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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 21 November 2013

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

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

General Question Time

Aberdeen City Council (Transport)

1. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with Aberdeen City Council regarding transport issues. (S4O-02612)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government has had regular recent discussions with Aberdeen City Council over a number of transport issues, which include public transport, road and rail infrastructure, hydrogen infrastructure, and learning technologies and electric vehicle infrastructure.

Maureen Watt: I understand that Aberdeen City Council is asking the Scottish Government for funding for preparatory work or a feasibility study in order to introduce trams to Aberdeen. Given the fiasco that happened here in the city of Edinburgh over trams, the on-going work on the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the introduction of hydrogen buses in Aberdeen, would it not be wiser to wait and see the impact of those three projects before committing scarce taxpayers' money to that request?

Keith Brown: The member will be aware, of course, that the Government did not support the Edinburgh trams project at the outset. Following a vote of the Parliament, however, it supported the project to the tune of £0.5 billion. I am aware that Aberdeen City Council has instructed its officers to open discussions with Transport Scotland officials on proposals for cross-city transport connections in the council's strategic infrastructure plan.

We will of course consider any representations that the council makes. However, at this stage my view is that this is a purely Aberdeen City Council initiative. The Scottish Government's transport priorities are clearly set out in our strategic transport projects review and our infrastructure investment plan.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for those comments and I am sure that Aberdeen City Council will approach him on those terms. Does the minister accept that the options on the table need not be confined to one particular form of rail link and that a rail link that could be built economically and

effectively could make a real difference to the connectivity of Aberdeen airport? Will the minister agree to join the council in considering the feasibility of different options, clearly recognising that if he does so, he will have an opportunity to influence the terms of that study?

Keith Brown: As I said in my response to Maureen Watt, I think that this is purely an Aberdeen City Council initiative but I have gone so far as to say that Transport Scotland officials will discuss the council proposals with the city council officials. That is as far as I would want to go in relation to that.

Lessons can be learned from the experience of a tram project in a busy city such as Edinburgh—lessons that to some extent are relevant for Aberdeen City Council. It would be an Aberdeen City Council initiative should the council choose to go forward with it, but obviously Transport Scotland officials will discuss the proposals with council officials if the council wants to bring them forward.

Environmental Noise

2. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to meet its obligations under the European Union directive relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. (S4O-02613)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): The Scottish Government is currently consulting on noise action plans that are required under the environmental noise directive. Those plans set out a suite of proposed actions, building on the strategic noise maps that were published earlier this year for the principal agglomerations: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen; main airports; and major road and rail networks. The consultations close on 18 December.

Gordon MacDonald: The Edinburgh draft noise action plan identifies Calder Gardens in the Sighthill area of my constituency as an Edinburgh road candidate noise management area. The directive requires member states to bring about measures intended to avoid, prevent or reduce exposure to environmental noise. Is the minister concerned that further house building in the west of the city and the resulting traffic increase in the Calder area will add to the environmental noise problem?

Paul Wheelhouse: I remind members that I have previously provided advice—as noted in my register of interests—regarding education aspects of proposed developments in the west of Edinburgh.

The strategic development plan for south-east Scotland, which was approved by Scottish ministers in June 2013, makes strategic housing land allocations that require to be reflected in local development plans. Planning applications for housing development proposals require to be determined in the normal way by planning authorities taking into account all material considerations that may impact on the local environment. Those include noise impacts as well as the previous issue raised by Mr MacDonald regarding air quality.

Minister for Town Centres

3. Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what the remit is of the minister for town centres. (S4O-02614)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): As Minister for Local Government and Planning, I have ministerial lead for town centres and responsibility for the delivery of the town centre action plan, which was published on 7 November. That plan is a cross-Government response to the recommendations in the external advisory group report, "Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres". The plan will stimulate the debate on the future for Scotland's town centres and encourage and support action from across the wider public, private and community sectors.

Margaret McCulloch: I welcome Derek Mackay's appointment as the minister for town centres. I appreciate his taking the time to speak to the cross-party group on towns and town centres, and I wish him well in his new role.

The town centre action plan has been largely well received and I endorse many of the points in it. However, I ask the minister how he will respond to the criticism from the Federation of Small Businesses and others that issues such as business rates and the state of the property rental market have not been fully addressed. What is there that the business community can sink its teeth into that would address the cost of trading in town centres as opposed to out of town?

Derek Mackay: I welcome Margaret McCulloch's welcome of my appointment to that dedicated post, to which I will give 100 per cent attention. I engage with a range of stakeholders on the town centre agenda because it is so important to the people of Scotland, and I congratulate the member on the work that she does in the cross-party group, which I was delighted to attend.

I will shortly meet our partners, including the FSB, to discuss what they believe are shortcomings in the report and enable them to identify further actions that we can take. However,

the areas that the FSB highlighted were matters for local government and not necessarily the Scottish Government, so I will continue to engage with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and individual local authorities.

The FSB whole-heartedly welcomes the fact that the Scottish National Party Government has delivered the most generous range of rates reliefs in these islands. It also welcomed the retention and continuation of the small business bonus scheme and the expansion of the fresh start relief that incentivises landowners to open up properties rather than keeping them closed.

I look forward to further engagement with all partners, not least the FSB.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I, too, had better welcome the minister to his position, or I will be in trouble.

In my constituency, there are several town centres—such as Penicuik—that require a helping hand. Given the constraints on the public purse in Government and in local authorities, will the minister consider providing an information website that is dedicated to helping communities to establish—if it is appropriate—development trusts, social enterprises or whatever to lever in lottery funding, for example, to regenerate their town centres?

Derek Mackay: There is some welcome news on retail sales in Scotland, but our response should involve more than just retail. Our plan is about community action to deliver innovative solutions to town centre issues, among a range of other actions that we will undertake. I commit to fulfil Christine Grahame's request to deliver such a website to support our community groups in progressing their local plans.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The minister will be aware that South Ayrshire Council has in the past gratefully received support from the town centre regeneration fund. Are there—or will there be—further funds available to concentrate on a high street where regeneration is still much needed?

Derek Mackay: I remind John Scott that the concordat with local government ensures that the de-ring fencing of a substantial amount of funds has given local authorities the ability to deliver their local economic development function. As part of the town centre action plan we have announced new resources, not least the town centre housing fund, which aims to increase the residential footfall in our town centres.

We will look at further resources, but the package of business rates relief is now worth more than £0.5 billion, which is a substantial contribution that will help businesses in town centres. We will

continue to work with councils throughout Scotland in delivering on the agenda.

I launched the town centre action plan in Kilmarnock—not in South Ayrshire, but East Ayrshire, which is close enough—because of the importance of the issue in that area. I welcome the fact that East Ayrshire Council has become the country's first "town centre first" council, and I encourage other councils to follow in that vein. They will get a warm welcome from the Scottish Government, and we can look at further investment decisions to support our town centres at what has been a very difficult time.

Superfast Broadband

4. Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it will announce the next set of locations to receive superfast broadband. (S4O-02615)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): Contracts for the delivery of next-generation broadband were awarded earlier this year. A dedicated website—www.scotlandsuperfast.com—was launched in October to provide up-to-date information on deployment plans throughout Scotland. The first areas that will go live, in Inverness-shire and Moray, were announced recently; those will be among the first areas to be able to access fibre broadband services from early next year.

We plan to provide regular updates on our website, including the first announcement of deployment in the rest-of-Scotland intervention area, with a postcode checker facility, in early 2014.

Roderick Campbell: The cabinet secretary will know that a number of my constituents have expressed disappointment at the speed of their broadband. Earlier in the year, Fife Council stated that it hoped that more than half of the deployment of superfast broadband in the area would be completed in the early stages of the project. Can the cabinet secretary advise whether Fife Council's targets are realistic and confirm that North East Fife will not be left as a technological white space by 2015?

Nicola Sturgeon: Rod Campbell is assiduous in representing the interests of his constituents on this issue. Our current plans suggest that large areas of Fife will benefit earlier in the project. We are not able to confirm precise percentages at this stage, because the plans are subject to survey and will change as broadband is rolled out, but we are absolutely clear that we want no area to be left behind, including North East Fife. We want to ensure that as many people as possible have access to next-generation broadband. Where that

is not possible, we have committed to ensuring that everyone within the project's intervention area has access to at least a basic level of broadband connectivity. There is real ambition and determination behind the project, and I am happy to keep Rod Campbell updated as further detail of the roll-out plan becomes available.

NHS Grampian (Primary Medical Facilities)

5. Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with NHS Grampian regarding the provision of primary medical facilities for expanding communities in the north-east. (S4O-02616)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Scottish planning policy makes clear that, when identifying locations for new housing, planning authorities must take account of the availability of infrastructure, including community facilities. Under Scottish planning legislation, health boards are key agencies in the preparation of development plans and should be actively engaged with planning authorities in the process of planning for new development and the growth of communities.

Regarding discussions on the provision of primary medical facilities for expanding communities in the north-east, there are no confirmed plans for medical facilities at present. However, NHS Grampian has been in discussion with the local authority on the matter, and those discussions will continue.

Alison McInnes: General practitioner practices in the north-east have some of the largest patient lists in the country, and many serve growing populations. Chapelton of Elsick could provide 8,000 homes but, as the cabinet secretary has just acknowledged, there are no confirmed plans to build medical facilities in the new town. Developers have offered a retail unit for a GP surgery for the first 800 houses and will set aside ground for a medical centre as the community grows. However, a medical centre would cost millions and it is unclear where the funding would come from. Residents therefore fear that existing healthcare services such as Portlethen medical centre, which is already among the busiest in the country with nearly 14,000 patients, could be overwhelmed. Given that health boards were recently stripped of their powers to allocate capital funding, will the cabinet secretary take responsibility and act to ensure that residents in and around Chapelton of Elsick can access high-quality healthcare in future?

Alex Neil: Alison McInnes raises a number of valid points, particularly regarding the new development at Chapelton of Elsick. As I said in my first answer, the health board and local

authority are in detailed discussion. The matter is for discussion between the health board and the local authority. If, after those discussions, the health board has to come to me to request additional funding, we would obviously look at any proposal, but the priority is for the responsible local organisations—namely, the health board and the local authority—to agree a way forward. We can then see whether Scottish Government intervention is needed and how we can help in implementing any proposals that are agreed.

Children's Dental Health

6. Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making on improving children's dental health. (S4O-02617)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Significant progress is being made on improving the oral health of children in Scotland. For example, the national dental inspection programme has found that the proportion of primary 1 children with no obvious decay experience had increased to 67 per cent in 2012, compared with 44.6 per cent in 2003, and that the proportion of primary 7 children with no obvious decay experience has risen to 72.8 per cent in 2013, compared with 52.9 per cent in 2005.

Aileen McLeod: I thank the cabinet secretary for his comprehensive response and welcome the improvements and the progress that are being made. The success of the Government's child oral health programme goes hand in hand with access to dental services. In Dumfries and Galloway there was a period before 2007 when accessing routine NHS dental treatment was almost impossible. What steps has the Government taken to increase access to NHS dentists?

Alex Neil: This Government can be very proud of the steps that it has taken to improve access to NHS dentistry. For example, from 2007 to 2013, the period in question, the proportion of children and adults registered with an NHS dentist increased to 89.5 and 79.9 per cent. That compares to 67.2 and 46.2 per cent in 2007. Dumfries and Galloway has also shown a similar improvement from 2007 to 2013.

The number of dentists working in the NHS also reflects our success. From 2007, the number has increased by 670, which is an increase of 27 per cent. There are also specific initiatives in place to support areas such as Dumfries and Galloway. I confirm that grant funding through the Scottish dental access initiative has been critical in providing funding for a range of new practices in South Scotland, including in Dumfries and Galloway, for the period in question. I also draw attention to the new dental school in Aberdeen.

That will ensure a sufficient stream of newly qualified dentists for the NHS.

Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference

7. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what trading and co-operation opportunities there are for Scotland arising from its participation in the recent Abu Dhabi international petroleum exhibition and conference. (S4O-02618)

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): Last week, I led Scotland's largest-ever delegation to the Abu Dhabi international petroleum exhibition and conference. More than 40 Scottish companies and higher education institutions were represented at one of the largest oil and gas events in the world.

To date, five Scottish companies—Doosan Babcock, FoundOcean, PEAK Global Consultancy, Safehouse Habitats and Scotmas—have confirmed new partnerships with local Emirate organisations, cementing the companies' foothold in a key global market. In addition, one other Scottish company, MJB International, announced that it had secured a contract from the French company, Air Liquide.

I also had meetings with the United Arab Emirates energy minister and the head of the Abu Dhabi petroleum institute. The discussions reiterated the significant opportunities that exist for partnership and collaboration between Scotland and the middle east. In addition, my visit to ADIPEC has led to a pipeline of opportunities for us that, despite that dreadful pun, officials will pursue in the coming weeks.

Bill Kidd: I thank the minister for that comprehensive reply. It does not leave me an awful lot to follow up on, although I know that he has much more information in the pipeline. What future design and engineering work opportunities will there be for companies based in areas such as my Glasgow Anniesland constituency? Are we looking to training opportunities specifically as a consequence of the minister's ADIPEC visit?

Humza Yousaf: I will not attempt to lower the tone even further with another pun. Everywhere I went in ADIPEC, people had heard of the expertise and training for the oil and gas sector not only in Aberdeen but across the whole country. In fact, the UAE energy minister had been to Aberdeen on occasions in a previous life and knew exactly what expertise the country has.

There will be significant opportunities. Closer collaboration between Scotland and the middle east has already seen supply chain into the Gulf increasing by 82 per cent since the previous year.

My officials and Scottish Development International would be happy to meet the member to discuss the outcomes of what we achieved at ADIPEC and see exactly how companies in his constituency could benefit from that closer collaboration.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Given Scotland's expertise in training offshore workers, what is the Government doing to support training companies to attract international clients?

Humza Yousaf: I thank the member for that question. Some higher education institutions attended the conference with us and, on top of that, we had representatives from the energy technology partnership. We have some of the best training academies for vocational on-hand training and we are working with them to put them in touch, through SDI, with companies from the middle east that have a huge investment in the North Sea, such as TAQA, to see how they can use that expert training that they will not get anywhere else. If those companies get that level of training and their workers are trained to drill in the North Sea, they will be able to drill anywhere in the world and that will help their global operations not only in Scotland, but in Canada, Nigeria and wherever else they take place. The Scottish Government, including Fergus Ewing and other ministers, take those training opportunities extraordinarily seriously. Scotland's expertise will help companies across the world and we look to do that through the energy technology partnership, Nigg Skills Academy and the many other great training institutes that we have.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-01690)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Johann Lamont: This week, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, a respected independent think tank often quoted by the First Minister, said that because of falling North Sea oil revenues and an ageing population, an independent Scotland would face significant tax rises or public spending cuts.

I do not suppose that any of us here imagines that we are going to get an answer, but with a cock of the head and an indignant sideways look, could the First Minister tell us why the IFS is scaremongering like that?

The First Minister: We would do what the IFS report itself indicates: we would increase the Scottish tax base by growing the economy and generating extra revenue.

I do not know whether Johann Lamont is aware that the model that the IFS used, which is the Office for Budget Responsibility model, suggests that the United Kingdom will be in deficit for every one of the next 50 years—the next half century. It indicates that UK Governments will have to raise taxation or reduce expenditure to meet that sustained position. That is what the model tells us.

Instead of looking at that, we should be looking in Scotland at how we change the circumstances of this country by using investment to grow the economy, to generate more jobs and revenue and to give us a sustainable future.

Johann Lamont: The IFS is just asking us to look at the real world. Why would we bother with all that malarkey when we can just make things up as we go along? How will we deal with an ageing population? Presumably we will all just get younger under independence. There will be £300,000-worth of Oil of Olay for each man, woman and child.

Of course, the IFS said that even in its most optimistic of forecasts, income tax would have to go up by 8p or VAT would have to rise to 27 per cent to fill the fiscal black hole.

