in trying to bring about successful and sustainable places.

I chair the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on visual impairment, and a number of years ago Guide Dogs Scotland offered me the chance to undertake a walk with a guide dog while I was blindfolded. The walk, which took place in Greenock from Clyde Square to Cathcart Street, was an emotional and challenging activity, but it also ensured that I became more aware of the built environment in my community. After the event, when speaking to a local reporter, I was asked whether I now wanted the local authority to

demolish it and build a more accessible environment. Clearly, that would not have been realistic, but what is realistic is for future investments to be undertaken collaboratively and with accessibility in mind, considering every member of our society. There is also the element of retrofitting, or improvements that can be made to the existing infrastructure in our towns, cities and rural communities. Let us face it—many carbuncles have been built over the years the length and breadth of Scotland. In the past, certainly, planning was not perfect and some of those things were put up in our communities.

In my constituency, many organisations already operate with the sense of engagement that is part of the place principle. Your Voice and Inverclyde Carers Centre are hugely important in getting that message across to the elected politicians. I can think of three other examples: the Belville Community Garden Trust at the east end of Greenock, the Inverkip Community Initiative hub and the Inverclyde Association for Mental Health, which has the Broomhill gardens and community hub. Those three projects were led by the communities and fashioned that change; they got the politicians involved to make sure that positive change happened in those communities.

There is still a journey to take, but I welcome the place principle and the sense of empowerment that it will provide to our communities.

16:23

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): We all agree that the place principle is a good one but that it probably needs more work in practice. As a councillor in Edinburgh, I was very aware of the silos that often existed between and within different public bodies, and I am less optimistic than Stuart McMillan that those barriers have been, and are being, broken down. I think that there is still a lot of work to be done, particularly within local authorities, to make sure that different departments are speaking to each other and to other local authority organisations and bodies.

Stuart McMillan: If Mr Balfour reads the *Official Report*, he will see that I said that there is still a journey to be undertaken but I welcome the progress that has been made.

Jeremy Balfour: I think the difference is that I am a pessimist and Stuart McMillan is an optimist. I fully relate to what he said.

Something that we all—in both the Scottish Government and local authorities—have to look at is the role of the third sector. I am pleased that members from across the parties have mentioned projects in their local areas, because the place principle cannot be a matter simply for health boards, local authorities and other large

organisations. Third sector organisations have a vital role to play, as they are often the ones who know what is going on and what services need to be provided in the local community.

I am concerned that the City of Edinburgh Council and other local authorities often find the third sector budget an easy one to cut. When cuts have to be made, councils often go after third sector budgets. That approach might be easy to justify in the short term, but the long-term effect on communities is devastating.

The largest implementation of the place principle in Scotland is happening through integration joint boards, which try to bring together health and social care. I think that all members support the approach, which is breaking down silos, and I was interested to hear the cabinet secretary say that the approach must be democratic, accountable and transparent. I think that we all agree that those principles should underpin any service that is provided, but I have some concerns about integration joint boards in that regard. We all want better services, and recent decisions in the Lothians that have resulted in groups that had been funded for a long time having their funding completely cut without much notice are not the way forward.

I welcome the debate and how things are moving, but we must keep in mind whether the organisations that we are talking about are democratic, accountable and transparent to the people who live locally and who need their services.

16:27

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): There is good news from East Ayrshire, at least, which I hope might bring a smile to the faces of some of the gloomsters in the chamber.

When I read the briefing notes for the debate, my first reaction was to think, “At long last. Well done. It is good to put people and place at the centre of everything that we do.” The place principle approach is easy to understand and can be rewarding for the people who use it. At first sight, it might appear to be one of those initiatives that appear and then gently slip off the radar, but I think that it will become an important tool in helping people to set out a vision for their place and community.

As usual, I am indebted to colleagues in East Ayrshire Council, who stepped up to the mark again and provided me with a helpful insight into the trailblazing work that is going on in East Ayrshire in support of the place principle—or placemaking, as it is referred to down there.

My friend and colleague Councillor Elena Whitham is COSLA's spokesperson on community wellbeing and serves as the deputy leader of East Ayrshire Council. From what she and others have told me, East Ayrshire was the first council in Scotland to adopt placemaking that is led by and for the community. As far back as 2016, the council changed how its planning and economic development teams worked to incorporate the place-based approach.

The placemaking model lets people in the community take control of their priorities for improving where they live, and such an approach is at the heart of the principle that the Government has set out today. In East Ayrshire, council and community steering groups have worked together to produce a map of the community, to identify areas that need improvement and to consider how improvements might be made.

We think that the first example of that in Scotland was in the Irvine valley town of Newmilns. The approach has also been taken in Ochiltree, Catrine and neighbouring communities, and it is in progress in another 28 locations in East Ayrshire. The steering group for the approach, the Newmilns Regeneration Association, undertook essential community engagement, running workshops and public consultations to produce maps and action plans for Newmilns and Greenholm. The resulting placemaking map and action programme identified the community's priorities for Newmilns, which were fed into the development of East Ayrshire Council's community-led action plans.

The Newmilns placemaking plan was approved by the council in 2018, and it has since been adopted by the council as statutory supplementary guidance. Why is that important? Because, once adopted, it has now become part of the local planning policy. That is the key: all the good work that was done by local people is now very much enshrined in the local planning process.

It is a long way from the planning process that I remember, in which officials—God bless them—presented a community master plan to local people after it had been devised pretty much exclusively by them. The place principle approach now gives the local community's vision the appropriate status and influence, and it must be taken into account by private developers and public sector organisations—and why not? I have seen the work that was carried out in Newmilns, and it is great to see the town from that perspective, setting out a vision for the creation of more civic space with cycling and walking areas; for buildings being protected and developed; for new housing spaces and places with business potential; and for improved streetscapes and environmental improvements. All of those things

provide us with a more holistic view of how our communities see their future and how they want their towns and villages to develop.