Chuckling at his own jokes, as he likes to do, and selectively quoting lines that suit his argument—I am sure that he is looking for them right now—could the First Minister tell us why the

people of Scotland should believe him rather than the evidence of their own eyes?

The First Minister: Let us talk about what is agreed in the IFS report. Page 9 confirms that Scotland pays more tax per head than the UK at the moment. Page 11 confirms that Scotland is in a stronger fiscal position than the rest of the UK.

To quote exactly, the report says:

“the average revenues raised per person in Scotland (£11,079 in 2013–14 prices) were higher than for the UK as a whole (£9,342 ...)”.

The IFS has validated an argument that I have brought to the chamber many times, from the “Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland”—GERS—forecast, that Scotland more than pays its way in the UK. In the past five years, that has amounted to many billions of pounds that could have been invested in Scottish public services, used to lower the rate of borrowing, or used to do a combination of both. However, because of our position with the UK, those resources have not been available to the people of Scotland.

Our case is a simple one: instead of not having those resources available, why not invest in the economy? Why not grow productivity—grow our exports—and ensure that we have growth in the economy, which generates more revenue, so that we do not have the dreadful future that has been forecast for the UK by the IFS, which says that it will be in deficit for the next 50 years?

Johann Lamont talks about changing the age structure of the country in an independent Scotland. How would we do that? Perhaps we could do it by allowing young Scots who want to work in this country the opportunity to stay here—or perhaps we could do it by not kicking out, as the Border Agency does, the many skilled young people who come to study at our universities and desperately want to work either for a time or permanently in Scotland. Would that not help to change the population’s age structure? Of course these things must be right because they are controlled from London and Johann Lamont backs control from London of the immigration policy that would consign us to that prospect.

The IFS’s central forecast, which has been taken from the Office of National Statistics, postulates 4 per cent population growth in Scotland over the next 50 years. The population of Scotland has grown by 5 per cent over the past 10 years but, as the IFS tells us, if we remain trapped in the policies that are governed from Westminster, Scotland faces a very poor prospect indeed. If we grow the economy and put the investment in, we have a bright and certain future.

Johann Lamont: Another of the First Minister’s tricks is to go on and on answering a question that

he was not asked. When the IFS says that in its most optimistic forecast income tax would have to go up by 8p or VAT rise to 27 per cent to fill the fiscal black hole, only the First Minister could say that the IFS validates his position. It does not.

Indeed, I would not be surprised if convicted Enron executives across the United States were, at the moment, planning their appeals, saying, “I know we fiddled the figures, but Alex Salmond has taken it to a whole new level.” With every economic paper the First Minister publishes, Fred Goodwin must feel a day closer to redemption; each prospectus must make Bernie Madoff spit out his breakfast in admiration.

Feeling free to quote a former Labour chancellor in a falsetto voice, to dig up a blog that he was trawling through last night or to give us some more selective quotes like the last few we just got, can the First Minister explain to us why the fiscal black hole exposed by the IFS does not actually exist and why there is nothing to worry about after all?

The First Minister: I point out to Johann Lamont that I quoted from the IFS because I think it very useful in agreeing the current position. The IFS backs the Scottish Government GERS figures in showing that Scotland more than pays its way in the United Kingdom—[*Interruption.*] I hear from the Tory benches that that it is not true. I have already given one quote; page 11 of the report points out that

“Scotland exceeded revenues by £1,550 per person”.

Given that direct quote from the IFS, let us agree that over the five-year period Scotland has more than paid its way within the UK.

I have pointed out to Johann Lamont that I do not think that the population structure of this country is a given; I think that it would be enormously improved if we did not refuse young Scots an opportunity to work in their own country and if we allowed other skilled people, many of whom we have educated, to work in Scotland. That, to me, would bring about a substantial and important change with regard to the sorts of challenges that the IFS has indicated and which face all European economies.

I have substantial admiration for the IFS, unlike Westminster politicians, including Alistair Darling, who have dismissed its various reports. Indeed, I see that the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has

“taken the highly unusual step of attacking the ... Institute for Fiscal Studies, describing its methods of measuring the fairness of the coalition’s controversial spending review as ‘distorted and a complete nonsense’.”

That is exactly why I have pointed out that on the basis of the IFS report we can now be reasonably certain that the arguments that we have been putting forward about Scotland being in a stronger

fiscal position than the rest of the UK have been validated with regard to the past five years.

What happens over the next 50 years will depend on the policies that are pursued in this country, which, in turn, will depend on whether we have control of the policies that are pursued in this country. I say that we should get control of the economic levers, increase productivity, increase our exports and invest in our economy. Let us grow the Scottish economy and move forward to that better future.

Johann Lamont: The First Minister is guilty not just of selective quoting, but of selective thinking. The First Minister says that the IFS is helpful, but only to the extent that it agrees with him. We know that SNP back benchers are helpful to the First Minister only when they agree with him, but he ought to look at the whole of the IFS study and take it on board.

Just like at the start of his campaign, the First Minister is going to the cinema on Tuesday. What is he going to see—“Historic Day V” or “Honey I Shrunk the Fiscal Gap”? If the First Minister is to be believed, we will not just be a new country after independence, but he will invent a new arithmetic. While the choice in every other country in the world is between tax rises and cuts in spending, Alex Salmond will have us believe that we are the only country in which the future is this: how big a tax cut can we give to big business and how much more can we spend on good things? Is it not the case that at the very heart of next week’s white paper and at the heart of everything that the Government does is the belief that if the First Minister and his colleagues say something confidently and often enough, no matter how wrong it is, the people of Scotland will be daft enough to believe it?

The First Minister: Let me try another quote from the IFS. Johann Lamont will say that I am being selective, but I think that it underlines the points that I have been making. The IFS acknowledges that

“These factors”—

in the report—

“are inherently uncertain and could also evolve differently if Scotland were independent rather than part of the UK; in addition, they could be substantially affected by the policies chosen by the government of an independent Scotland.”

That is basically what I am saying.

Johann Lamont says that the choice is between cutting spending and increasing taxation. That would be the Labour Party’s position, with, according to the IFS/Office for Budget Responsibility analysis, a deficit in every single one of the next 50 years. We now know exactly what, if Johann Lamont has any influence, the

policy of the next Labour Government would be on that issue.

I do not think that Johann Lamont is in a particularly good position to talk about either economic advisers or the real world. Fred Goodwin was the economic adviser to Alistair Darling, not to me, and the current economic adviser to the Labour Party is the Rev Paul Flowers. I do not think that that gives us a tremendous indication of what the future should hold.

In addition, in the real world at present, Labour figure after Labour figure is saying exactly what they think of the Labour Party’s current coalition with the Tories. For example, according to the Scottish Labour Party chairperson, Labour activists “simply cannot stomach” working alongside the Conservatives in the no campaign. In the real world, key Labour figures such as Alex Mosson are coming out in favour of the yes campaign. That is what is happening in the real world.

As the white paper is launched next week, the yes campaign will be reinforced. Why? Because this party and this Government have ambition for this country. We think that we can invest in the future, grow our economy and give all our people a decent future.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S4F-01685)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): No plans in the near future.

Ruth Davidson: Nothing that has been said in the past quarter of an hour takes away from the fact that the Institute for Fiscal Studies report said clearly that an independent Scotland would start life with such a gap in its balance sheet that either taxes would have to rise or spending would have to be slashed. Those are similar findings to those of the Office for Budget Responsibility, the Centre for Public Policy for Regions, the National Institute of Social and Economic Research, the Confederation of British Industry, the David Hume Institute and any number of academics and economists whom one cares to mention. Why does the First Minister think that the IFS came to such conclusions? Was it part of some vast right-wing conspiracy, or had it just done the sums?

The First Minister: I think that Ruth Davidson’s interpretation is entirely wrong. The IFS’s point is not that the current budgetary fiscal position of Scotland is worse than that of the United Kingdom, but that it is, as I have just read out, better than that of the United Kingdom. Indeed, under that

optimistic scenario, it will be better until 2040, according to the IFS figures.

What the IFS argues is that Scotland faces the challenges that every European economy faces because, it says, an ageing population will cause considerable difficulty. I argue that the answer to that is to grow the Scottish population by allowing people who have grown up in this country the opportunity to work in their own country and by allowing the many thousands of skilled people who want to work in Scotland to do so, as opposed to their being thrown out by Ruth Davidson's colleagues south of the border.

If we are to address the long-term challenges that the IFS mentions, we know full well what awaits us in the United Kingdom. Perhaps some of those things would come to pass here, if they were to happen in the United Kingdom, but with the policy levers of an independent Scotland and with ambition for this country we can create a new and better future for ourselves.

Ruth Davidson: To pick out half a sentence from page 11 and repeat it again and again might be a life raft of a debating point, but it does not change the headline message of the IFS report, which is that in order even to begin to balance the books, there must in an independent Scotland be either a huge spending cut or a tax rise equivalent to VAT of 27 per cent or a 9 per cent hike in income tax.

The inconvenient truth for the First Minister is that the IFS is not alone in its analysis. Independent think tanks, academics, economists, financial experts, business groups and trade bodies are all lining up and saying the same things: the books do not balance, the currency is not secure and oil is a finite resource. All of them—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order. Let us hear Ms Davidson.

Ruth Davidson: All of them are on one side of the argument, while on the other, all alone, is the First Minister, sticking his fingers in his ears, making fag-packet promises and with an economic plan that has more holes in it than Rab C Nesbitt's string vest. All the independent experts are saying one thing and Alex Salmond is saying another, so let me ask him this: Why should voters close their eyes, cross their fingers and take a punt on the First Minister's far-fetched claims?

The First Minister: The only thing that Ruth Davidson has worked out is that she should not say that we will not get "Dr Who", which I understand she said in *The Sun* newspaper this morning. Unfortunately for Ruth Davidson, according to the BBC, "Dr Who" is simultaneously broadcast in 50 countries—

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): Seventy-five!

The First Minister: I am sorry. It is broadcast in 75 countries—I was underestimating—which is an increase of 25 since I started the sentence.

All the dismal forecasts of Ruth Davidson require to be challenged, but let me just say that I know that the Tory party, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have attacked the IFS's figures in the past, but I am not doing that. I am just pointing out what the IFS itself has said.

Ruth Davidson has cited the IFS report, which in fact validates something that she has never publicly admitted, as far as I know: that Scotland more than pays its way in the United Kingdom. Over the past five years, many billions of pounds that we could have used to invest in the Scottish economy have gone south—in every sense of the term. That is in the IFS report. I know that it is an inconvenient truth, but there it is, in the IFS report.

Let us talk about what the IFS says about the future. Paul Johnson, the director of the IFS, said:

"what this is saying is in order to avoid problems somewhere down the road you need to make some changes in the short run. These are perfectly plausible changes—a few per cent of national income, smaller actually than what happened or what is happening at the moment over this current period. ... As I say, this is not unusual among developed countries. Developed countries as a whole are facing these kinds of challenges".

I have indicated how we in this party and this Government would face those challenges in an independent Scotland. We would grow the economy; we would grow the tax base of the country by growing the economy. If we stay with the United Kingdom, if we allow the Home Office to fling out talented people who want to work in this country and if we deny young Scots the opportunity to work in their own country, I have no doubt that the future will be dismal for Scotland, as is indicated in some of the IFS's forecast. However, there is an alternative, and that alternative is to believe in the resources and the ability of the people of this country, to invest in that future and to grow the economy.

Ruth Davidson—remarkably for a Conservative Party politician—said that she felt that I am alone in these forecasts. The reason why I am here is that the substantial and overwhelming verdict of the Scottish people was to elect this Government, who have given their verdict time and again on the prospects of the Conservative Party in Scotland. When Johann Lamont talked about the ageing profile of Scotland's population, I thought that she was talking about the Conservative Party's support.

The reason why the Government was elected is that the people of Scotland have the nous to know that this is a country that has ingenuity and ability; our people are an ingenious people, and we have ability among our people. They also know that having vast natural resources in oil and gas is an asset and not a liability. If we combine those two things—an ingenious population and vast natural resources—we can make a success of our economy. That ambition and belief will be reflected in the white paper and reflected in the votes of the people of Scotland next year.

The Presiding Officer: Very briefly, I call Duncan McNeil.

Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): The First Minister will be aware that due to the reckless conduct of metal thieves on Tuesday, 280 homes in Greenock lost their power and four houses were set on fire, which put people's lives at risk. The consequences go on, in that the circuit boards of all the central heating boilers have been blown and will have to be replaced, possibly with significant investment by the social landlord and homeowners. As the First Minister knows, this is part of a growing trend. Scottish Power has reported that more than 800 substations have been subjected to attacks since 2011, and that 70,000 homes in Scotland have been affected.

We appreciate that the Scottish Government is looking at legislating to address the issue, but can the First Minister assure us that it will be brought forward as soon as possible and, in the meantime, that there is co-ordinated action between the police and Scottish Power against the reckless people who are putting lives in danger?

The First Minister: I am very much aware of the incident, and I am aware of not just the inconvenience but the danger that was caused to Duncan McNeil's constituents by a disgraceful theft of metal that affected power lines and power supply. I assure him that we will at the earliest opportunity bring forward legislation through the forthcoming licensing bill. More than that, there is current police action that is co-ordinated by Police Scotland and the British Transport Police, and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice will shortly meet Scottish Power specifically on the issue of protection and security of power lines. Action will be taken.

I agree with Duncan McNeil that it is a very serious situation. What makes it all the more galling is that the actual value of the theft was some tens of pounds, although it put hundreds of people to substantial inconvenience and some families in substantial danger, which makes the theft all the more deplorable.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-01688)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

Willie Rennie: Does the First Minister think that police officers are being taken off the streets to backfill civilian jobs?

The First Minister: No. I agree with what the chief constable has said on a number of occasions. That is not the policy of Police Scotland.

Willie Rennie: If the First Minister had actually read what the chief constable said yesterday, he would not have said what he has just said to Parliament. He was actually a lot clearer about this before, because he has said in the past that it was "utter nonsense".

Yesterday, the chief constable said that it is happening "on a daily basis". Now it is confirmed by the chief constable that police officers are being taken off the streets. We can add to that list police stations being shut to the public, control rooms being closed, Audit Scotland being scathing, chiefs being at loggerheads and the Scottish Police Authority saying that it just does not know where the savings will come from.

This grand mess is something that Kenny MacAskill said was "a once-in-a-generation opportunity". Is that not a warning that, the next time they try to sell us something that is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, people might not believe a word that they say?

The First Minister: Unfortunately for Willie Rennie, I have read the report about the Public Audit Committee yesterday and have the full quotation before me. He quoted four words of it. The actual, full quotation is:

"We do not have a policy or strategy to backfill support staff with police officers. Of course it happens on a daily basis, but it's not part of a plan."—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: That goes along with this quotation:

"I must repeat that we do not have a strategy or plan to backfill Police Staff Roles with Police Officers. "I want as many officers as possible to be on the street in an operational role."

Those are quotations from the chief constable—they are not just the words that Willie Rennie tried to take out of context. [Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: The difficulty for Willie Rennie on police reform is that most people would regard the advent of Police Scotland and the ability to merge 10 organisations into one as very substantial achievements indeed. Most people would regard the record numbers of police officers on the streets and in the communities of Scotland—if it was up to Willie Rennie, they would not be there—and a 39-year low in recorded crime as substantial achievements.

If people want to look for an alternative to the policies that are being pursued in Scotland of reinforcing the front line and of emphasising not the back office but the front line and people in communities, they need only glance at what happens under the control of Willie Rennie's colleagues south of the border, where England is about to lose almost as many police officers as the record numbers that Scotland now has.

The Presiding Officer: We now have three questions. I ask that the questions—and the answers, too, First Minister—be as brief as possible.