I say, "Well done" to Newmilns. That is the reality in East Ayrshire, and I commend the approach to members to persuade their councils to embrace it elsewhere. East Ayrshire Council has already allocated £1.7 million from its town centre fund, using community-led regeneration as the driver, and the approach is working—it is not theoretical or pie in the sky, as some members have suggested. I look forward to placemaking being progressed right across Kilmarnock, the Irvine valley, Ayrshire and, indeed, Scotland. It really works, because local people feel that they have influence in shaping the future of their communities. I encourage members to come and see the work. They should visit Newmilns this year and take part in the local food and arts and crafts festivals on September 21 and 22, when they will be made most welcome.

16:32

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): In advance of today's debate, I took the time to read the Scottish Government's three-page factsheet that explains the place principle. The nub of it is that folk want to shape their own lives and change them for the better. We all need to find ways to ditch the silos that exist within and across services. Of course, the real test will be how we put all of this into practice and demonstrate the place principle in the real world, as others have said, by being able to point to more than anecdotal or isolated examples or projects. It needs to move from being the exception to being the norm.

Like others, I think that it is important that the Scottish Government keeps the Parliament informed of progress. It is good to see ministers leading the debate today, but there is a role for others, and there are opportunities for local government and other public sector partners to show leadership. We need to recognise that empowering communities is not a two-dimensional approach or a top-down process. We must also accept that, if we really listen to communities, it will not always be comfortable and they will challenge orthodoxy. The local governance review is particularly important in that regard, and I ask the minister, in her summing up, to update us on its progress. The review will be important in establishing the next steps for meaningful community empowerment.

Others have alluded to the need to harness and make best use of our resources, because of austerity. As a result of austerity, the debate feels partly like a necessity, but good public sector reform and community empowerment must be far more than a cost-cutting exercising—in fact, they

should not be about cutting corners. We must recognise that it is the right thing and the smart thing to have sustainable public services and to mainstream the asset-based approach that has been championed by Harry Burns because it is good for people's psychological and physical health. It is also the gateway to establishing good preventative services on the basis of what actually works for communities.

This week, we have spent much time celebrating the past 20 years of the Parliament. There is much to celebrate, but, if I had to point to one negative, it would be that the public sector reform journey should have been started far earlier.

The child poverty delivery plan "Every child, every chance" has a central focus on earnings, the cost of living and social security policy, but it also recognises the importance of a "place-based approach" to improving quality of life and actions to prevent young people who are growing up in poverty from becoming parents who, in turn, have to bring up their children in poverty. In the plan, there is a commitment to invest £2 million in the innovative children's neighbourhoods Scotland programme, the first such neighbourhood being in Bridgeton, in Dalrnarnock. There were ambitions to extend the programme, and I would be grateful if the minister—if she has time—could update us on that.

In my constituency, there are many local community organisations, such as Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Community Development Trust Ltd and West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust, which has a fantastic vision for the old co-operative bakery building in West Calder. There are social enterprises such as Kidzeco and the school uniform bank in West Lothian, which are responding to very harsh and real community needs. In my mind, it is such organisations that are the successors to the co-operative movement, which has a proud history in West Lothian. For many years before I entered the Parliament, I was a front-line social worker, and I will never demur from the importance of investment in public services. However, over the course of my career, I have recognised that how and by whom services are delivered is as important as how much we invest in them.

16:37

Alex Rowley: I have made it clear that there is nothing in the Government's motion that I could disagree with. However, sometimes there is a sense that the Parliament is a bit like a scene from "The Emperor's New Clothes", the Hans Christian Andersen book: when anybody speaks out, everybody else is in complete denial.

There is no question but that the years of austerity have impacted on communities throughout Scotland, and anybody who says otherwise is in complete denial. As an example, we know about the importance of play, but play parks are disappearing. My granddaughter—her mum tells me—spent the weekend with her pals playing in a play park, yet those parks are disappearing. Councils say that they cannot maintain the simple things in communities, such as play parks, anymore. That is the impact at a practical level.

I was out campaigning on Friday in Cowdenbeath and a lady from Quarry Court came up and spoke to me about the parking issues there and in Blackburn Drive. She told me that she has a parking space that is marked off due to her mobility issues, but that she has to be home by lunch time because, if she is not, she cannot get parked. Year after year, that community has been crying out that it needs car parking. A community planning model in which local people set out their local priorities in a community plan would work. Those people would be able to say, "That's our priority", and they would then be able to influence the decisions and the spend. The problem is that, if the council turns round and says, "We've had to slash these budgets and we haven't got any money to put in parking places", people's lives are disrupted.

Angela Constance acknowledged that austerity is a key issue.

Willie Coffey: I invite Alex Rowley and his colleagues to come down to East Ayrshire and see the process working in practice. He would be very welcome to come and see it.

Alex Rowley: As a former councillor and council leader, community planning is not only something that I have supported in principle; I have driven the idea of community planning. If the member comes to Dunfermline, he will find one of the best local community planning partnerships in the country, and one of the reasons for its success is that, rather than being driven by council officials, it is driven by local people, with council officials being there to provide support.

I think that it was Bob Doris who talked about a charrette. The community planning partnership in Dunfermline, which I met a few weeks ago, has done a charrette; its issue now is how it will get the money to implement the result. Interestingly, that would partly involve the town centre moneys, which have been welcomed, with £4-odd million to be spent in Fife. However, I ask the cabinet secretary how local people and local communities are going to have a say on how that money is distributed. Is it just going to be a group of council officials and councillors who make those decisions?

Bob Doris: I agree with the member that austerity is an issue. We have different political solutions in relation to that, but I agree with him on that point.

Really good community-led practice on local place existed way before community planning partnerships were doing their stuff, but does the member not welcome the fact that that approach is now being shared right across the country? It can improve communities and help us to ensure that the money that we have is spent wisely and in a way that is community led.

Alex Rowley: I do not think that there is any disagreement. I do not understand why so many SNP members seem to take offence at us highlighting the impact of austerity. Stuart McMillan was quite wrong to say that any of us had suggested that that was down to the SNP Government. I am clear about where austerity comes from, and I am clear that it is a political decision. All that I am saying is that the impact of austerity on communities hinders the community planning process, and that process is certainly something that I have supported.

Jeremy Balfour spoke about councils and what I used to call the departmentalism within them. He is right—it continues to exist. Indeed, if we look at the Scottish Government, we find that silos or departmentalism run through Government departments. It has been tackled, but it has not been wiped out.

We need to consider how we can involve communities. Campbell Christie highlighted in his report that too many public authorities were coming to the table at a point when there was a crisis and there was firefighting, if you like. He said that we needed more investment in preventative work. However, where is the preventative work with young people when we see youth clubs shutting down and community learning and development workers and youth workers being paid off at a rate at which they are not being replaced?

Where is the preventative work in our communities? Somebody mentioned a day centre for older people. Kinross Centre, which I have mentioned many times, provides lunches and exercise for older people—

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Your time is up, Mr Rowley.

Alex Rowley: Lots of good things are happening out there. Lots of project-based work is happening, but when people run out of money, that work stops. Let us be truthful and acknowledge what is happening in our communities. Once we acknowledge the problem, we can, I hope, start to address it.

16:44

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): This has been an interesting debate, in parts. It has certainly helped me no end. I am known for my brevity. I like plain English and I do not like Governmentspeak. The “place principle” could easily fall into that category, and initially I could make neither head nor tail of it, but I have got there, I think. The place principle is that bodies working in a particular area—for example, the great place that is East Kilbride—should work together, which makes sense. That is my take on it, but let us see what the Government says.

According to the Government, the place principle recognises that

“Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities. Places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live in and invest in them.”

The principle goes on to request that

“All those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.”

I hope that everyone can just about follow that. It all sounds sensible, and was signed by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

That is all very well if everyone goes along with the idea that public authorities should work together. People can and do work in silos, as we have heard, and sometimes it is difficult to get them to change. It is worth trying, though, and that is why I like the fact that the principle was drawn up.

Some tools have been developed to help people along the way, and I want to talk a bit about one—the place standard tool. It is particularly relevant, given that we will soon deal with the Planning (Scotland) Bill in the chamber, in which community engagement features heavily.

The tool is there to help anyone assess and improve the quality of a place. To use it, people are given 14 questions to ask themselves; they are also asked to give ratings. The questions include the following:

“Can I easily walk and cycle around using good-quality routes?”

“Does public transport meet my needs?”

“Do traffic and parking arrangements allow people to move around safely ... ?”

“Do buildings, streets and public spaces create an attractive place that is easy to get around?”

“Can I regularly experience good-quality natural space?”

“Can I access a range of space with opportunities for play and recreation?”

“Do facilities and amenities meet my needs?”

“Is there an active local economy and the opportunity to access good-quality work?”

There are a number of other questions—I will not go through them all—and once people have been through the process, they should be able to see what the priorities are for change and improvement. It could be obvious that people need more and better green spaces, that housing is run down and that there are not enough play facilities.

We could be very cynical about this kind of stuff, but it is basically about working with people to improve their communities. Done well—done with people—it works well. A good example is a series of meetings called what’s next for Stromness?, to be held later this week, in which Orkney islanders will be asked how they would like their community to develop in the next five to 10 years. That is great. Aileen Campbell mentioned projects in Fort William and Granton, and Willie Coffey mentioned some of the great work that is going on in Ayrshire. If the invitation is still open and if he will host a visit, I would love to visit East Ayrshire.

However, the approach does not work if it is used just to pay lip service to community involvement or if certain groups are excluded. The briefing from Inclusion Scotland for the debate was particularly powerful in expressing the view that disabled people are often left out.

There have been some excellent speeches today, and I want to mention a few of them. Gordon Lindhurst mentioned dementia-friendly Pentlands.

Neil Findlay: I am pleased that the member has mentioned disabled people missing out on some of the agenda. Would he reflect on his own party’s treatment of disabled people in recent years, which has seen them excluded from many things, including having dignity and a decent income?

Graham Simpson: Neil Findlay’s contribution says it all about Labour today. It has been a doom-laden Labour Party that has turned up to a debate that should have been consensual and positive, with members highlighting local projects, as many other members have tried to do.

Michelle Ballantyne mentioned the importance of great architecture, Andy Wightman talked about how centralised Scotland is and James Dornan did not rant, so that was good.

James Dornan: Oh!

Graham Simpson: He spoke about the excellent Pollokshaws hub. Bob Doris, too, spoke about local projects. Jeremy Balfour expressed his frustration with the local government and third

sector cuts but, across the piece, I thought that members were very positive in highlighting some of the great work that is being done in their areas.

I lodged an amendment that was not accepted by the Presiding Officer, which made me feel a bit like a Lib Dem. In my amendment, I simply urged the Government to keep us informed of how the place principle was progressing. I will just have to make that request informally. My amendment was positive and consensual, unlike Labour’s. Labour members’ complete lack of interest in the debate is evident from the number of empty seats on their side of the chamber, unlike in the rest of the chamber.

I lodged my amendment because we need to keep tabs on how effective the place principle is in practice. After all, there is no point in developing such things if people do not use them. That would just give ammunition to people who might say, “This is Government waffle,” and we would not want that.

16:51

Aileen Campbell: Despite the lack of disagreement over the place principle, this has been a robust and good debate. That is as it should be, because the place principle approach is not designed to be an esoteric, beard-stroking philosophy that boils down to motherhood and apple pie. Our communities deserve much more than that—they deserve to be empowered and trusted.

The place principle approach is not designed to gloss over austerity or the daily struggles faced by people who are vulnerable or who live in poverty. Indeed, their situation is very much at the forefront of our thoughts. If someone’s day-to-day struggles involve working out how they will make ends meet, how can they possibly have the space to think about how they might feel a sense of empowerment or about any notions of a place principle? Our approach is about ensuring that we create a country and a society that enable everybody to feel the benefit of what we do and the investment that we make.