Fiscal Sustainability (Independent Scotland)

4. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies on the fiscal sustainability of an independent Scotland. (S4F-01711)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): As I said, given that the same forecasts from the IFS and the Office for Budget Responsibility say that the United Kingdom will run a fiscal deficit in each of the next 50 years, we should not be surprised at the long-term nature of the forecast.

Independence is the key to changing the outcome. I pointed out earlier that the IFS acknowledges and reports that the overall 50-year prognosis would be substantially affected by the policies that the Government of an independent Scotland chose. We choose policies for growth and achievement. That will make the difference.

Kenneth Gibson: I spoke to Paul Johnson, the IFS director, on Tuesday. He admitted that the IFS has carried out no work on the impact of the UK leaving the European Union following the proposed 2017 referendum. Does the First Minister agree that that would be a better focus for the IFS than attempting to predict Scotland's economic circumstances half a century into the future?

Does the First Minister also agree that what the IFS got right was confirmation that Scotland's economy performs better than the UK's at present, with a relative budget surplus of £12.6 billion over the past five years, and that an independent

Scotland could reform the tax system to boost the economy and increase growth?

The First Minister: That—in particular, the first bit, which was validated in the IFS report and is now, presumably, universally accepted across the chamber—is exactly what Scotland has lost out on over the past five years. We have been in a consistently stronger fiscal position than the UK as a whole but unable to use those massive resources for the benefit of the Scottish economy.

As we have already discussed, I believe in changing the parameters of the population forecasts by investing in the future of the economy. There are any number of young Scots who want to work in the Scottish economy if they are given the choice to do so. It is a foolish and mistaken policy to fling people out of the country when they want to commit themselves to Scotland.

We can rise to the challenges. We can invest in the future and grow the economy. That is an altogether more convincing prospect than the dismal prospects offered by the unionist parties, who would keep us in the current box of low growth and low aspiration in Scotland.

Wilful Neglect of Patients

5. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the First Minister when the Scottish Government will bring forward plans to extend legislation to make wilful neglect of patients a criminal offence. (S4F-01705)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I thank Rhoda Grant for giving me the opportunity to address the question, because it is hugely important.

The recommendation on wilful neglect becoming a criminal offence was made by the world-renowned patient safety expert Professor Don Berwick in relation to how the safety of patients in NHS England could be improved in the wake of the Mid Staffordshire scandal.

Rhoda Grant will be aware that wilful neglect is already an offence when it relates to mental health patients in Scotland. We are examining the best legislative manner in which to extend that protection to all patients. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing will update Parliament before the end of the year on how we can take that forward.

Rhoda Grant: The First Minister will be aware of Scottish Labour's proposal to create an integrated health and social care inspectorate that is independent of Government, is accessible to staff and patients to allow them to raise their concerns and has the powers to take tough, decisive action. Will he explain to us why he has failed to consider our proposal so far?

The First Minister: All proposals are considered. The integration of health and social care is hugely important, and we will look at all proposals as we carry forward that policy.

I think that Rhoda Grant is being very unfair to the Scottish health service, in the light of its achievements on patient safety. Given that the recommendation to which she refers was made by Professor Don Berwick, perhaps we should look at what he said about patient safety in Scotland. He said:

“The Scottish Patient Safety Programme is without doubt one of the most ambitious patient safety initiatives in the world—national in scale, bold in aims, and disciplined in science ... aligned toward a common vision, making Scotland the safest nation on earth from the viewpoint of health care.”

That is the view of the person whose recommendation Rhoda Grant has asked us to consider. Obviously, we will consider it favourably. Nine of the 10 key recommendations have already been put in place in Scotland as part of the patient safety programme, and the 10th one, which Rhoda Grant asked me about, is one that we will consider positively, so that we can live up to Professor Don Berwick’s estimation of patient safety in Scotland.

Police Scotland (Statistics)

6. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government is doing to ensure that statistics presented by Police Scotland are accurate. (S4F-01695)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Scotland is now a safer place, as we know, and that is supported by the 1,000 additional officers that we have provided, in contrast to what is happening south of the border.

There is a well-established system in place to ensure consistent and accurate reporting of police data from the eight legacy police forces and Police Scotland. The Scottish crime recording standard, which was introduced in 2004, provides a victim-orientated approach and ensures uniformity in crime-reporting practices throughout Scotland. Compliance with the standard is reviewed by Her Majesty’s inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland. That is why we are working closely with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to ensure that published Police Scotland management information is always robust.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the First Minister for his response, but he will know that, this week, senior police officers have spoken out against a target culture in the centralised Police Scotland. What assurance can he give us that techniques such as gaming are not being used to present a picture of

police activity and recorded crime that is less than accurate?

The First Minister: I can give Murdo Fraser the assurance that, because of what I have said to him, we can have confidence in the statistics that Police Scotland produces and, indeed, in the statistics that the former forces produced.

Given the excellence of those statistics, perhaps Murdo Fraser might just accept that there are more than 1,000 extra police officers on the streets of Scotland, whereas thousands have been made redundant south of the border; that recorded crime is at a 39-year low; and that police officers throughout the country are doing an excellent job on behalf of the people of Scotland.

I do not want to comment on the trials and tribulations of Conservative Party Cabinet ministers, but there is a fundamental breakdown in trust between the UK Government and the police service, just as there is a fundamental breakdown in trust between the UK Government and the fire service. Has Murdo Fraser ever realised that the reason why that trust is intact in Scotland is that, unlike his colleagues south of the border, we value and regard the work of our uniformed services?

John F Kennedy Assassination (50th Anniversary)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-07824, in the name of Richard Lyle, on the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament acknowledges the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the 35th President of the United States, John F Kennedy, on 22 November 1963; remembers what it considers his great achievements as a political leader especially with regard to foreign affairs, civil rights and economic policy; commends what it believes were his efforts to limit the threat of nuclear weapons through diplomatic measures, most notably by signing the limited test ban treaty with the UK and Soviet Union; considers that he was instrumental in progressing the civil rights movement through open public support and executive orders, which resulted in interventions such as the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity; applauds what it believes was the recovery of the US economy under his presidency and understands that it enjoyed its longest sustained expansion since the second world war; recognises what it considers his ambitious vision of safely sending an American to the Moon by the end of the 1960s; believes with sadness that his time in office was unjustly cut short, and honours with sincerity and respect the memory of President Kennedy who, it understands, travelled through central Scotland in 1939 before delivering a speech in Glasgow on behalf of his father, Joseph, who was the USA's ambassador to the UK at that time.

12:34

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):

I thank all members of the Scottish Parliament who supported my motion, which allowed the debate to take place, and I welcome to the chamber Zoja Bazarnic, who is the principal officer at the United States consulate general. I also thank my American intern, Dana Cullen, who aided me in preparing my speech.

Today, we remember former US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Tomorrow, 22 November, is the 50th anniversary of his tragic assassination. I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of President Kennedy, who was one of the most noteworthy political leaders of the 20th century.

America's youngest elected President, who had served just over 1,000 days in office, was shot dead on 22 November 1963 while being driven in his presidential limousine through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. It was a shock to all. Most people of my generation remember where they were on that fateful day.

Kennedy's assassination has been the focus of conspiracy, mystery and intrigue for the past 50

years. In countless books, articles, films and research, people have analysed and debated the information, producing unsatisfactory explanations for why a man with such enormous promise met such an untimely death. Questions about the gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald—did he act alone? How many bullets were fired? Where were the shots fired from?—continue to plague people who are fascinated by President Kennedy and the almost Shakespearian drama that surrounds his life, family and legacy.

In a recent newspaper article, it was suggested that President Kennedy foreshadowed the exact means of his death in a conversation with his wife, Jackie, on the morning of the assassination. Over 50 years, official reports have concluded that there were three bullets and one man and that the President's death was the result of a horrible, random act of violence. However, the public have been unable to accept that. People have constantly sought to give Kennedy's life meaning and are unable to believe that such a historic figure could be brought down by one lowly man.

That is testament to the man that JFK was and to his political accomplishments. The theories around his death might be provoking, but ultimately they detract from his presidency and accomplishments. Prior to being sworn into office, Kennedy had received a purple heart for service in world war two and a Pulitzer prize for his non-fiction book, "Profiles in Courage". He was a young, exuberant, handsome man with a glamorous wife, all of which, along with his wit, intellect and charisma, fitted the family for celebrity in a way that was perfect for the age of television. He easily defeated Nixon in the first televised presidential debates and he was the first President to use the television to address the American people. In that way, Kennedy was able to connect to the public and appeal to Americans on a personal and emotional level. He has been described as having had a unique ability to combine substance with style and wisdom, particularly on significant issues such as war, peace, space and civil rights.

As most presidencies do, Kennedy's presidency faced turbulent times. It was the era of the Cuban missile crisis, the early years of the Vietnam war and the construction of the Berlin wall. However, despite political obstacles, he emerged to initiate the first Apollo mission to the moon, displaying his visionary spirit. In foreign policy, he was instrumental in negotiating a nuclear weapons test ban treaty with the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, and he committed to a phased withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam. With a view to containing hostile relations, his presidency gave birth to the Peace Corps, and he was the first President to vocalise support for the civil rights movement. He drafted the Civil Rights Act of 1964,

which called for an end to voter discrimination, segregation of schools and other forms of discrimination.

Those were the achievements of a mere 22 months in office. What more might Kennedy have done had he lived? Some people suggest that his current popularity among politicians and the public is based more on the promise of what might have been than on the reality of his short term in office. Historian Dr James Boys has written:

“more than any other president, JFK is judged to a great extent on his promise, as opposed to his specific achievements in office.”

That might be true, but we must not overlook or underestimate the sense of joy that Kennedy brought to the presidency, which ultimately convinced the public of his greatness. He served at a time when cynicism towards the White House was at a minimum. Perhaps that helps to explain the longing for the days of Kennedy's Camelot.

Kennedy was a man whom the public could stand behind and support. Through his handling of the Cuban missile crisis, he emerged as a heroic leader. Republicans and Democrats in America have sought to bask in Kennedy's glory and often try to emulate his speeches and draw on him as a symbol. As we know, it is nothing less than extraordinary to find common ground between those two parties, so the fact that that happens speaks to the importance of Kennedy's presidency. Unfortunately, many politicians today have failed to realise that Kennedy's public image and persona were not just for appearance but had real substance as their basis.

Had Kennedy continued to live, he would surely have been elected for a second term. His presidency was on track to be the champion of the civil rights movement and to promote peaceful relations abroad, especially with the Soviet Union. Vietnam might have taken a far different course, as he was adamant about not committing more troops on the ground. However, we will never know about those possibilities. We will continue to wonder what could have been when we think of Kennedy and lament the loss.

Kennedy's death has forever shaped how we remember him. Instead of remembering him for the myths of his death or his unrealised potential, we should remember him for being the man who inspired a nation, for the spirit that he brought to the presidency, for the accomplishments that he achieved in such a short time, for being a symbol for peaceful diplomacy, and for the duty that he gave to his country.

I will end with an excerpt written in the weeks that followed Kennedy's death that aptly captures the essence of the late President. The excerpt was

on display in the recent Andy Warhol exhibition in the Parliament. It says:

“And so the 35th President of United States was laid to rest, the four days that shocked the world came to an end, and the great and near great from around the world turned back to their own worlds. And in all the speeches, in all the eulogies, in all the comforting messages, nowhere was the world's sentiment more clearly expressed than in a brief inscription on the back of a picture of the late president which was handed out at St. Matthews cathedral: ‘Dear God, please take care of your servant, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.’”

Sadly, years later, on 19 May 1994, Kennedy's wife, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, died at 10.15 pm eastern standard time of cancer at her Fifth Avenue apartment in New York. So ended the Kennedy dynasty.

12:41

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): It is a cliché to ask, “Where were you when Kennedy was assassinated?” but some of us have a reply. I asked some colleagues.

John Pentland was in a house listening to the radio. He could not be more specific than that—or perhaps he was just being evasive.

Roderick Campbell pled the fifth amendment.

Nanette Milne was in the medical school library at Foresterhill in Aberdeen.

Mini-skirted Mary Scanlon was back-combing her hair in Montrose, ready to go to the Locarno to dance to Brian Poole and the Tremeloes. It was cancelled.

Elaine Murray was playing with her junior chemistry set and listening to the radio.

I was in the Cameo picture house, also in a mini-skirt, watching a Jacques Tati film. The film stopped. We thought that the projector had broken, but then, across the black screen came the words, “John F Kennedy has been assassinated.” Stunned to silence, the cinema emptied without people having been given any instruction to leave, and I felt that the world was a very bad place. Why?

When JFK became President, it seemed that a new world had a chance. He was charismatic and refreshing, with his stylish wife and charming children. The court of Camelot, as the White House and the entourage became known, seemed a breath of fresh air and promised so much to the impressionable teenager that I was: an end to wars, for a start. Wars have continued even up to today, of course. I recall what became known as the Cuban missile crisis: the 13-day confrontation in October 1962 between the Soviet Union and Cuba on one side, and the United States on the

other. That crisis is now generally regarded as the moment in which the cold war came closest to turning into a nuclear conflict, and is the first documented instance of mutual assured destruction, which is aptly shortened to MAD, being discussed as a determining factor in a major international arms agreement. MAD—how appropriate. I truly thought then that world war three was inevitable. That was a chilling moment.

The Camelot court was not, of course, as clean as a whistle and the idyllic family was not so idyllic, but those were the days before the internet, texting, 24-hour news, satellite broadcasting, and people documenting events with their mobile phones.

When I review the reality of the Kennedy years—some good, some bad—with the benefit of historical appraisals, I recognise his achievements, but sometimes it is chalk and cheese. However, that does not detract from the promise that was snuffed out so brutally.

We can compare the election of JFK with the election of Barack Obama, not simply because of the means of reaching the electorate and the funding but because some of the hopes that rested on the shoulders of JFK seemed to transfer to and come alive again with the current first family. However, the current personable and eloquent President, though exuding some glamour and style to western eyes at least, has had a much tougher time from his electorate and the fourth estate. That is not necessarily a bad thing, although the results might sometimes depress us, but how would JFK and his family have fared today by comparison?

The assassination of JFK remains a seminal moment in international history, and it was followed five years later by the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy in the same year. Those three murders put a brutal stop to the influence of three substantial figures and, for the very young Christine Grahame, the promise of a different and better world.

12:45

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I congratulate Richard Lyle on introducing this debate and I welcome the American consul to the gallery.

I tweeted last week that everyone of a certain age would be obsessed with the assassination of JFK this week, not surprisingly, because we can all remember where we were on the night of Friday 22 November 1963. I can go further than that, because 1963 was a momentous year in many ways as it was really the beginning of the 1960s in terms of the cultural shift, the first Beatles records and so on, and it was also a momentous

year in politics. However, I can remember only one sentence that I heard in 1963. I was at a club at my secondary school on the evening of 22 November when somebody came into the room and then, 10 seconds later, the person in charge stood up and said—I can hear it as clearly as if it was yesterday—“President Kennedy has been shot three times in the head and he is dead.”

I am told that 40,000 books have been written about that event and about President Kennedy more generally. I must say that I have not read any of them, so I will not deal with who killed him. However, I have been convinced that the ballistic evidence shows that it could not have been just Lee Harvey Oswald. Clearly, many people speculate about who else was involved. I am told that JFK’s nephew, Robert Kennedy Jr, is going to write a book, which will come out next year, saying that the Central Intelligence Agency was involved.

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Malcolm Chisholm: I do not have time.

The best way to get mythologised is to die young, but I suppose the most interesting question for this debate is, what was John F Kennedy really like? What was he all about? He had a lot going for him, as Christine Grahame has reminded us, because he was not just young but glamorous, charismatic and eloquent, and he talked the language of change. There was a remarkable contrast between the politics that he represented in America and what was happening in the United Kingdom at the time. Conservative members will probably agree with that point, because it was the end of the old Conservative party when the grandees in 1963 picked the 14th Earl of Home as the next prime minister; after that, the Conservative party modernised itself.