Our adoption of the place principle represents an attempt to make better use of the resources that we have, to knock down silos, to disregard organisational boundaries and to ensure that we focus on people, places and outcomes. It comes on top of the mitigation measures that the Government is having to apply to soften the blows of the welfare reforms and the acts that will take more than £3 billion out of the social security system by 2020-21. If we had all the tools and powers to look after our people and pursue our own policies without needing to use resource to

mop up another Government's mess, imagine what we could do.

It is on that premise that I want to respond to some of the points that Andy Wightman made. As everyone knows, this year is the 20th anniversary of the Parliament being reconvened, and it is a useful milestone for reflecting further on where the balance of power should lie. Although I do not share all of Mr Wightman's analysis of local government, I share some of his concerns about how we can do more to empower our communities and the need for us to transform local democracy. We are seeking to empower our communities. Participatory budgeting, which Mr Wightman mentioned, is one of the ways in which we are doing that. That is a good start; participatory budgeting is an approach that I think should be built on, as it gives communities the chance to decide on where money should be spent and on what. However, it is just a start. We need it to grow and for people to be less risk averse in applying the principle. We will ensure that that happens by trusting our communities.

That is why, along with COSLA, we committed to the local governance review, in which we are taking a whole-system approach that involves looking across Scotland's public services. The review deals with not just local government, but local governance. We want to ensure that measures to empower people and places that are taken in different spheres of governance are cohesive and mutually supportive.

Angela Constance asked for an update. Last year, more than 4,000 people took part in the "Democracy Matters" conversation on the future of community-level decision making. In addition, more than 40 public sector partners submitted proposals for alternative governance arrangements that could improve outcomes and drive inclusive growth in the places that they serve. Despite that variety of views, people, without exception, overwhelmingly want to see a transformation in how decision-making arrangements work in Scotland. They do not want to accept the status quo. People and communities are up for this, and we need to respond to that level of engagement. I will certainly ensure that we will keep not only Angela Constance but the whole chamber updated on the progress of that work.

Many other members made good and positive contributions. As Stuart McMillan acknowledged, the place principle continues our empowering communities agenda. It builds on our regeneration strategy, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, land reform, the Scottish land fund, the Planning (Scotland) Bill, public sector reform, rural policy and our inclusive growth policy.

The place principle and place-based approaches are supportive of a wide range of

other policy agendas. For example, our public health reform agenda aims to improve public health through a whole-systems approach, focused on prevention and early intervention and creating the conditions for wellbeing in our communities.

Understandably, many members spoke about their own constituencies and the good work that is happening in them, which has been enabled by that focus on a sense of place. Willie Coffey mentioned East Ayrshire. I am glad that he did, because a huge amount of positive work is happening in East Ayrshire. The approach there has enabled better decisions: joined-up decisions through which things are done not to communities but with them, by people working alongside them.

For by the examples that Willie Coffey cited, East Ayrshire has also benefited from the place approach through the good work of the Centrestage project. I saw another example recently at the Scottish Civic Trust awards, at which Bellsbank received recognition for the work there that has transformed that former mining community. That work happened not because the council did stuff to Bellsbank, but because it worked with the community to recognise the potential and the assets of that area. It enabled that community and that town to flourish and to become a thriving place that people are proud to say they come from.

Gordon Lindhurst spoke about Dementia Friendly Pentlands. That was a useful example as it highlighted the importance of communities of interest and reminded us that, in the pursuit of empowerment, we need not only to avoid empowering the already powerful but to be mindful of not disempowering others. I totally take on board Alex Rowley's example of the woman with mobility problems in that respect. That underlines the point that we need to be inclusive in how we engage with people from all walks of life and all areas of interest.

Bob Doris spoke about charrettes in Springburn and that mass engagement to help provide a vision for the community, which gives people a sense of ownership about how they drive that community forward.

Bob Doris: I thank the cabinet secretary for mentioning the charrettes in Springburn, which gives me the opportunity to invite her to Springburn to see for herself that community-led regeneration, which is underpinned by the place principle. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Can members keep their conversations down, please?

Aileen Campbell: I am happy to accept Mr Doris's invitation to visit Springburn.

To respond to Alex Rowley, of course austerity has impacted on our communities, but we need to be clear about where austerity has come from. People have been disappointed with some of the contributions from Labour, because it sometimes felt as though Labour members missed the fact that the fundamental owners of austerity are the Westminster Government and the Conservative Party. That is why some of the grumbling in the debate occurred.

Angela Constance asked about the children's neighbourhood programme and the progress on new sites. Work is under way to identify new sites and of course we will keep her updated on progress.

Michelle Ballantyne made a request for the Scottish Government to monitor how councils implement the place principle. That was quite contradictory to comments that were made about the Scottish Government seeking to centralise lots of things and disempower local government. We are not planning to monitor local authorities per se, but we want to work with them to make the place principle a tangible reality.

Michelle Ballantyne *rose*—

The Presiding Officer: You will have to be very brief, as the minister is in her last minute.

Michelle Ballantyne: Okay. In 2016, the "Place-based Approaches to Joint Planning, Resourcing and Delivery" report identified that the UK has had a place-based approach since the 1970s. If we are having to revitalise that approach or bring in a new one, what are we going to do to make sure that it makes a difference?

Aileen Campbell: We will do that by working in partnership with our colleagues in local authorities. We will work together to take that forward and make it tangible and real.

Ultimately, regardless of people's views in the debate and the views on the fundamental problems with a place principle, we all want a Scotland in which everyone can play a full part in society and where we have empowered communities that can shape their individual and collective futures. The place principle is the only way that we can make a success of our vision for our national performance framework and it is one of the only ways that we can try to knock down the silos that still exist, make good on the principles of Christie and progress public sector reform. However, we need to raise the debate on the issue and tackle the vicious inequality that exists in our society.

The debate has been good, and I have appreciated some of the contributions. I look forward to continuing the debate in the future to ensure that people feel that they have ownership

of the places that they call home and that we give support to those areas that need it to ensure that every part of the country flourishes and has the success that it deserves.

Committee Announcement

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a committee announcement. I call Graham Simpson, the convener of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.

17:01

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for the chance to make a short statement on behalf of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee. The committee hides in the shadows somewhat, but we look at every piece of legislation, so we thought that we would shout about our work on the Planning (Scotland) Bill—specifically our report on the bill following stage 2.