JFK had a lot that contributed to the myth, but there have of course been many debunkers since then, although I think that some people have gone too far. I think that the feminist critique of his attitude to women is probably valid—in fact, it is certainly valid. However, others have gone too far. George Kerevan, for example, said in an article in *The Scotsman* a month ago that JFK was a fraud and liar, and that he generated cynicism about the effectiveness of democratic politics—I think that all that went too far. George Kerevan also said, quite strangely, that JFK won the election in 1960 through denying millions of black Americans the vote. In fact, the exact opposite of that is the truth. I urge people to read a really interesting article in *The Guardian* yesterday by Candace Allen, who said that it was basically the black vote that won Kennedy the 1960 election. That is also what is stated in Theodore White’s book “The Making of the President 1960”.

It is true that, in retrospect, Kennedy can be criticised for not moving faster, but he tried to get the civil rights bill through and, of course, Congress blocked it. A book that has recently come out—I have only read a review of it—“The Letters of John F Kennedy”, apparently has many letters between Kennedy and Martin Luther King that show the former’s commitment to the civil rights movement. Of course, partly out of respect and in memory of John F Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson made sure that the civil rights bill went through Congress the year following JFK’s assassination.

A lot has been written about JFK’s role in foreign affairs and nuclear weapons. I think that he learned a lot of lessons in that regard from the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The correspondence with Khrushchev that is in the book of JFK’s letters shows them both trying to hold the line against their respective hard-liners. That resulted, for example, in the test ban treaty of 1963, so there were positive aspects to JFK’s role in foreign affairs and nuclear weapons. Christine Grahame referred to MAD, but let us be honest: MAD is a lot better than the first-strike madness that many of JFK’s advisers advocated.

I think that I am more or less out of time. There is a lot of controversy about whether JFK would have got involved in Vietnam. Part of his appeal is that people feel that he might have been able to stop the disaster of the Vietnam war. That is suggested by some evidence, which I have no time to go into. I do not really know the answer to that question.

There are many uncertainties and controversies about JFK, but it is absolutely appropriate to commemorate today a defining moment of the 1960s and a key moment in modern American history.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Given that many members still wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion under rule 8.14.3 of standing orders to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[Richard Lyle.]

Motion agreed to.

12:51

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank Richard Lyle for bringing to the chamber the motion to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of American President John F Kennedy. I was only two years old when President Kennedy was assassinated. I do not remember the feeling in the air after it happened. I do not

remember the powerful reaction of the whole world to that earth-shattering moment. I do not even remember how upset my parents and other family must have felt afterwards.

However, we do not have to be able to remember that day to understand the profound impact that President Kennedy had on our world. JFK’s numerous achievements on the domestic and international stages created an image of a man who deserves our utmost respect. One can only imagine how different our world would be if his life had not been cruelly cut short.

JFK had a vision for peace and prosperity the world over. He loved his country and cared deeply and passionately about civil rights, economic prosperity and scientific innovation through space exploration. However, given the nature of the times, much of his focus was on world politics and, in particular, on relations with the Soviet Union.

A reminder of JFK’s humanity is that his presidency experienced many highs and many lows. One of his lows was the failed Bay of Pigs invasion near the beginning of his presidency in 1961. The attack had been largely planned before he took office, so he was briefed after being elected and he approved the plan without having much time to think about it before the invasion was launched. From that experience, Kennedy learned that he would have to develop a better strategy for US and Soviet relations than rushing into armed conflict.

The desire to avoid superpower skirmishes helped JFK to bring the world back from the brink of nuclear war in 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis. He had been involved in that conflict from the beginning. He was able to remain calm, even while the world was preparing to duck and cover and when an American plane was shot down, killing the pilot. The achievement of a resolution through direct negotiation with the USSR reinforced his view that reconciliation was achievable.

Kennedy’s new views were on display in his commencement address on 10 June 1963 at the American University in Washington DC, which was also 50 years ago this year. He said:

“I have, therefore, chosen this time and place to discuss a topic on which ignorance too often abounds and the truth is too rarely perceived. And that is the most important topic on earth: peace ... not merely peace in our time, but peace in all time.”

He went on to announce his willingness to negotiate with the Soviets

“toward early agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty”,

which resulted in the nuclear test ban treaty later that year. He also declared that he would not conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere as long

as other states refrained from testing there as well. As he said, that was an attempt

“to make clear our good faith and solemn convictions on this matter.”

That speech signalled the climax of a dramatic growth in President Kennedy's character over his short, incomplete presidency, and it showed his aspirations for world peace, which we could all stand to take some time to refocus on.

I would like to take a moment to share with members an excerpt from one of President Kennedy's final speeches. On 13 November 1963—only days before he was assassinated—the Scottish Black Watch band during its American tour performed for him and more than 1,000 guests on the White House south lawn. JFK shared with the gathered crowd these words on the importance of American and Scottish connections. He said:

“We're proud to have them here because they are a Scottish regiment, and that green and misty country has sent hundreds of thousands of Scottish men and women to the United States, and they have been among our finest citizens. And we're proud to have them here, because, speaking personally, the history of Scotland captured me at a very young age. The United States, and in fact all of us, love, I suppose, lost causes, and on occasion the history of Scotland has been a lost cause, but in some ways they have triumphed—perhaps more today than ever before.”

It is no surprise to me that Richard Lyle felt compelled to lodge this motion on the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination, and I thank him again for it. President Kennedy felt a deep connection to our great country, just as many of us felt a deep connection to him and his unparalleled leadership. Let us take this anniversary of his death to reflect on the many leadership lessons that we can learn from him and to renew our faith in our cause and our country, as he would have us do.

12:55

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con):
Presiding Officer,

“From Dallas Texas, the flash, apparently official: ‘President Kennedy died at 1 pm Central Standard Time.’ 2 o'clock Eastern Standard Time, some 38 minutes ago.”

I think that most people have seen Walter Cronkite's broadcast, in which he brought to the world the official confirmation of the President's assassination. I was only four years old and surprisingly I can remember where I was when I heard about Kennedy. It was the following day and I could not understand why my grandparents were so uninvolved in the first episode of “Doctor Who”. I was enthralled. “The President has been killed,” they told me by way of explanation. Yeah, well, who? Whatever.

Then, blow me, because of “That man Kennedy” the first episode had to be repeated the following week and it was a whole fortnight before I could find out what had transpired. That was the perspective of a four-year-old at the time.

Back to Kennedy. I have read plenty about him and his family since, and, despite all that, I remain fairly unimpressed. His father was a fascist-supporting ambassador to the United Kingdom who did all that he could to frustrate any US involvement in disrupting the progress of Hitler and the Nazis. His mother acquiesced in his father's sanctioning of a lobotomy on her sister. His younger brother abandoned a woman to drown in a car crash. When in office, he and his brother Bobby shared women, took drugs and behaved reprehensibly and in a way that would lead to their being hounded out of office today. They gave J Edgar Hoover all the material that he needed in effect to blackmail the presidency of the United States. His father fixed votes in the presidential election in 1960 that saw JFK elected as President. He initiated America's substantive involvement in Vietnam. He was responsible for the Bay of Pigs fiasco. It was his successor, Lyndon B Johnson, who did all the heavy lifting on the landmark civil rights legislation. He did not do that just in memory of JFK. LBJ was personally hugely committed to driving through that civil rights legislation and it was LBJ who drove through most of the social legislation that remains at the heart of the US today.

To Kennedy's credit, he conducted himself heroically when the ship that he was commanding, PT109, was attacked and sunk in the second world war. His single-handed rescuing of members of his crew demonstrated outstanding and immense personal courage. Although there are some who carp over the details and the cold war consequences, he deserves every credit for the way in which he managed the Cuban missile crisis.

Deborah Devonshire, the dowager duchess and the youngest and only surviving Mitford sister, knew him well. JFK's sister Kathleen, known as Kik, married Deborah's brother-in-law. Kik and her husband were to die in an air tragedy, the consequence of which was that Deborah's husband acceded to the dukedom. The Devonshires and the Kennedys stayed in touch. The Devonshires attended the inauguration and JFK, when President, visited Chatsworth to the wide-eyed astonishment of the people who were queuing up to tour the house on that day. In her autobiography, “Wait for Me!”, Deborah Devonshire testifies to JFK's immense charm, vitality and sense of purpose. For those of us under a certain age, that is something that we never saw, but I defer to her assessment. The Kennedys had charm.

That charm was manifested in Jackie—Jackie, who created Camelot and captured the imagination of the wider world. Like Camelot, though, it was an idealised fiction. In my view, JFK is remembered because his assassination was the first globally televised news event of its kind. In 1963, people in the US and across the world shared the shock and raw emotion of his assassination, of Dallas, of Lee Harvey Oswald, of Jack Ruby, of the flight home to Washington, of Jackie's blood-spattered suit, of the horse with the reversed boots, of John junior's salute to his father at the funeral, of the Zapruder film footage. This was a President who represented the youth, glamour and ambition of the post-second world war generation. They mourned the "what might have been" of all that youth, vigour and purpose being cut off so dramatically before their eyes and in his prime, but it cannot disguise that he was flawed and must remain a largely unknown quantity.

13:00

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): I thank Richard Lyle for bringing the debate to the chamber. The question, "Where were you when Kennedy was assassinated?" is often posed. I should declare that I was not born for another 15 and a half years, almost to the day, so I have no personal memories of the incident. However, it is one of the most pivotal moments of the mid-20th century, and I welcome the chance to reflect on that. A four-minute speech—and indeed a whole member's debate—probably would not do justice to any life, let alone that of Kennedy, but it is worthwhile for us to have the debate.

Kennedy did not have many links to Scotland, although the motion refers to the incident in which his father, as the Ambassador of the United States to the Court of St James, sent him to meet those US citizens who had been caught up in a German attack on a ship that was sailing for America.

Another connection, which David Torrance highlighted, appears in today's *Daily Record*. There is an interview with the last remaining member of the Black Watch pipe band that played at President Kennedy's funeral, which had been planned so meticulously by his widow Jacqueline Kennedy; the origins of Camelot lay therein.

There is a tendency in assessing the life of President Kennedy to oscillate between hagiography on the one hand, and demonisation—as we just heard from Mr Carlaw, if I may respectfully say so—on the other. The truth is somewhere between the two. It is probably fair to say, for example, that Kennedy did not exhibit exceptional moral qualities in his personal life. However, in his public life, there were many achievements.

I will reflect on one of those achievements, which has been mentioned. In those 13 days in October 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy ignored the more bellicose demands of the American military leadership—epitomised by the head of the American air force, Curtis LeMay—for military action. He charted a different course with more sound counsel from some wiser heads and avoided the mutual assured destruction to which Christine Grahame referred, which would have obliterated the entire world. We should reflect on the fact that Kennedy's greatest achievements were probably never fulfilled. As the title of Robert Dallek's biography states, his was "An Unfinished Life".

The assassination was a pivotal moment and we have to ask what would have happened if Kennedy had lived. That is, of course, necessarily revisionist. The first thing that we can accept is that he would definitely have won the 1964 election. His assessment that Barry Goldwater would be the Republican candidate was correct; Johnson decisively defeated Goldwater, and Kennedy would have done too.

There are indications of how things might have been different. The first is in the commencement address at the American University, to which David Torrance referred and from which I will also quote. In talking about relations with the Soviet Union, Kennedy made the salient point:

"For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Those are only words, but they were well received in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the speech was made available in its entirety in the Soviet press, which was very unusual at that time. Khrushchev received it well, and it was followed up by the nuclear test ban treaty.

We know that Kennedy's last executive order—to which Richard Lyle referred—planned the beginning of the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and that he had established a back channel to Cuba. There was discussion of normalising relations between Cuba and America and we could perhaps have avoided the 50 years of strained relations that have followed since then.

We do not know what would have happened if Kennedy had lived, but I think that there is enough evidence to suggest that a different course would have been charted and there would have been an ambitious agenda for global peace. That was all lost in the street on 22 November 1963 as a result of an assassin's bullet. Of course, that event is shrouded in mystery, and will—sadly—probably remain so for ever more.

13:05

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Richard Lyle was right to say that most American politicians, even to this day, still pray in aid John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and many around the world do so, too. That has led to some of the greatest put-downs in American politics. The one that I remember best was from the 1988 vice-presidential debate, in which the Republican Dan Quayle was holding forth about his experience in office compared to Kennedy's when he entered the White House. He was up against Senator Lloyd Bentsen, who was quite a bit older than Quayle. Bentsen pulled himself up to his full six foot two, looked over the podium and said:

"I knew Jack Kennedy ... Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."

I suspect that many of us would have been pretty proud of that kind of political put-down.

Thirty years ago, I spent some time in an American history class with students of my age discussing presidents. The class teacher asked us to name the president that we would most like to study, to learn about what they had done for their country. Inevitably, many chose Jefferson, Lincoln, Eisenhower or of course Washington. I said Kennedy, for two reasons. First, there was the fascination that members have described with the kind of person that he was—yes, he was flawed but in many other ways he was utterly magisterial—and with what he brought to his politics and his country. We have to remember that that time of change was about the new frontier, the new beginning and replacing the war hero, Eisenhower, who had served his country in many ways. America was changing and Kennedy epitomised that, grabbed it and drove it in a way that I do not think anyone else could have done.

Just five weeks ago, for the first time in my life, I got to Dallas and took my family to Dealey Plaza. We went into the book depository, which is now a museum, went up to that sixth floor and looked out of that window. My son said, "Dad, are those two crosses on the road what I think they are?" They are—they mark the spots where the first bullet hit Kennedy and where the second one hit some yards further down the road. We walked round Dealey Plaza and behind the picket fence. I confess to Malcolm Chisholm that I have read quite a lot of the books and the conspiracy theories, but I still do not know what I believe. However, having been there, I know that it is an awful lot closer when you are there than when you see it on television or in a Kevin Costner movie.

Jamie Hepburn: Will the member give way?

Tavish Scott: Forgive me, but I will just make my speech.

We will never know who killed Kennedy, and I suspect that, even after reading the Warren commission's report, neither will America.

As members have mentioned, Kennedy brought forward civil rights legislation. I point out to Jackson Carlaw that, in Robert Caro's incomparable book about LBJ, he describes how the legislation passed through Congress and what Johnson did to get it through, particularly against his party's wishes, but the point is that it would never have got through had it not been for Kennedy's death. The sad conclusion that Caro comes to in that important text about American political history is that the only reason why the legislation passed through Congress was because Johnson was able to twist, cajole and make senators and congressmen recognise the importance of the legacy that was the civil rights legislation and therefore rightly get it through the legislative and lawmaking systems.

The other enduring legacy of Kennedy is his speech making. His inaugural speech in 1961 is, for many of us, the defining text on how to write a speech. Believe me, most of us, including me, will never get there but, as an ex-speechwriter, it is nice occasionally to try. Obama does that. His speech in Chicago when he won the election was up there with Kennedy's, although not quite as good. Many fine men and women will seek to get to the top of the rhetorical Everest that Kennedy created. On the 150th anniversary of the Gettysburg address—when we remember that a speech can be two minutes and not 22—it is important that we remember Kennedy's legacy of the power of speech and words to swing an audience and to move a country. That is possibly his most enduring legacy—the one that the world will never forget. Whether we can remember what happened or, like many of us, we cannot, we will certainly always remember JFK.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks. I call George Adam, to be followed by James Kennedy—forgive me, I mean James Kelly.

13:10

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): James Kennedy? I was a bit concerned there, Presiding Officer—I thought that somebody would be following me who I could not compete with.

I thank Richard Lyle for securing the debate. Like Jamie Hepburn, I was not born at the time—I was born in 1969. I often hear stories from my mother and father about where they were at the time.