There has been huge interest in the bill among members from across the chamber: 24 members from all parties lodged amendments at stage 2. Something remarkable happened at stage 2: Alex Cole-Hamilton got an amendment passed.

Some of the amendments revised delegated powers that were already in the bill and some added entirely new ones. There are more than 40 new and revised powers in the bill. We had no recommendations to make on many of them, but we welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to lodge a number of amendments at stage 3 to seek to rectify some of the committee's concerns.

The committee's report sets out various matters on which, we think, the Government should consider lodging amendments at stage 3. A new section has added a provision under which the use of a property for short-term holiday lets will require planning permission. The definition of the phrase "providing short-term holiday lets" is currently covered only in guidance, so the committee has called for that definition to be included in the bill, or to be specified by regulations that would be subject to affirmative procedure.

I lodged a fair number of amendments, one of which was to allow for what is known as land-value capture in newly created masterplan consent areas. I praise the committee lawyer who nervously had to tell me that there might be one or two issues with that, with which the committee agreed unanimously.

New section 14E(2) of the bill says that

"before determining an application for planning permission where the development involves any land on which there is a music venue, the planning authority must consult the Music Venues Trust".

The committee has asked the Scottish Government to check with the trust that it is okay with that.

I thank the committee members for their work, and I thank the committee clerks and lawyers. Members who lodged amendments at stage 2 will have received a copy of the report. However, I urge all members to read the report as we head towards stage 3, which will be in mid-June. I commend the report to the Parliament.

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-17265.2, in the name of Alex Rowley, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17265, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on adopting the place principle, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)

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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (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)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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 74, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-17265, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on adopting the place principle, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)

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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (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)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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 74, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes that the places where people live and grow up shape their opportunities and make them feel part of a community; agrees that local decision-making and delivery, informed by the views of the people who live and work there, are key to the social, economic and physical success of places; welcomes the cross-sectoral development of and support for the Place Principle; agrees that the Place Principle supports public, private and community sectors to develop a clear vision for services, assets and investments to maximise the benefit from their combined resources; acknowledges the partnership work of the Scottish Government and COSLA in agreeing and adopting the Place Principle; acknowledges that everyone has a role to play in improving outcomes and addressing inequalities in and across communities; recognises the negative impact of austerity on local services and local communities, and understands that a more joined-up, collaborative and participative approach to services requires sufficient resources to empower local people and those working in local services.

Home-Start Glenrothes 21st Anniversary

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-16374, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, on Home-Start Glenrothes turns 21. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates Home Start Glenrothes, which is celebrating its 21st anniversary in 2019; welcomes the support that it has provided over the years to help families with young children build better lives; notes that it supports between 60 and 70 families at any given time; acknowledges that the Home Start model relies heavily on volunteers to do the work; understands that the assistance that it offers is tailored to each family and can include one-to-one support for parents; notes that the charity's work also includes running mindfulness classes and family support and respite groups, providing parents with support with budgeting, teaching cookery skills and its Bookbug session, at which parents read and sing with their children, and wishes Home Start Glenrothes the very best of luck with its work.

17:07

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I thank colleagues from across the chamber for supporting the motion in my name. I also welcome the representatives from Home-Start Glenrothes who have joined us in the public gallery and look forward to seeing them all at the reception this evening.

Three years ago, almost exactly a month after I was elected, I visited Home-Start Glenrothes at its base in the Macedonia area of the town. I will always remember the feeling that I had when I walked into the community house, which was one of support and empathy. It was also one of persuasion, because, just a few weeks later, I found myself running the Glenrothes 10k in aid of the organisation and the vital work that it does.

Home-Start Glenrothes was founded 21 years ago. Locally, it trains volunteers and experts to support between 60 and 70 families in the area at any one time. Across the United Kingdom, the organisation's 13,500 volunteers support more than 27,000 families and 56,000 children. Home-Start works across my constituency to support families who are struggling because of social isolation, poverty or poor mental health. None of us can predict what life will throw our way—whether it be illness, disability or bereavement—and Home-Start works to take the pressure of such factors off families who are in need.

Ahead of the debate, I spoke to our local Home-Start co-ordinator, Lindsey Brown, who told me:

"I'm a great believer that your postcode cannot dictate what your future holds. We work in Glenrothes to give people opportunities. We have two mums who have just completed their college qualifications through a partnership with Fife College and we have four more with interviews next week. I know that this might sound like rose-tinted spectacles—but it really is our job to help them be the best they can be."

Any member who know Scotland's best new town well might know of Macedonia. There are real challenges in that part of Glenrothes, but there is also a sense of pride and community that is not found everywhere. Although poverty can be a key driver in determining which people Home-Start supports, it is important to say that supported families can—and do—come from all walks of life.

This week is mental health awareness week, and it should be said that poor mental health can play a crucial role in tipping families over the edge. As Lindsey told me, locally, there has been a huge increase in anxiety and poor mental health, particularly among younger people. That has shifted the focus of Home-Start's support, with volunteers looking at the importance of teaching young people about their own self-worth. Indeed, the team has recently started a mindfulness class. It is fair to say that some had their doubts about how the class would work, but the mindfulness sessions are now well attended because people are starting to see the benefits of investing in their mental health.

The support that is offered is wide ranging. Another example is the provision of cookery classes to support families. I am reliably informed that one dad has managed to lose more than 2.5 stone after attending one of Home-Start's eight-week cookery programmes in Glenrothes. From being someone who was living on takeaways and junk food, he became someone who was finally able to cook for himself. His daughter's behaviour also improved, and it was all the result of his being taught the life skill of cooking.

In Glenrothes, the Home-Start team has also been able to tap into improving nutrition by developing a community allotment. As a result, it now has access to two raised beds at the back of Glenrothes high school, the produce of which will be used by the whole community. Home-Start has also been working in conjunction with the Princes Trust and Fife College to have the community house's gardens transformed for the benefit of the people of Macedonia.

Home-Start is not a stand-alone organisation. Indeed, 33 per cent of all Home-Start Glenrothes's referrals come from Fife Council's social work department. As Lindsey Brown told me, Home-Start can get to where other agencies cannot reach because families do not see it as a threat. Home-Start offers a tailored approach to each family, giving compassionate, confidential help

and expert support without judgment. That is one of the reasons why it has such a strong partnership with social work services and the local authority in Fife, which recognises the importance of the skills that Home-Start brings. It is about such partnership.

A large part of Home-Start's work remains focused on the more traditional home visits, which are provided by volunteers. All volunteers are required to attend a 10-week programme or a preparation course before they are allowed to visit families' homes. Home visits are crucial, particularly in the early days of someone having a new child, for example. The practical and emotional support that is provided allows families to maintain their dignity even when they are dealing with very personal difficulties. One of the key ways in which the Scottish Government has supported families at that important time is through the baby box. I hope that members across all parties can reflect on that policy as being hugely significant for families at an important time.

What it means to be a family has changed in the past 21 years. Indeed, right now, we have a cabinet secretary on paternity leave, which sends a powerful message about 21st century Scotland. When my mum brought up three girls in the 1980s, she had no choice but to forfeit her career—it was expected. We now have a much healthier view of the roles and responsibilities in a family, and the work of Home-Start supports mums and dads in taking those on.

Across the chamber, irrespective of party allegiances, we all want the next generation to be given the start they need in life not just to grow but to thrive. Home-Start focuses on the early years as those that make the biggest impact. As it notes:

“Children who are raised in a stable, loving, family environment are more likely to have a positive and healthy future.”

We know that the formative years between 0 and 3 are the ones that make the difference, so Home-Start makes interventions to support families at that crucial time.

Getting it right for every child starts with organisations such as Home-Start. It starts with making tiny changes to support families by teaching them how to cook, for example. It starts by giving parents the knowledge to understand what benefits they might be entitled to. It starts with supporting families that are struggling with poor mental health.

Before closing, I just want to say that Home-Start Glenrothes is always looking for volunteers, and I encourage constituents in the Glenrothes area to get in touch if they would like to play their part in supporting the work of the charity.

Home-Start Glenrothes is based at the heart of the community. The work that it does in Glenrothes and beyond is vital to families in my constituency. I pay tribute to Lindsey Brown and her team of amazing staff and volunteers, and I wish them continued success for the next 21 years and beyond.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I understand why people in the public gallery wish to applaud, but it is not permitted in the public area.

17:14

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Jenny Gilruth on securing the debate this evening. She explained eloquently the important role that Home-Start Glenrothes has played in the lives of countless families in the past 21 years. I commend all involved, staff and volunteers alike. It is good to see them joining us here tonight. All that I can say echoes Jenny Gilruth—here's to the next 21 years and beyond.

It will come as no surprise that, as the MSP for the Cowdenbeath constituency, I wish to congratulate Home-Start Cowdenbeath on all the work that it has done since it started up in July 1990. Home-Start Cowdenbeath will be just a few years behind Home-Start Glenrothes in celebrating its 21st birthday, and we all look forward to that in a couple of years' time.

Home-Start Cowdenbeath, which has an office on Cowdenbeath High Street—diagonally across from my constituency office, in fact—serves the area covering Balingry, Lochore, Crosshill, Glenraig, Lochgelly, Lumphinnans, Kelty, Hill of Beath, Crossgates and of course Cowdenbeath itself. Its focus is on enabling parents and carers to be the best that they can be, in recognition that there are a lot of pressures on parents, and particularly on young parents.

Home-Start Cowdenbeath adopts a very person-centred approach in the family support that it offers, which can include one-to-one support around perinatal mental health problems, increasing breastfeeding through local support groups, and getting children into the outdoors through, for example, the promotion of gardening activities.

Home-Start Cowdenbeath seeks to get fathers involved in antenatal workshops and, in general, recognises how important it is that fathers are part of the process from the outset. Home-Start also seeks to tackle loneliness and isolation, particularly among young mothers. Groups are run specifically for under-25s, to provide a forum where young mothers can chat freely and hopefully gain some confidence.

However, it is important to note that home visits remain at the heart of what Home-Start does. After an initial meeting with the family to discuss their specific needs, Home-Start will match the family to a volunteer. The help that is given is unique to that family and will depend entirely on the circumstances of the case, and a decision on what is needed for that family. A key element is building the family's resilience so that they are better able to cope in future with the challenges that they face. Sadly, many challenges are faced today, particularly by young parents, in my constituency and that of Jenny Gilruth, and indeed across Scotland, further to the great difficulties that Tory austerity is inflicting on our population.

At the same time, Home-Start volunteers play a pivotal role in helping families to access local services such as housing, or mental health services. As Jenny Gilruth said, that is very important. Home-Start helps families with access to children's centres and health services, and to citizens advice bureaux, which can, for example, help families to obtain financial advice. The volunteer may even look after a child to allow the parent to attend relevant appointments, or they may help with transport, so that the parent can reach the service that they need.

I pay tribute to the staff of Home-Start Cowdenbeath, who I had the pleasure of meeting some months ago. I was hugely impressed with their dedication and determination to make a positive impact. Those workers do a very challenging job, and it was clear that it is also emotionally draining; they do it extremely well and make a huge difference to the lives of many families in my constituency. Finally, I also pay tribute to Home-Start's fantastic army of volunteers, without whom all of that great work would not be possible.

17:18

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): I thank Jenny Gilruth for bringing this members' business debate to the chamber, and I am grateful for the opportunity to take part. It is right and proper that we congratulate Home-Start Glenrothes on reaching its 21st anniversary this year and I am delighted that we have individuals from that organisation in the gallery this evening.

I very much welcome the support that Home-Start has provided over the years to help families with young children to build better lives. My first association with Home-Start was back in 1999, when I was elected as a councillor in Perth and Kinross. In my capacity as vice-convenor for housing and health, I met staff and volunteers from Home-Start Perth. I was a regular attendee at many of its meetings and spoke at a number of its events. Back in 2017, I was delighted to visit

Home-Start Clackmannanshire, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2018.