Why would someone of my generation be inspired by the legacy of John F Kennedy? His Administration was indeed glamorous and it was different. It was younger. Kennedy was the first

person to hold office in the White House to have been born in the 20th century. Much has been said about the Camelot legend, too. Kennedy's Administration actually believed that it could change the world. With that youthfulness came an ideal of trying to change the world and make it a better place.

Tavish Scott is quite right: his words are extremely important. These are the things that inspire us. I saw one quote earlier today:

"The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were."

Nowadays, we would also say "and women". When we hear that as a young man or woman, it inspires us, especially if we are a politician, to want to be involved in the process and to try and change the world. Who in my generation would not have been interested? Who would not have wanted to get involved in all that and to see what it was all about? Was it the glamour? Yes, there was glamour involved. The important part, however, is what Kennedy said and many of the things that he did.

When I define myself and my politics, I think about another quote:

"Economic growth without social progress lets the great majority of people remain in poverty, while a privileged few reap the benefits of rising abundance."

Those are relevant words for debates that we have in this chamber here and now. President Kennedy said them in the 1960s.

In my constituency office, my constituency manager, David McCartney, loves Bobby Kennedy—that is his hero. He sees Bobby as the one he would aspire to be like.

A constituent came up to me and my wife Stacey after the election and said, "Here's the first lady of Paisley." She was thinking about Jackie Kennedy, not any other first lady whose husband was in office after that.

In referring to some of the things that John F Kennedy did during his short time in office, people have mentioned the Cuban missile crisis, when the world was on the brink. I have a personal or constituency connection there. Ken McGinley, a campaigning nuclear veteran, was on Christmas Island—he was one of the soldiers who was experimented on by the British Army. He wrote to Mrs Kennedy after that. He was inspired when John F Kennedy had the nuclear test ban brought in a year after the Cuban missile crisis. Ken McGinley wrote because of that and he got a letter and a picture back from Mrs Kennedy, which said that she thanked him for his support and everything else. Those are the things that make a difference to people's lives. There is a man who is

now in the later years of his life and he is still talking about it—that remains a major part of what he did.

Kennedy was a man of change. He believed in changing things. During his time in power, women in the federal Government were paid the same amount of money as men. That was radical in the 1960s. In some places, that is quite radical now in the private sector. That was something that the Kennedy Administration pushed for. Another thing in the 1960s was that only 0.0035 per cent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a Government body, were African American—and they were nearly all chauffeurs. The Kennedy Administration tried to ensure that that part of the population of America could get that opportunity—that they could aspire to be members of the FBI or get involved in other things.

Kennedy's death came as a great shock to everyone. We only had to look through the Andy Warhol exhibition that we had in the Parliament to see how much of an effect it had on him.

How can we sum up Kennedy's legacy? Oliver Stone's "Nixon" movie has a line where Nixon looks at a picture of Kennedy on the wall. This probably never actually happened, but he says that Kennedy reminds people of

"what they want to be",

whereas he reminds them of

"who they really are."

That was the difference. Whether he was good, bad or indifferent, because of the difference in the legacy of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, he inspires us to be what we want to be and to achieve everything that we can. That, for me, is what makes the difference.

13:15

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): I congratulate Richard Lyle on bringing his motion to the chamber. The variety and depth of the speeches show how much Kennedy inspired many of the members in this chamber and the great deal of interest that there is in not just Kennedy's assassination but his political legacy.

I was only a month old when John F Kennedy was assassinated, so I do not remember the incident. My parents—I am the oldest of seven children—were always very interested in politics, although not actively involved. I was very aware of the virtues and positive aspects of the Kennedy Administration, which has always greatly interested me.

Pupils from Burnside primary are with me today and are sitting in the gallery. Before I came to the chamber to give this speech, one young pupil

asked me, "What was it that made John F Kennedy famous?" There are two aspects to the answer. The first is the assassination itself. We will see more of the photographs and images tomorrow, but there is no doubt that the image of an American President driving down a street and being assassinated in front of thousands is one that shocked people at the beginning of the television age, as members such as Christine Grahame have said. People were also shocked that the life of the President, pictured in an iconic image with his wife and young family, had been denied. Such images add to the fascination of the conspiracy theories.

From a political point of view, Jackson Carlaw did the debate a service by bringing an alternative critique to the table. Although I did not agree with much of it, he was right to point out that perhaps all that glisters is not gold.

I would say two things about Kennedy. In yesterday's debate on same-sex marriage, a lot of people spoke about how the world has moved on. I was talking to my 13-year-old daughter Erin recently about a project that she was doing on America. We talked about the challenges that black and Negro people faced in America: they were not allowed to ride on certain buses; there was segregation; and people were murdered and beaten up. Kennedy took a stand against all that and moved things on. Perhaps if he had not done that, and if Lyndon Johnson had not carried that work on, we would not have got Barack Obama as President in 2008. Kennedy did the world a real service.

Kennedy also showed real leadership during the Cuban missile crisis. If people read up on what happened at that time, they will see that there is no doubt that we were on the verge of world war three. He was right to stand firm and provide leadership at that time.

The real lesson for me is that politics matters. I return again to yesterday's meeting of the Parliament, when we had tributes to Helen Eadie. Sadly, that was the third occasion in recent months when we have had to pay such tributes; Brian Adam and David McLetchie also died recently. Although we have different views and visions, the thing that brings everyone in this chamber together is that we are in this because politics matters.

What John F Kennedy achieved in his life and political career shows that we can make a difference in politics. That is something that all politicians should carry forward in their political careers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Well done. I call Willie Coffey, after whom we will move to the minister's closing speech.

13:19

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley)

(SNP): I join colleagues in thanking Dick Lyle for bringing the motion on President Kennedy to the debating chamber and for providing the Scottish Parliament with an opportunity to remember one of the most influential and charismatic political leaders the world has ever known.

Those of us who were around at the time remember where we were at the moment of the assassination. Even though I was five, I still recall the moment vividly; when the newsflash came on the TV, I was in the house with my mother, sitting at the fireplace. I knew something awful had happened but I was not sure exactly what it was. I recall being incredibly saddened by my mother's reaction to the news and knew that what had happened was important. Fifty years on almost to the day, I am privileged to be able to stand here in our Parliament and give something back to honour the memory of a man who changed the world.

The cold war between the west and the Soviet Union was probably at its coldest during Mr Kennedy's presidency, and the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 would probably have finished the careers of lesser Presidents than JFK. Yet he prevailed, won the support of the American public and successfully faced down Khrushchev during the Cuban nuclear missile crisis of 1962, succeeding in persuading the Soviets to dismantle their nuclear capability there in return for a reciprocal agreement from the Americans in Italy and Turkey and a promise not to invade Cuba. Diplomacy certainly averted disaster for the world.

At that time, America was a racially divided country and the civil rights movement was struggling to gain momentum. President Kennedy must have watched in horror the events in May 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama when state-sponsored brutality put down a civil rights event led by Martin Luther King, who was to be assassinated himself only five years after the President. Perhaps JFK could have done more earlier to rid America of apartheid, but his executive orders prohibiting racial discrimination laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In many ways, the Kennedy Administration was years ahead of its time. As my colleague Dick Lyle has pointed out, in 1961 JFK established the Peace Corps, as a result of which US volunteers worked in third world countries to build roads and hospitals and educate their citizens. He promoted his new frontier programme, promising federal funding for education, medical care for the elderly, economic aid to rural regions and Government intervention to halt the recession of the time. He also declared to an unsuspecting world that

America would put a man on the moon before the end of the decade, which of course happened in 1969. Averting a nuclear world war three while planning to expand the scientific achievements of mankind beyond our dreams were pretty impressive achievements in his all-too-short term in office.

Presiding Officer, you would expect us to find some story connecting Jack Kennedy to Scotland. As Jamie Hepburn made clear in his speech, in 1939, as a 22-year-old, President Kennedy made his first public speech in what I know as the Baird hall of residence in Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow, after the Germans had torpedoed the Athenia passenger ship, killing 28 Americans. Glasgow's reaction to that incident and the way in which its people looked after and cared for all who survived it, particularly the American citizens, must have left a hugely positive impression on the young Mr Kennedy and might well have influenced him in his later years as President. We would like to hope that it did.

I feel privileged to be standing here talking about President John F Kennedy and the important legacy that he left us, after such a short term of office. He touched the hearts and minds not only of the American people but of people throughout the world, including in Scotland. I might have been only five when he was taken from us but he certainly made an impression on my life. He said

“A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on.”

The ideas and vision of John F Kennedy certainly live on and I think that the world is a better place because of him.

13:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I, too, congratulate Richard Lyle on securing the debate. Although I was not born when President Kennedy died, I have felt the impact of his life throughout my own, and this very interesting and poignant debate has made it clear that 22 November 1963—the day on which President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas—will forever be marked as a pivotal moment in world history. He was human and had flaws but he was also a leader who provided hope, which is the most precious currency for any political leader.

I want to touch briefly on a couple of examples of JFK's vision and his impact on Scotland and the world, because that vision is what makes his death as tragic today as it was 50 years ago. In doing so, I want to recognise and celebrate the strong bonds of friendship between Scotland and the US. Indeed, on this sad anniversary, we join our

American friends in honouring the memory of their young President and a legacy that lives on to this day.

JFK was as famous for his Irish roots and Boston brogue as he was for being a product of the American dream. However, as the motion states, it was here in Scotland that the 22-year-old son of the US ambassador to the UK first demonstrated his potential as a politician and leader. He made his first public speech on behalf of the US Government when he addressed the American survivors of the German U-boat attack on and sinking of the passenger ship Athenia, who were being cared for in Glasgow—as we have just heard from Willie Coffey.

As US President, JFK had the vision to recognise the perils of nuclear weapons, as a number of members have said. In recognising the threat, which is as profound today as it was following the Cuban missile crisis, both he and Khrushchev realised that it was insane that the power to spark nuclear war should be controlled by two individuals. They privately began to exchange letters that reopened their earlier dialogue on the banning of nuclear testing. That was followed by the limited nuclear test ban treaty, which was signed on 5 August 1963 in Moscow, one day before the 18th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. It took Kennedy two months to convince the US public and the Senate to support the treaty in a demonstration of how strongly resolute he was on doing something about the peril of nuclear weapons.

As US President, JFK had the vision to imagine a society in which people of all races and religions were treated equally. When he was elected in 1960, civil rights were a key issue in the US and there were high expectations of the new President. Reluctant to lose support among the southern states, having only narrowly won the election and barely holding control in Congress, instead of trying to pass legislation Kennedy appointed a large number of African Americans to high-level positions and worked to strengthen the Civil Rights Commission.

On 11 June 1963, the President addressed the nation, promising to introduce major civil rights legislation following the attempt by the then governor of Alabama to block two black students from entering the University of Alabama. When I was in the US this summer, I had the privilege of meeting the current mayor of Alabama as part of this year's civil rights anniversary celebrations. In 1963, not long after that address by JFK, 200,000 Americans gathered for the march on Washington when Martin Luther King delivered his momentous “I have a dream” speech. The march helped a comprehensive civil rights bill to clear several hurdles in Congress and win endorsement from

both House and Senate Republican leaders. Unfortunately, Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963, before the bill could be passed. Nevertheless, as we have heard, President Johnson was able to sign the bill into law as a tribute to his fallen predecessor.

Perhaps Kennedy's most ambitious vision was to commit to putting a man on the moon. In 1961, the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space, creating the impression among Americans that the US was falling behind in the space race. Kennedy understood that to restore the faith of Americans, the US Government would have not just to match, but to surpass the Soviets. In a speech on 25 May 1961, before a joint session of Congress, Kennedy called for an investment of billions of dollars to achieve the goal of putting a man on the moon by the end of the decade. Sceptics questioned the ability of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to deliver that but, as we all know, on 20 July 1969 the crew of Apollo 11 realised President Kennedy's dream—the first spaceflight to land humans on the moon. My first memory of television was watching that event. It was a tremendous point in history, and its impact is a tribute to the work of JFK.

As Tavish Scott said, as well as for his vision we remember Kennedy for his powerful oratory and his ability to capture the mood of the moment. One of the finest examples of that came a few months before his death. During a visit to West Berlin, on 26 June 1963, amid the tensions of the cold war, Kennedy spoke about the United States' support for West Germany some 22 months after the Soviet-backed East Germans had erected the Berlin wall. Although his message was aimed as much at the Soviets as at the people of West Berlin, it is best remembered for his compelling statement of empathy: "Ich bin ein Berliner". In that simple phrase, spoken in their mother tongue, Kennedy conveyed powerfully how the United States would stand with the people of West Berlin against oppression.

In closing, I want to reflect on and use some other statements made by JFK. In 1962, Kennedy ignored advice from key advisers and tried to pass a social security measure on medical care for workers over 65. In a message to Congress in February 1962, he said:

"For one true measure of a nation is its success in fulfilling the promise of a better life for each of its members. Let this be the measure of our nation."

Addressing the Irish Parliament in Dublin on 28 June 1963, President Kennedy said of Ireland:

"the achievement of nationhood is not an end but a beginning ... For self-determination can no longer mean isolation; and the achievement of national independence

today means withdrawal from the old status only to return to the world scene with a new one."

Finally, reflecting the remarks made by James Kelly in what I thought was a fitting and very good speech, I want to end with a quote that is perhaps most appropriate for this place and this time:

"So, let us not be blind to our differences—but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved."

This has been an excellent debate with excellent speeches and has been a very fitting way to mark the memory of a man who made such an impact on the world.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I agree. I now suspend this meeting of Parliament until 2 o'clock.

13:31

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Education and Lifelong Learning

College Courses (Gamekeeping and Countryside Management)

1. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether colleges offer courses in gamekeeping and countryside management that meet the demand for jobs across the sector. (S4O-02592)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): Several colleges offer provision of that kind, including North Highland College, in the member's constituency, many of whose graduates have been successful in securing relevant employment. That is a good example of a college designing courses to meet the specific needs of the local community, consistent with the aims of our reforms.

Rob Gibson: Will the cabinet secretary ensure that all gamekeepers and countryside managers can gain qualifications in, for example, deer culls, wildfire control and mountain rescue, as their job remits are set to broaden to provide public goods for the national economy and local environment?

Michael Russell: The member asks a good and pertinent question. It is important that people who are trained in the area, who go on to find jobs in a variety of sectors, are aware of the changing needs in those sectors. I am aware of the concern of the member and the committee that he convenes about deer in Scotland. I think that his concern is widely shared in rural Scotland. Therefore, it is extremely important to ensure that people who are trained as gamekeepers are up to date on and can cope with the pressures and issues.

Colleges in general should ensure that their provision matches the needs of employers. I know for sure that that will be true in the area that we are considering, as it will be in many other areas.

Education (Health Promotion)

2. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action the education sector is taking to promote good health and help tackle health inequalities. (S4O-02593)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): In Scotland, the health and wellbeing of children and young people is a core focus of key national

policies such as curriculum for excellence and getting it right for every child.

Health and wellbeing is one of the eight curricular areas that all children and young people will experience as part of their broad general education, and is one of the three aspects that all staff share a responsibility for developing—literacy and numeracy are the other two. That helps to ensure that children and young people will develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that they need for mental, emotional, social and physical health and wellbeing, now and in the future.

Neil Findlay: The report, "Equally Well" and, more recently, Professor John Frank, of the Scottish collaboration for public health research and policy, said that if we are serious about tackling health inequality, we must provide early years education from the age of two. Does the minister agree? What steps is he taking to tackle health inequality through early years education?

Dr Allan: As the member will be aware, health is at the centre of what is provided from the very early pre-school years.

The member mentioned an important report. NHS Health Scotland published another important report, in 2013, on the causes of health inequalities, which made clear that Government must tackle not just the symptoms of health inequality, however important those are, but the socioeconomic causes of those symptoms. However much the member and I disagree on this, my view is that it would be better if we had the powers to tackle social inequalities here.

Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP): Does the minister agree with the steering group for general practitioners at the deep end, which is made up of 360 GPs who work in the 100 most deprived practices in Scotland, and which found that Westminster austerity and welfare reform are damaging communities and targeting the most vulnerable people in our society? Does he agree that the only way that we can tackle health inequalities in Scotland is by giving this Parliament the full powers of independence?

Dr Allan: I share the deep-end GPs' concern that the United Kingdom Government's welfare reforms will impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our society. That can only widen health inequality, which in turn will blight all sorts of other opportunities that people have in their lives, such as education opportunities. For that reason, this Government will continue to press the UK Government on the need to protect the most vulnerable people in our society from many of its misguided changes.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Question 3, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, has

not been lodged. The member has provided a satisfactory explanation.

National Exams

4. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the reported concerns of teachers regarding their workload in relation to the new national exams. (S4O-02595)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): The Scottish Government takes teachers' concerns very seriously and has listened closely to those who deliver in our classrooms. We established a short-life working group to tackle concerns about unnecessary bureaucracy arising from the implementation of the curriculum for excellence. The group's report, which was agreed by all stakeholders in Scottish education, is released today and will directly benefit all those involved in implementing the curriculum for excellence.

Education Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Scottish Government have already delivered a wide range of support to help teachers to introduce the new qualifications, including over £5 million of additional funding and full course materials for all 95 national 4 and national 5 courses.

We will continue to listen and respond wherever that is needed. Our schools have made excellent progress in delivering the curriculum for excellence, and I have every confidence that next year's qualifications will be delivered successfully and will benefit pupils across Scotland.

Hugh Henry: I note the additional resources that have been put in and the work that has been done. Teachers are certainly to be commended for their efforts in trying to make a success of the changes.

Notwithstanding what has been done, I hope that the minister will have a listening ear to the concerns that continue to be expressed, because it is painfully clear that teachers across the country have an increased workload. With their developing entirely new materials for the new nationals, the change in study leave arrangements and a lack of in-service days, teachers are left to take their work home just to cope with the planning and developing demands of the new nationals. It is imperative that the materials are available and that more support is given. Will the minister commit to addressing any concerns that continue to be expressed?

Dr Allan: As I have indicated, I am certainly more than willing to listen to teachers. It is notable that the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association commented that the Government was listening to teachers in areas around that subject today.

As I have mentioned, a lot of effort has already gone into providing support and materials, but if any areas of concern are outstanding, the Government and Education Scotland are more than happy to speak to people.

It is, of course, worth saying that one of the concerns that was expressed was about unnecessary bureaucracy. Some people felt that some local authorities were imposing unnecessary bureaucracy around the implementation of the curriculum for excellence. I am pleased that a wide group of stakeholders has agreed on a statement and an action plan to ensure that we minimise the unnecessary monitoring of teachers and allow them to do what they want to do, which is teach.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): The cabinet secretary told the Educational Institute of Scotland in June that it would be "utterly unacceptable" for any school, headteacher or local authority to require unnecessary paperwork from teachers. Can he reiterate that view?

Dr Allan: I am more than happy to emphasise what I have just indicated. We should all seek to eliminate unnecessary paperwork in the system. The group that was established to tackle bureaucracy reported today and has given key messages to ensure that that happens. Education Scotland will challenge any such practices that it finds in schools.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Can the minister confirm that the textbooks for every national 4 and national 5 course are now printed and in the hands of teachers?

Dr Allan: If the member has outstanding concerns about somewhere, I will more than happily chase them up. Substantial investments have been made only this year. Another £1 million has gone into providing textbooks. As I have already indicated, I constantly speak to teachers and representatives of the teaching profession. If the member has somewhere in mind where she feels that provision is not happening, I am more than happy to intervene.

Edinburgh College (Meetings)

5. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the board of Edinburgh College. (S4O-02596)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): I meet the chair and principal of Edinburgh College among others at various formal and informal events. For example, I attended the first birthday reception for the college that was held in the Parliament on Tuesday 1 October, which was jointly hosted by Colin Beattie MSP and Kezia Dugdale MSP.

Sarah Boyack: I, too, attended that event.

Tensions and strain have been caused by the merger at Edinburgh College. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council has investigated concerns that were raised by the Educational Institute of Scotland branch, and it takes the view that the concerns that the branch raised on administrative assistance and staff morale are “real and serious”, and that new systems that were implemented due to the merger have exacerbated that pressure.

What lessons does the cabinet secretary think can be learned from the Edinburgh College merger in that regard? Does he have a view on how best to address the issue of staff morale going forward? For example, other colleges have drawn on the resource of the Scottish Government change team. Does he think that that might be helpful in this case to ensure that students and staff have the highest possible morale going forward?

Michael Russell: I would urge both college management and union representatives to work constructively together in every college in Scotland because that produces success. The change team, among others, have been engaged in a range of situations, and what has been taking place has ensured that the necessary and important mergers, which produce colleges of scale—as those working in colleges at every level recognise needed to happen—go through by negotiation and discussion.

I can assure the member that the Scottish funding council has assured me that the Edinburgh College principal and her senior team are addressing the issues raised by the unions and the SFC’s report. The SFC will monitor progress on that and provide regular updates. However, that should not detract from the fact that the college is delivering substantial benefit for learners; for example, Edinburgh College is now the single largest supplier of students to the University of Edinburgh.

The Presiding Officer: Question 6, in the name of Margaret Mitchell, has been withdrawn. The member has provided a satisfactory explanation.

National 5 and Higher Mathematics Unit Assessments

7. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the effectiveness of the national 5 and higher mathematics unit assessments. (S4O-02598)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): The Scottish Qualifications Authority is on track to deliver full support for all the new national qualifications, including mathematics, following an unprecedented level of engagement and

partnership working with practitioners, national agencies, schools and local authorities. Assessment in the new qualifications is designed to sample learners’ skills, knowledge and understanding, and provide opportunities for deeper learning. The SQA is providing a comprehensive range of support for teachers to ensure successful delivery.

Jackie Baillie: The minister will of course be aware that concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of the unit assessments in the national press and, perhaps more important, by individual teachers. A number of teachers have commented to me that the documentation for assessment is ambiguous and repetitive, layout is poor and marking instructions are poorly designed. Does the minister agree that the lack of detail is worrying in terms of consistency of marking across centres? What action will he take to ensure that the assessment process is improved?

Dr Allan: As I have indicated, the Government is very willing to listen to any concerns from individual teachers. However, I should say that I have confidence in the system of unit assessment for maths and the SQA’s unit assessments for all its subjects. As I said, they were developed following very extensive consultation with teachers and others. The first round of quality assurance for each national subject, including maths, is happening right now across the country. I intend fully that it will continue to build teacher confidence. We are, as I said, always willing to listen to any individual who wishes to raise any concerns, but I have confidence that the system that we are operating for unit assessment is sound.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): How will the new national qualifications enable young people to develop the skills that they need for moving into further education, employment or training?

Dr Allan: Obviously, the thinking behind curriculum for excellence and the new qualifications goes back a long way, but it also goes back to a recognition across the Parliament that people’s lives in the 21st century will be very different from people’s lives in the 20th century in terms of the number of jobs that they will have, and their need to be flexible and adaptable in the workplace and to have lifelong learning. Gaining such skills is at the heart of what is done in schools, and skills are at the heart of the new national examinations and the curriculum for excellence.

Creationism

8. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will introduce

measures to prevent the promotion of creationism in schools. (S4O-02599)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): Throughout religious and moral education, and throughout religious, moral and philosophical studies, the understanding that the world's religions have of creation will be explored, examined and critically reflected upon, not promoted. Similar objectivity is expected of teachers if contentious issues such as creationism are raised. Within the sciences curriculum, the concept of evolution is introduced through the experiences and outcomes at second, third and fourth levels. The concepts of natural selection and evolution are also widely explored from a scientific perspective in the national qualifications in biology. In addition, the big bang theory and the origins and expansion of the universe feature in the new physics higher.

Patrick Harvie: I hope that there is no complacency on the issue in the Government. It is clear that whatever measures are in place have been inadequate to prevent some—shall we say?—eccentric ideologies from being promoted in schools. We are talking not about creation myths being presented in the context of myth and comparative religious study, but about the promotion of the idea that the earth is 6,000 years old and that human beings have in that time coexisted with dinosaurs or other such patently absurd rubbish. If even Michael Gove can get a grip on that, why cannot the Scottish Government?

Dr Allan: I am not sure whether the member listened to what I just said. I indicated strongly that the content of biology and physics courses, for example, promotes none of the ideas that he listed. I therefore have complete confidence in our teachers to deal objectively with contentious issues as they arise. I make it clear that the science curriculum in Scotland is not dictated by any of the agendas that the member suggested influence it.

Colleges (Regionalisation)

9. James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it is monitoring the regionalisation of colleges. (S4O-02600)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council monitors regionalisation and reports regularly to the Scottish Government on progress.

James Kelly: I have raised previously the sale of Woodburn house in my constituency, which was an annexe of the former Langside College. It has come to light that Woodburn house was given a European regional development fund grant in

1998. Such grants are typically given on the basis of a 20-year lease, which has not been the case in this instance. In the regionalisation process, has the granting of regional funding been considered? Was that considered in relation to Woodburn house?

Michael Russell: If the member writes to me with his concerns about Woodburn house, I will be happy to address them. The question of asset disposal lies with colleges. If asset disposal was undertaken in a way that was disadvantageous to a college, that would be a concern. However, the relevant relationship would be that between the funding council and the college.

I encourage the member to write to me. If he wishes to discuss the matter with me, I will be happy to do so, but it might be more appropriate for me to get the funding council to tell him its position on the matter.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I have raised in the past the top slicing of the budget for further education colleges, in the Highlands in particular. I understand that the regional board in Glasgow is recruiting policy officers and other staff and that it rents offices from Glasgow Caledonian University. Will the cabinet secretary ensure that the regional strategic bodies do not become expensive bureaucracies and will he therefore allow more resources for front-line education and training?

Michael Russell: How the Glasgow colleges decide to operate is a matter for them. The purpose of regionalisation is to ensure that resources are focused as closely as they can be on young people, youth employment, providing opportunities for young people, ensuring that retraining takes place at every level and ensuring that colleges compete effectively and work with local businesses. I recall that the member voted against regionalisation, but I am glad to say that it is going well and that front-line resources are benefiting.

Disabled Students Allowance 2012-13

10. Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason there was a decrease in funding for the disabled students allowance in 2012-13. (S4O-02601)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): Disabled students allowance is paid in response to demand, so costs reflect the number of claimants and their needs. Initial discussions with the disabled students advisory group suggest that the reduction in DSA spend in 2012-13 reflects a combination of a decrease in the number of claimants and institutions being in a better state of readiness to make the reasonable adjustments that are

expected of them by the Equality Act 2010, along with technological improvements that mean that the functionality of equipment that students use lends itself much more easily to supporting students with disabilities.

Jim Hume: I thank the minister for that answer, but in England funding is increasing while in Scotland it has fallen to its lowest level since 2003-04. Does not the minister agree that the Scottish Government's cuts to the education budget, which have led to 8,500 fewer students in higher education in just 12 months, and a 17 per cent cut to the disabled students allowance, are limiting the options that are available to disabled people who want to study now that they are confronted with fewer courses and less support to make their studies affordable?

Michael Russell: No. There is virtually not a single word that I agree with in that, partly because there is not a single fact that appears to me to be justified or accurate. The reality of the situation, as I explained to Mr Hume—clearly he was not listening, so let me repeat my point—is that the budget is demand led. The budget has not been cut; the demand has reduced. Perhaps that is because support for students is better in Scotland; perhaps it is because students do not have to scabble around looking for money in circumstances in which they would have to borrow it south of the border; or perhaps it is because the Scottish Government has been providing for and supporting changes in college funding and college support that will benefit students—all things that the Liberal Democrats could learn from south of the border.

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I take from what the cabinet secretary said that not only was it a demand-led issue, but there was a reduction in the number of disabled students making applications. Can the cabinet secretary tell us whether in fact there are fewer disabled students at colleges?

Michael Russell: What I said and what I will say again is that we believe, as does the disabled students advisory group, that the reduction has come about due to a number of things—a decrease in the number of claimants, which is because institutions are in a better state of readiness as regards the reasonable adjustments that are expected of them, along with technological improvements and better equipment.

As the relevant minister, I have also provided additional support to charities and to others to support disabled students and I have encouraged the charities to expand the activities that they undertake. All of those are positive moves and it is about time that members realised that what is happening in Scotland's colleges is a major

improvement in provision and facility, which has been welcomed across the college sector.

PPP/PFI School Contracts 2012-13

11. George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how much it spent in 2012-13 on costs associated with public-private partnership and private finance initiative contracts for schools. (S4O-02602)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government's total funding specifically in support of local authority school PPP/PFI contracts in 2012-13 was £209.5 million.

George Adam: Last year, Renfrewshire Council spent just under £15 million on PFI payments. Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that that form of payday loan being used to pay for schools is something that the Renfrewshire Labour administration should be informing people about as it pushes forward with its school closure programme?

Michael Russell: I agree with George Adam. I am quite sure that Mrs Henry, the Labour convener of education in Renfrewshire Council, will wish to inform people that the PFI approach that was used in the past has not delivered best value for the taxpayer, with excessive profits being made by the private sector. Councils should be clear with parents about the massive costs that the approach imposes.

Instead of paying a fair price for schools and nurseries, PFI mortgaged the financial future of Scotland's councils. As a result, today's pupils are burdened with PFI's poisoned chalice, with nearly £400 million being top-sliced from council education budgets in 2012-13 to pay for PFI programmes. The mistakes that were made with earlier PFI contracts will not be repeated. I am sure that people from Renfrewshire—members as well—will want to make that clear.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (National Exams)

12. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Scottish Qualifications Authority regarding the roll-out of the new national exams. (S4O-02603)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): The Scottish Government is in frequent discussion with the Scottish Qualifications Authority on the implementation of the curriculum for excellence and the new national qualifications. SQA is also a member of the curriculum for excellence management board and the curriculum for excellence implementation group.

Liz Smith: In a previous answer to Hugh Henry, the minister acknowledged concerns among teachers about the workload that has been involved in that. I notice that in the discussions in Glasgow, Edinburgh and West Lothian councils, that has had something of a knock-on effect in respect of concerns about the new higher exams and whether they should be delayed for a year. Can the minister comment on that?

Dr Allan: I do not think that there is any dubiety that the Government and teaching profession expect the norm to be that people will do the new higher when it becomes available. As the Government has already indicated today, professional judgment will obviously have to be exercised in some circumstances, but it will have to be exercised in the context of working with local authorities and parents.

Student Numbers

13. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last discussed student numbers with Colleges Scotland and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. (S4O-02604)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): My officials and I meet regularly with Colleges Scotland and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to discuss a wide variety of college issues. Our expectations on student numbers are set out in my letter of guidance to the funding council. The latest letter of guidance was issued on 21 October, and the SFC monitors progress through outcome agreements.

Mark Griffin: College lecturers in my region have told me that, for funding reasons, student numbers are of paramount importance until 1 November. If students are kept on courses until that point, the college will receive funding, and lecturers have been told to do everything in their power to counsel, cajole, or persuade students to stay on until then. Does the cabinet secretary think that that is right? Is that being replicated across Scotland? Has there been a drop in the number of college students since 1 November?

Michael Russell: It is about time that Opposition members accepted that the college sector is working incredibly hard to promote opportunities for young people. That is what it does, and it is doing it better because this Government had the courage to implement a series of much-needed reforms that had to happen.

The portfolio in each college changes from year to year and from time to time in order to ensure that the communities that they serve are provided with access to the latest

“innovative, high quality, relevant learning”.

It was not I who said that; Cumbernauld College used those terms.

What is taking place is perfectly normal changes within courses. The college sector is going from strength to strength. It would be good to hear a regional or local member from the Opposition supporting their colleges rather than running them down.