Home-Start is a charity that embraces many of the values that I and others can concur with and which continues to offer support and encouragement for individuals. I understand that Home-Start relies heavily on volunteers and that the assistance that the charity offers, which is tailored to each individual family's needs and requirements, is vital. It also supports families in groups, and provides opportunities for trips, events and parties, and access to services.

We have heard how Home-Start can help people with their mental health and wellbeing, with cooking classes and access to allotments. Such things allow individuals to expand their potential and give people the opportunity to support the individuals whom they look after.

As many of us know, the years from a child's birth to when they go to school are a vital time for their development, and the environment in a family home can strongly determine the opportunities and life chances that many children are presented with. It is well known that children who are raised in a stable and loving family environment are much more likely to have a positive and healthy future. Home-Start's home visits are vital to engaging with individuals who may have difficulties or a crisis to manage. Through home visits, Home-Start can support people through that.

Home-Start works extremely well in ensuring that many of its volunteers are parents who understand the difficulties that people are suffering and who can protect and support service users. Volunteers work alongside parents in their own homes to help them to cope with the stresses and strains of their life experiences. Home-Start volunteers make a huge contribution. They help with the skills, confidence and strength that are needed to nurture and support, which ensures that people are protected. Home-Start excels at that support. I congratulate and commend it for all the work that it does.

I have followed and highlighted many of Home-Start's recent successes, and I have lodged parliamentary motions that have helped to highlight the fantastic level of help and support that some of the organisations have received. I will continue to offer my support and encouragement to Home-Start across my Mid Scotland and Fife region. The work that is being done in Perth and Kinross, Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Fife is making a real difference for individuals and families, and that should be commended.

Organisations such as Home-Start are needed more and more because of the hectic lifestyles of many individuals. They support, nurture and

ensure that there are life chances and opportunities to support wellbeing. Each and every day, volunteers and staff go the extra mile to ensure that families have a safe and secure environment that enables them to thrive.

I wish Home-Start Glenrothes all the very best in its 21st anniversary year. I know that it will continue to support with volunteers. We have to work together. The Scottish Government, councils and the third sector all have a part to play in ensuring that such work continues. I look forward to seeing Home-Start Glenrothes go from strength to strength.

17:22

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate. I thank Jenny Gilruth for securing chamber time for it.

As an MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife, I have visited Home-Start groups across my region. It is, however, a few years since I visited Home-Start Glenrothes. It was good to hear from Jenny Gilruth about its recent activities and the support that it continues to provide to families in the area. I add my congratulations and very best wishes to Home-Start Glenrothes on its 21st birthday, and I thank all the staff and volunteers who make the organisation what it is—a welcoming, inclusive and caring support for families with children.

All Home-Start groups offer support to families in variety of situations. They can provide valuable support to families that are new to an area and have no family locally, families that are struggling with poor mental health, families that are coping with bereavement and loss, and families in which there are child-protection concerns.

Home-Start Glenrothes is well known in its community; that is reflected in Home-Start groups throughout the UK. There are 32 Home-Start groups across Scotland, and Home-Start Glenrothes is part of a network of Home-Start groups in Fife. I am pleased to have visited Home-Start East Fife, Home-Start Kirkcaldy and Home-Start Levenmouth.

As well as including the 21st birthday of Home-Start Glenrothes, 2019 marks 25 years for Home-Start Kirkcaldy. As Home-Start Glenrothes does, it values its volunteers. I acknowledge the commitment of Mary McOuat, who has volunteered with it for 20 years. Her years of dedication to the organisation are reflected in the valuable commitment of Fiona Hastie and Elizabeth Coupe, who have volunteered for 11 years each.

All volunteers attend a preparation course. They are matched to the families whom they will work

with, because the relationship is based on trust and understanding.

As well as doing one-to-one work, Home-Start groups offer a variety of activities. I am pleased that BBC Children in Need is supporting a family support group that Home-Start Kirkcaldy offers, and I recognise the organisations that support the work of Home-Start, as well as the fundraising efforts of its volunteers and supporters.

As Jenny Gilruth highlighted, Home-Start Glenrothes supports between 60 and 70 families at any given time. As part of its birthday celebrations, Home-Start Kirkcaldy is recognising that it has supported almost 1,000 families over the years.

The importance of the work of charities such as Home-Start in supporting families and children in Fife cannot be overstated. In the chamber, we have previously highlighted the work of Fife Gingerbread and the YMCA. On Friday, I visited Plus Forth Valley in Stirling, which supports children and young people who have a disability. They are but a few of the organisations that give families invaluable support and provide services that invest in families, help to build confidence and parenting skills, provide opportunities for young people, and much more. The work that they do supports the efforts of social work services, the health service and education and employment services, and can help to prevent people from reaching crisis situations, when they would need more statutory support.

The debate celebrates all that such organisations do, but we must recognise the financial situation in which they operate. Without them, there would be a greater strain on other services, yet too much of their time is taken up completing funding applications—which are often complicated, too short term and too project focused—and having to justify their value to overstretched local authorities, which are constantly looking to deliver less for more. Charities that provide valuable services in our communities face that common pressure. They are a resilient and determined group of organisations that face funding uncertainty, but still achieve so much.

Third sector organisations such as Home-Start can offer flexible, responsive and innovative support—for example, Home-Start Levenmouth has just started a pilot perinatal service, because it identified that a number of young mothers were experiencing mental health difficulties and it recognises that 80 per cent of its referrals relate to child or parental mental health.

Home-Start groups across the country often work at the sharp end of family services. They report that they are seeing an increase in the

complexity of families' needs and in the number of families who face several challenges. However, Home-Start groups consistently provide quality support, offer guidance and help to build healthy, happy and connected families. I thank them all very much for that.

17:27

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)

(SNP): I am grateful to my friend and colleague Jenny Gilruth for bringing the debate to the chamber, and I look forward to attending the reception for Home-Start Glenrothes that she is hosting tonight. What better way to highlight the great work that Home-Start Glenrothes does than by celebrating its 21st birthday? Over those 21 years, it has given inestimable help to so many families.