Highlands and Islands (Education and Skills Provision)

14. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to align education and skills provision in the Highlands and Islands with the needs of local employers. (S4O-02605)

The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance): The Highlands and Islands skills investment plan has been prepared by Skills Development Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council over the past six months to provide an agreed framework for increasing alignment of education and skills provision with the needs of local employers.

Rhoda Grant: The minister might be aware that Kishorn Port Ltd is progressing its development at Kishorn. There is no local college provision in the area. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that local young people have the skills that will enable them to take up the jobs that could be created at this exciting development?

Angela Constance: The Highlands and Islands skills investment plan is the first regional skills investment plan, and it is very much looking to align education and training opportunities with skills needs and the needs of employers. The Highlands and Islands skills investment plan was discussed at the convention of the Highlands and Islands at the end of October and a number of suggestions were made before the plan was finalised.

I can go away and look at the specific issue that Ms Grant has brought up, but I assure her that the purpose of a skills investment plan is to enable young people to make the most of the opportunities that are available to them in their local economy. That is important for all Scotland, but particularly for rural Scotland.

Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

15. Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of Sir Ian Wood's recent report on developing Scotland's young workforce, what it is doing to

support collaboration between schools and colleges. (S4O-02606)

The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance): I welcomed the unanimous support for the Wood commission's report and its direction of travel when it was debated in Parliament on 8 October. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has asked the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to discuss delivery of the commission's interim recommendations on increased collaboration between schools and colleges with a range of partners, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, sector leaders, local authorities and Education Scotland.

Lewis Macdonald: I welcome that positive approach, but in the light of the recommendations to join up activity, timetables, and resource allocation across schools and colleges in order to deliver effective vocational pathways, does the minister anticipate that the outcome of those discussions will be that colleges will be provided with additional resource in order to support collaboration with schools, or will they be expected to stop doing something else in order to prioritise that collaboration with schools on vocational education?

Angela Constance: We are certainly looking carefully at the funding implications of the Wood commission's report. Sir Ian Wood said that "significant additional funding" would not be required, but it is stating the obvious to say that additional funds will be required, so we are looking at that in detail. The cabinet secretary has been very clear with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. Some funding will be identified to enable the very important pathfinder projects, in which we hope to make progress apace for the next academic year.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Has the minister had any further discussions with the United Kingdom Government regarding its position on the European youth guarantee scheme, and whether the UK Government intends to continue to withhold access to the scheme from Scottish youngsters?

Angela Constance: There continues to be a strong disagreement between the Scottish Government and the UK Government with regard to implementation of the European youth guarantee. I last discussed that issue face to face with David Cameron and his colleagues at a joint ministerial committee on Europe meeting a few weeks ago.

The Scottish Government very much believes in early intervention, which is absolutely pivotal in preventing youth unemployment becoming long-term unemployment. Although we are making

good progress in Scotland with our headline youth unemployment indicators, the proportion of young people who are in the claimant count for 24-plus months is rising. I have concerns about the failure of the work programme.

The other thing that I am really concerned about is the narrative that is emanating from down south, in which instead of having a debate about how we can enhance opportunities for young people, such as through the European youth guarantee, we are having a debate that is fuelled by welfare cuts and cuts to benefits to young people. I do not like that debate, which is emanating from the UK Government, and which in some regards has been emulated by the Labour Party at United Kingdom level.

Disabled Students

16. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that universities and colleges meet the needs of disabled students. (S4O-02607)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): We ensure that universities and colleges, like all public bodies, meet the needs of disabled students through compliance with the Equality Act 2010. We also provide direct financial support through programmes such as the disabled students allowance, extended learning support and college bursaries.

David Stewart: Has the cabinet secretary commissioned any research into the needs of disabled students undergoing further and higher education?

Michael Russell: I have met the relevant third sector organisations on a number of occasions. I have encouraged them to use funding that I have offered them to ensure that their services and their advice to the Scottish Government takes account of the real needs of students. I am very happy to meet the member if he wants to discuss this matter further with me. I attended a meeting of a cross-party group that discussed this issue as well. I am keen to see those who are deeply involved in this issue being very active in telling the Scottish Government and the colleges what more is required. If the member would like to have a conversation about that with me, I am happy to have it. I am also happy to make sure that the learning disability charities are involved as deeply as we can possibly get them involved in offering good advice and providing services.

Dyslexia

17. Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what work

it carries out to identify and support people with dyslexia. (S4O-02608)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): To help all teachers address the needs of pupils with dyslexia, I launched the enhanced dyslexia toolkit at the Scottish learning festival in September 2012. The toolkit includes materials on effectively identifying and supporting pupils, increased accessibility for teachers and information for education authorities on implementation of the toolkit.

Education Scotland, through its inspection programme, looks at the ways that schools and other establishments meet the needs of all learners, including those with dyslexia. In addition, education authorities have a duty to identify, meet and keep under review the additional support needs of all their pupils and to tailor provision to their individual circumstances.

Margaret McDougall: It is estimated that one in 10 people in Scotland is affected by some form of dyslexia. The condition can present in various ways, which means that it can be difficult to identify. At a recent conference on dyslexia that I attended, it was said that trainee teachers spend only a few hours on the subject.

The Presiding Officer: Can we have a question, Ms McDougall?

Margaret McDougall: I am just getting to it. Early identification is paramount in giving extra confidence and support in education to those with dyslexia. Should more time be spent at teacher training colleges on techniques to identify dyslexia, to help trainee teachers identify the signs of dyslexia, so that pupils get the support that they need?

Dr Allan: The member raises important issues about dyslexia. Although the Government does not lay down the detail of what universities do in initial teacher education, it is fair to say that the Government very much sees career-long development at the heart of on-going teacher training. Not everything can be fitted into initial teacher training, but it is important to note that the requirement for full registration as a teacher includes the need to identify the barriers to learning and respond appropriately. The Government and Education Scotland work closely with the teaching profession to ensure that, in the course of their careers, teachers understand the issues of dyslexia better than teachers in the past did, because dyslexia, if unrecognised, can blight people's opportunities.

Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

18. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the interim report of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce, what plans it has to pilot new pathfinder projects. (S4O-02609)

The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance): As I said in response to an earlier question, I welcome the unanimous support that was expressed in the Parliament for the report. I also mentioned that the cabinet secretary has asked the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to discuss with partners early progress on the identification of pathfinder projects.

Chic Brodie: Will the minister consider for pilots those colleges, such as Ayrshire College, that have engaged with employers and associated organisations, resulting in the identification of courses in, for example, performing engineering operations and aerospace skills?

Angela Constance: That is a matter for the Scottish funding council and its partners. I hope that it will be helpful to the member if I say that it is clear that, in the identification of pathfinder projects, they are looking for areas where there is existing good practice and where there is a strong focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. Discussions are on-going. I am sure that Mr Brodie is well equipped to make representations, whether via me or direct to the Scottish funding council and other partners.

Academic Freedom

19. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the rights of academics at universities to express their views on the constitutional debate. (S4O-02610)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): As Murdo Fraser would expect, I say with complete conviction that the Scottish Government fully recognises and supports the rights of all academics at universities to express their views on the constitutional debate.

Murdo Fraser: I warmly welcome the cabinet secretary's response. Can we therefore take it that there will be no repetition of the bullying approach by his ministerial colleague towards an academic at the University of Dundee who had the temerity to speak out in public in support of the continuation of the United Kingdom?

Michael Russell: It is such a great pity that the unanimity on freedom of speech and openness that that question and answer gave us has been

broken by Mr Fraser. I have known Shona Robison for close on 20 years and, as the First Minister said from this very spot last week, I could not associate in the same sentence the words “intimidation” and “bullying” with Shona Robison. Clearly, Murdo Fraser does not know her very well; clearly, other members do not know her very well either. Let us find a way to agree on the matter. Independence is an important debate that we need to have—[*Interruption.*]—without jeering from Mr Bibby. We all need to be able to contribute without fear or favour, name calling or cat calling—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear the cabinet secretary speak.

Michael Russell: The Presiding Officer has emphasised my point and I thank her for doing so. It is really important to have the debate. Yesterday afternoon’s debate showed that this chamber has the capability to be one of the best debating chambers in the world. We showed how we can come together in passionate, strong principled debate. If we do that for the next 10 months, Scotland will be a better place for it.

The Presiding Officer: I regret that I do not have time to call Mark McDonald’s question.

Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill: Preliminary Stage

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08259, in the name of Joan McAlpine, on the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill.

14:39

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to open the preliminary stage of the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill and to provide the Parliament with some background on the bill. Before I do that, I thank the clerks and the Scottish Parliament information centre for the considerable work that they put into informing the committee about the background to the bill. Indeed, I thank all those who gave written and oral evidence, sometimes after travelling quite a distance. I also thank the staff of Pollok House for accommodating the committee at its first public sitting and the staff at the Burrell, who gave us a very interesting tour of the collection—both seen and unseen.

Private bills propose laws that allow individuals, groups of individuals or corporate entities to acquire powers or benefits in excess of or in conflict with the general law. The bill is the third private bill to be introduced in this parliamentary session and it is the first that I have worked on. It has given me an interesting insight into that side of the Parliament’s work.

Sir William Burrell was born in 1861 and worked from the age of 15 in the family’s shipping agency, in which he achieved great financial success. He developed a passion for art from a young age and as his wealth grew, so did his collection. Before his death in 1958, Burrell gifted an astoundingly broad collection of some 9,000 items, including stained glass, paintings, sculpture, furniture and even large pieces of architecture. Edinburgh and London were also considered as recipients for the collection, but only Glasgow would agree to the stipulations of the gift. To this day, the bequest represents the largest single gift of art treasures by one person to a single city.

Very many of us in Scotland are familiar with the Burrell collection. Visitor numbers reached 1 million in the years that followed its opening in 1983 and I confess that it seems like yesterday when I went to see the collection in the days after the Queen opened it.

Perhaps less well known is the buried treasure that is not currently on public display. The committee had the privilege of a behind-the-

scenes tour of the collection, as I said, and we were amazed at the important paintings, furniture and architectural pieces that currently have no place on public display, as there is room to display only about 2,000 of the roughly 9,000 items in the collection.

Sadly, our tour also revealed the poor state of the building that houses the collection, which is of course a relatively new and modern building. It is now almost 30 years since its completion and, by some accounts, the roof has never been quite right and there is now no hiding the fact that the situation has reached a critical point. The conservators, whose work is to carefully preserve the priceless artefacts, put quite a bit of their energy into designing tarpaulins to catch the drips from the waterlogged ceiling. It was very distressing to see what a sad state the building has got into. Although it was not in the committee's remit to look at the building's history, it would be fair to say that all the members of the committee were concerned that there was a poor relationship with the architect and that problems that seem to have been there from the beginning have not been resolved.

Glasgow City Council now plans to renovate the building, not only to address the roof problems once and for all but to create more display space to bring some of that buried treasure into public display and allow more people in Glasgow, Scotland and beyond to enjoy Burrell's collection.

The bill's purpose is to alter the restrictions that Burrell placed on lending and borrowing when he gave his collection to the people of Glasgow. In short, Burrell was happy for loans to be made in Great Britain but not overseas. He also prohibited the display of items that do not belong to the collection alongside items that do. Glasgow City Council wishes to allow loans to be made outwith Great Britain and for the restriction on borrowing to be relaxed, to allow related works to be displayed alongside those in the collection. All that would be governed by a lending code: a publicly accessible document that would set out the decision-making process that would govern any potential loans and would guarantee the involvement of the Burrell trustees in any final decision.

The committee looked at the opportunities and risks of lending beyond Great Britain and tried to put ourselves in Burrell's shoes and interpret what led him to place restrictions on his bequest.

At this point it is important to state that there were no official objections to the bill's proposals.

There are many opportunities to be gained from lending the collection further afield. Displaying associated works side by side contributes to knowledge and we were reassured that lending in the future would be confined to a small number of

items and would be for scholarly purposes only. We believe that the one-off tour planned by the bill's promoter in association with the British Museum will help to raise the profile not only of the collection but of Glasgow itself, encouraging more people to come to see the collection and—I hope—raising some money for the building's renovation.

It is time to put the collection on the world stage and stop hiding it away. We accept that lending is not without risk but most of our witnesses agreed that damage most often occurs not in transit but when works are being packed and unpacked and, as a result, the risk remains the same whether a work is being lent within Great Britain or overseas.

We had very particular concerns about moving and redisplaying the collection's more delicate items, particularly pastels and textiles, but were reassured by the specialist evidence that we sought on the matter.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): You must draw to a close, please.

Joan McAlpine: It is impossible to know what was in Burrell's mind when he placed those restrictions on his bequest. We know that he wanted to share his collection; after all, he lent regularly within Great Britain and, indeed, made a contribution to the great exhibition at Kelvingrove.

We endorse the view of the promoter and others who contributed to the bill's scrutiny that a private bill is necessary and appropriate and that there was no alternative means of achieving the same result.

I again thank everyone who gave evidence.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill and agrees that it should proceed as a private bill.

14:46

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): In my role as Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, I want not only to offer some thoughts on the provisions in this private bill but to emphasise the significance of the Burrell collection as one of Scotland's great cultural assets.

As members will be aware, the collection is one of the most prominent and varied in Scotland and its significance to the history of art and antiquities is such that it sits alongside the works of art in our national galleries and museums. The 9,000-strong collection was assembled by Sir William Burrell as he travelled widely across the world and, in 1944, was generously gifted to the city of Glasgow along with the funds to erect a new building within which

to house his treasures. Nearly 70 years after his bequest, the bill is aimed at securing the building's long-term sustainability while looking at new ways of promoting his collection to an even wider audience and allowing more people to learn about and enjoy them than ever have before.

However, to enable that to happen, the bill's promoter, Glasgow City Council, has decided to overturn Sir William Burrell's express wishes in entrusting his collection to the city. That has raised a number of questions about the council's responsibilities as the collection's custodian and the power of the dead to constrain the actions of those living in a time very different from their own. The parliamentary committee responsible for scrutinising the bill has had the unenviable task of considering those sensitive issues in its analysis of the evidence, and its members have weighed up the risks and opportunities offered by the bill and looked back at Sir William Burrell's lifetime to ask what he might have done had he been faced with the same questions in a world where science and technology are markedly different from what he would have known.

The committee's analysis led it to conclude that Burrell was a lender who wanted to share his collection with the people not just in Glasgow and Scotland but further afield through loans within Great Britain. He wanted his works of art to be seen and appreciated. The Government shares that belief, which is why a key aim of the national strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries is to increase cultural participation by maximising the number and range of people who see collections and visit and enjoy museums. Allowing lending from the Burrell collection is consistent with that aim and would bring the collection to the attention of an international audience and enable people from all over the world to see and appreciate it. That, in turn, would raise the collection's profile and put Glasgow—and Scotland—on an international stage.

However, like anyone who collects items that are of value, Burrell was also concerned about the protection and care afforded to his collection, particularly after his death. The committee has found that an interest in preservation shaped much of Sir William's decision making, as, indeed, it is shaping Glasgow City Council's decision making today.

Central to the bill is the need to raise much needed resources to fund the refurbishment and repair of the Burrell building. There is no doubt in the mind of anyone who visits the collection, as I have, that it is not currently housed within a habitat that is commensurate with its status. The committee has placed great emphasis on the need to correct that, especially as the building was central to Burrell's wishes. That is consistent with

our national strategy, which aims to improve and ensure the long-term sustainability of collections through care and preservation.

Some people will argue that there are risks to care and preservation posed by international travel and the transportation of art works. The bill committee's meticulous report, for which it deserves our whole-hearted thanks, has had to balance those criticisms against the benefits that could be achieved by increasing access to the collection and raising the funds to support the restoration of the building.

The Scottish Government thanks the committee for its deliberations and supports its recommendation that the bill should proceed.