We all want children to have the best start in life. The Scottish Government's groundbreaking baby box and best start grants are testimony to our commitment to making that happen, as is our transformation of early years education.

However, we all know that children can be born into circumstances in which their parents need a bit more help in the form of practical and friendly support in their own homes to get them over the roughest times, and to level the playing field for their children.

Home-Start is a community network of trained volunteers and expert support to help families with young children through challenging times. Margaret Harrison started the organisation in 1973, and the first group in Scotland began work in Perth in 1984. Margaret Harrison believed that families are best supported in their homes, where support can be shaped to the entire family's needs. She realised that if parents get support and friendship from another parent, they will be better equipped to learn to cope with the problems that life can bring, and will be able to give their children the best possible start.

As we have heard, Home-Start supports parents who are struggling to overcome their own troubled backgrounds in order to do the best that they can for their children. Home-Start sees at first hand the harm that children can suffer when they experience trauma, abuse or neglect at an early stage of their development. In many ways, its volunteers were at the forefront of the adverse childhood experiences movement before it even had a name, or the high profile that I am thankful it now has.

Home-Start has a community network of more than 1,000 trained volunteers, who support 3,000 families and nearly 6,000 children every year. That is pretty incredible. There are 31 branches in Scotland and the nearest one to my constituency,

in East Dunbartonshire, is Home-Start Glasgow North, which is based in Maryhill and does a fantastic job. It deals with families who are struggling with postnatal depression, isolation, physical and mental health problems, loneliness, bereavement and many other issues. Such families receive the support of a volunteer, who spends about two hours a week in the family's home to support the family in the ways in which they need support.

The volunteers are non-judgemental, friendly and professional, and support is tailored to the needs of each family. Much thought and care go into matching a family with the right volunteer. They also welcome dads, granddads and male carers who need support to join the group.

I will let the facts speak for themselves on the benefits of Home-Start: a survey of clients has shown that, after they had engaged with the service, 95 per cent felt that their child's emotional and physical wellbeing improved, 93 per cent felt less isolated, 95 per cent felt healthier, and 94 per cent felt more involved with their child's development. I do not think that any organisation could boast a better testimony than that.

Happy birthday, Home-Start Glenrothes. I thank all Home-Start branches for their amazing work to make Scotland the best place to grow up in.

17:30

The Minister for Children and Young People

(Maree Todd): I, too, thank Jenny Gilruth for lodging the motion and highlighting the important work of Home-Start Glenrothes and the Home-Start network in Scotland. I am delighted to welcome some of its volunteers to the chamber—it is really great to have them here with us. I have had the pleasure and privilege of visiting many Home-Start projects across Scotland, and I have seen first hand the powerful work that its volunteers do—the service really is a lifeline for those who need help.

I take this opportunity to send Home-Start Glenrothes my best wishes for a successful parliamentary reception this evening—happy birthday! The reception, which takes place during mental health awareness week, will highlight the importance of perinatal mental health. Maternal mental health is a key priority for the Scottish Government. We know that as many as one in five women are affected by mental health problems in the perinatal period. In Scotland, that means 11,000 women are affected every year.

Being a parent is one of the hardest and most important jobs that anyone can take on. The challenges are even greater for families who are already coping with additional challenges in their lives, and Home-Start volunteers in Glenrothes

and across Scotland make a vital contribution to supporting those families to achieve the best possible outcomes for their children.

It is the Scottish Government's aspiration to make Scotland the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up in. The implementation of the national parenting strategy is key to driving that ambition, by championing the importance of parenting, by strengthening the support on offer to parents and by making it easier for them to access support.

We have made significant progress on the commitment to extend the provision of early learning and childcare by increasing provision of free childcare, and by further increasing it to 1,140 hours for three and four-year-olds from August 2020. We are improving antenatal and postnatal support, widening access to relationship support, developing the parent club website as a reliable source of information and advice for families, and continuing national play, talk, read and bookbug programmes, encouraging and supporting families to develop positive, nurturing relationships with their children from the very start.

By the end of last year, we had expanded the health visitor workforce by at least 440 since March 2014. We are also expanding the family nurse partnership programme by investing about £16 million a year, with the programme reaching up to 3,000 families at any one time. We also recently launched our much-loved redesigned baby box, helping to give every child in Scotland an equal start in life. All those actions make a real, practical difference for families.

Home-Start in Scotland is one of our key stakeholders and delivery partners in implementing the national strategy. It is funded by the Scottish Government through the children, young people and families early intervention and adult learning and empowering communities fund. In the four years that the fund has been running, we have provided just under £800,000 to Home-Start in Scotland.

We recognise the important role that third sector organisations such as Home-Start in Scotland play in supporting children and families across Scotland. In the last year alone, the Scottish Government has awarded more than £5 million to a wide range of third sector organisations that support children, families and communities. In addition, more than £2 million was invested in 2018 to continue funding national programmes that support children and families, such as play, talk, read and bookbug.

I am delighted that the Deputy First Minister recently announced the families and communities fund, which will provide up to £16 million a year. With a focus on early intervention and prevention

and improving outcomes for children, young people, families, adult learners and communities right across Scotland, that three-year fund will provide more certainty and stability for third sector organisations to plan and deliver services.

Earlier, I touched on perinatal mental health, and, because it is mental health awareness week, I want to finish by highlighting our investment of £50 million through programme for government commitments. I hope that that shows that we are determined to improve the recognition and treatment of perinatal mental health in this country.

Stigma is still a reality for many women who experience poor mental health in the perinatal period. I want Scotland to be a place where it is okay for people to speak out about poor mental health after they have had a baby, and where women and their partners do not feel scared or ashamed to ask for help or talk about how they are feeling. I know that volunteers at Home-Start Glenrothes and Home-Start in Scotland make a huge difference to families, including by providing support for mental health issues.

I congratulate Home-Start Glenrothes again on its anniversary and wish Home-Start all the very best in its vital work supporting families in Scotland.

Meeting closed at 17:36.

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