14:50

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): The Burrell collection is a fantastic asset to the city of Glasgow, but one that has been neglected. When the gallery first opened in 1983, there were more than a million visitors a year, but that number had halved by 1987 as the public's pent-up curiosity about a collection that had lain in storage for so long was satisfied. Annual visitor numbers have declined steadily over the past 30 years and are now below a quarter of a million. The drop-off in numbers was inevitable once the initial curiosity had worn off, but the on-going decline is due to a number of factors.

The leaking roof has been an ever-present problem virtually since the gallery opened and has meant that it has remained a three-star visitor attraction. As one visitor stated in their feedback form:

"This place looks tired and unloved".

There has been little rotation of the collection, and fewer than a quarter of the 9,000 pieces have been seen by the public. That might be because there is no dedicated team of conservators for the collection, as a result of which problems have been allowed to develop to the point that the gallery has posted a notice saying:

"Moth has been a big problem recently and vulnerable objects have been removed".

There has also been a lack of promotion of the collection, with Glasgow Life stating that

"The collection is still a bit of a secret, both here and internationally".

Indeed, a visitor survey suggested that more than 40 per cent of visitors had found out about the gallery through word of mouth.

The gallery needs to be totally refurbished, and a permanent solution to the roof problem must be found. In order for that work to take place, the collection will have to be removed. The question is

whether it should be put in storage or be allowed to tour to publicise Sir William Burrell's legacy to Glasgow. The will and agreement have always allowed the collection to be loaned within the United Kingdom, and Glasgow City Council has a record of being a responsible lender. The evidence that the committee received suggested that, on balance, the transportation of works of art has improved substantially since the collection was gifted. Glasgow Life also told the committee that

"apart from the one-off tour the possibilities of doing another major tour in our lifetime are not very high".— [Official Report, *Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill Committee*, 9 September 2013; c 30, 25.]

The committee was assured that the lending code will offer a sufficient safeguard for delicate items and that loans will be granted on a case-by-case basis with conservation at the forefront of decision making.

The bill's promoter has estimated that the museum would need to close for four years and that it would cost in the region of £45 million to refurbish it. It hopes that a third of that amount would be raised through the tour, either in donations or in sponsorship. However, it was highlighted in other evidence that it is unlikely that that amount would be raised. That is borne out by the refurbishment of the Kelvingrove gallery, the £28 million cost of which was borne largely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, European regional funding and the city council, with only £2.5 million coming from private sponsorship.

With that in mind, I refer to paragraph 91 of the preliminary stage report, which states:

"The Committee places a great deal of emphasis on the restoration of the building housing the Burrell Collection, particularly since it was so central to Burrell's wishes and to his Agreement with the City Council. In recommending that this Bill be passed, we place our trust in the Promoter to ensure that the refurbishment takes place and would consider any failure to do so as a betrayal of that trust."

I believe that the main benefit of touring the collection abroad in a limited number of places would be that that would raise the profile of the collection during the period in which the gallery was closed. When the refurbishment was complete, the tour would have stirred the public interest in this unique collection once again.

When the new gallery opens in around 2020, it will bring an economic benefit to Glasgow as visitors once again flock to see the collection. Who knows? Perhaps it will once again receive a million visitors a year.

14:55

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): Let me start by thanking all those who have contributed to

our consideration of the bill so far. In particular, I thank the convener, whose smooth running of the committee helped to ensure a consensual approach to the proposal.

The Burrell collection is a large collection of art and artefacts, but no one can appreciate just how large it is until they go down into the art stores and see the sheer volume of items that are not on display. The collection was gifted to the Glasgow Corporation by Sir William Burrell in 1944, and items were added to the collection by the Sir William Burrell Trust, which was established by Sir William's will when he died in 1958.

The Burrell collection is housed in the custom-designed building in Pollok country park. As a result of a poorly designed roof, members of staff are constantly moving exhibitions to protect them from water damage. The fact that exhibition space must be closed to the public restricts the space that is available to display items. As we have heard, the tarpaulins that have been engineered into a giant funnel to focus water into a big green wheelie bin do not really add to the atmosphere of the place and detract from the many marvellous pieces of art that are on display.

Water continues to leak through the roof, as the source of the leak, or multiple leaks, cannot be identified. After the water penetrates the roof, it is absorbed by a layer of insulation that sits underneath, until the insulation is saturated and the water leaks out at random points. That threatens items in the collection all round the museum so, rather than focusing on what should be their core purpose of speaking to visiting members of the public about the items on display, the staff need to be more focused on looking for water flowing down the walls, which might have an impact on the pieces of art.

Experts have also told us that preserving the temperature and humidity of the building is of the utmost importance. As an engineer, I can understand how difficult it must be to keep a building at a set temperature and humidity when, in effect, there is a massive wet sponge in the loft.

Against that backdrop, there is an urgent need for renovation, and the bill would help by allowing lending for an international tour to raise funds. The estimated cost of the renovation is £45 million, and it is hoped that the tour would contribute £15 million to that figure. The committee was not quite persuaded that all the £15 million could be raised, but that is a matter for Glasgow Life in trying to balance its books.

The tour could have other spin-off benefits: it could increase the accessibility of the collection and raise awareness of it, for example. As Gordon MacDonald pointed out, visitor numbers have fallen from a peak of 1 million a year when the

building opened down to less than a quarter of that. An international tour could increase awareness abroad, but it could also make us at home more aware of what we are missing, so it could encourage more local visitors.

The key issue for us was whether we felt that it would be appropriate for us to alter the will of someone who is no longer here. As Sir William clearly had no issue with his collection being loaned, the main concern is whether he would be content for it to be loaned overseas. The practice of transporting art is much changed since Sir William's time and, as has been pointed out, the main concern is about packing and unpacking at the point of delivery. It is perhaps no more dangerous for a piece of art to go on an international tour than it is for it to travel across Britain, just as it is no more dangerous for us to travel abroad by plane than it is for us to travel across Britain by car.

I think that it is impossible for us to second-guess the motives for Sir William's stipulation in his will. Given the requirement to carry out the essential renovation works and the probable reasons for Sir William writing his will in the way that he did, I support the committee's recommendation that consideration of the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill move on to the next stage.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, and the next stage is to call on the cabinet secretary to wind up the debate on behalf of the Government.

14:59

Fiona Hyslop: Scrutiny of private bills is an important but often unrecognised function of the Parliament, and I thank the committee for its work. Like the committee's evidence-taking sessions, this afternoon's debate has focused on two key issues—the judgment on overturning the wishes of Sir William Burrell and the risks and opportunities of allowing a collection, particularly one that contains so many fragile items, to be transported across the world.

The committee is satisfied that the evidence shows that Sir William Burrell was not a possessive collector but, instead, would have welcomed the opportunity to show his collection to as wide an audience as possible. However, he was concerned about the risks of transporting artworks internationally. We have heard that that is still a consideration for Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life, as custodians of the collection today, as presumably it is a consideration for any institution that engages in international lending. However, we have also heard that, by introducing a strict lending code and adhering to the highest standards of conservation and care, those risks,

while they can never be completely eliminated, can be minimised and mitigated.

The question then becomes whether the risks are enough to prevent the collection from being accessed by a whole new international audience and to hinder efforts to raise funds for the restoration of the Burrell collection building, which itself poses a threat to the collection's long-term preservation. The latter point has been central to the committee's consideration of the bill. The Government has seen for itself from projects such as the refurbishment of the Scottish national portrait gallery and the national museum of Scotland what can be achieved by investing in our cultural institutions and bringing our museums up to date for the 21st century: it results in soaring visitor numbers and increased customer satisfaction.

Glasgow City Council has shown initiative in that respect, too, and, over the past decade, it has been dedicated to ensuring that its cultural establishments are of a high quality. It has invested heavily in capital projects such as the Kelvingrove art gallery and museum refurbishment and the new Riverside transport museum, and I am sure that members agree that it has reaped the rewards. Given the Burrell collection's significance, it seems only logical for it to be next.

Unfortunately, we all have to accept that, financially, times are tight. Faced with a building that is not fulfilling its function, Glasgow Life has had to think carefully about where the money could come from to secure the Burrell collection's long-term future, and it has decided that the ability to tour the collection internationally would help to raise its profile and raise much-needed resources while offering more people the chance to see and appreciate what the collection has to offer.

One of our responsibilities in looking after our heritage is to ensure that the stewardship of both local and national museums is such that functions are carried out in a way that is diligent and fit for purpose in the 21st century. In supporting the committee's recommendation and allowing the bill to proceed to the next stage, the Parliament will take the right step.

We must always be vigilant and dutiful in ensuring that our artefacts, our heritage and our art have custodians who will look at all the different options and make sensitive decisions, but will also provide access to and due recognition of collections as they were first formed, and will do so in a way that is appropriate for this century.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call on Jackson Carlaw to wind up the debate on behalf of the committee.

15:03

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, remember when that extraordinary building opened in Pollok park—a gift to the city and people of Glasgow from the Stirling Maxwell family and a lung, if you like, in the second city of the empire. It is a magnificent red sandstone, glass and steel construction, and I very much welcomed the opportunity to have the tour and to go into the bowels of the Burrell collection to see the thousands of exhibits that have not yet seen the light of day.

Some of them, I have to say, may be less fascinating than others. Sir William had an extensive collection of Tudor beds. I do not know whether, if we brought all the Tudor beds out and lined them all up, we would draw in the public from around the world to see them. They looked somewhat less than fascinating to me. However, in addition to the Tudor beds there is a terrific array of art that has never yet found its place in the presentation of the collection.

People sometimes forget not just the range and size of Sir William's collection but the fact that, whether it is a Chinese vase, a Degas pastel, a Flemish tapestry or a bit of renaissance silver, he collected only the very best. In the Burrell collection, Glasgow and Scotland have a priceless jewel of art that reaches across everything that we could imagine.

The building is in a terrible state, as Mark Griffin and others said. I ask members to imagine a giant sponge, which is now waterlogged, between the ceiling and the roof. That means that the leaks can manifest anywhere in the building but not necessarily where they manifested in the roof above the sponge.

Having first thought that the renovation could, perhaps, be phased, we were persuaded that it could not and would have to be undertaken with the museum closing in the interim. We then had to decide whether the promoter's proposition of putting the collection on tour was appropriate. Could it somehow be put in the local church hall or something like that in the interim? Of course, modern standards of presentation and for ensuring that the collection is secure in temperature and every other sense mean that just shoving it into the building next door is not a possibility.

The question then came down to whether the committee felt—this was a very serious proposition—that we should set aside Sir William's will. It was mentioned that Edinburgh and London had both argued for the collection in the first place. If they had known that they were going to be able to set aside all the conditions of the collection, they might have bid that much harder.

We agonised in some detail over whether to set aside the terms of the will. We took legal advice on how long from the point at which a collection is gifted the terms of the will must prevail. Can they prevail in perpetuity? Is that reasonable? Circumstances change and 50 years have passed.

We heard about the way in which art is now exported abroad and the security that is attached to that. It turns out that the most dangerous period for art is not when it is in a plane being shifted across to some far country but when the porters remove it in the first place to put it in the box. They are likely to drop it, and that is where some sensational failures have occurred.

We were persuaded that it is right to give the fantastic collection an opportunity to be seen on a one-off tour around the world, promoting Glasgow, Scotland and the collection itself. We hope that that tour will, in future, bring to Scotland visitors who will see and promote the collection.

I, too, thank the clerks and everybody who gave evidence. As long as Joan McAlpine and I are in the Parliament, we never expect to work on a committee as collegiately as we managed to do during the preliminary stage proceedings.

I ask the Parliament to support the motion at decision time.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08326, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

15:07

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): I am grateful for the opportunity to open the debate on the general principles of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

I welcome Forrester high school and St Augustine's high school, who have a beautiful photographic display in the Parliament to mark yesterday's universal children's day. It is apt to note that, given the topic of the debate.

I thank everyone who has contributed to developing the bill so far, not least the members of the Education and Culture Committee for their work and their comprehensive stage 1 report. I also thank the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and the Finance Committee for their consideration of aspects of the bill.

I thank everyone who commented on the bill, especially the 2,400 children and young people and the 1,500 parents who provided their views. A range of opinions have been expressed. Many have been constructive and probing. That can only ensure that such a landmark bill will be examined, be improved and, ultimately, have the profound positive impact on children and young people that we all want it to have.

Today is an opportunity to take an overview of what the Parliament wishes the bill to achieve. I will start by discussing the principles that lie at the heart of not only the bill but our approach to improving the lives of children and young people.

The bill rests on five simple principles. First, it declares our collective commitment to making Scotland the best place in the world in which to grow up. It will establish in statute our shared responsibility for ensuring that our children have the best start in life and access to what they need to succeed as they grow and develop. Through its focus on what has been tried and on what we know works in our getting it right for every child approach, the bill builds on our renowned Scottish tradition of putting children at the centre of services and ensuring that their rights are upheld.

Next year is the 50th anniversary of the Kilbrandon report, which set the foundation for our children's hearings system. I can think of no more

fitting way of commemorating that than by passing a bill that so thoroughly embodies the principles of Kilbrandon.

The second principle is that shared responsibility should be achieved by working with parents and carers to provide the caring and supportive environments that our children should have. The bill aims to make public services more responsive to needs and sensitive to working with families. Our children deserve nothing less.

That will require a change in culture, systems and practice. The framework for that change is GIRFEC, which has been repeatedly endorsed by the Parliament, most recently in September. GIRFEC has been tested; it works. As the committee found in its evidence, the benefits to children and families are clear in those parts of Scotland that are furthest along with its implementation. As Barnardo's Scotland said in its submission to the committee:

"We ... welcome the proposals to put elements of GIRFEC into law. GIRFEC has been a great success where it has been fully implemented and it is right that the Bill should seek to secure its wider adoption."

The third principle in the bill is acknowledgement that we must continue to improve how we support our most vulnerable children and young people. The challenge that the Education and Culture Committee's report of its inquiry into taking children into care has set is one that none of us takes lightly. The bill rises to that challenge by making it easier for children who need to be looked after to stay in their families through the kinship care order; by extending the support that is available to care leavers; and by ensuring that the wider public sector understands our shared corporate duty in relation to those who have been in care.

Moreover, the bill recognises that, for some children, we need to respond more quickly to the terrible risk of abuse and neglect. We are all familiar with the tragic stories in the media of children who were below the radar, the signals on whom were not picked up or acted on, and in relation to whom the need to act would have been apparent only to someone who had access to all the relevant information, which was spread among a number of different organisations. As I said on 25 September, the recent tragic case of Daniel Pelka highlights the importance of professionals putting the child's interests at the heart of what they do and communicating their concerns. We can never prevent every case of abuse and neglect, but our bill will ensure that our services are better placed to identify and act on any concerns before those cases, too, become tragedies.

The fourth principle is the very simple idea that services to support our children and young people

are better when they are planned jointly. That idea underpins our proposals for joint planning of services by local authorities and health boards, and it is equally well planted in the planning that we expect to be done for individual children who need additional support from services. We do not need scores of unco-ordinated plans across different services and professionals. Children need services that work together with one another and with their families.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I am grateful to the minister for giving way.

In linking her first and fourth principles, will she give an undertaking that she will ensure that children and their families are as closely involved as they can be in the process of developing those children's plans?

Aileen Campbell: Absolutely. They need to be fully involved in the planning. That is the underlying ethos of GIRFEC—it is about ensuring that children and families are respected.

Lastly, the bill is watermarked with the principle of early intervention. Early intervention has been a mantra for years. We all know about the benefits to children and families of providing support as soon as problems arise, and to services whose resources are increasingly stretched. The bill will make real that recognition of the value of early intervention to our aspirations for early learning and childcare.

The benefits of investing in the early years are known when quality services are provided. We must ensure that those services meet the needs and wishes of families. With the resources and powers that we have now, we have made a start on transforming childcare. We want to match the very best in Europe and, as a step towards that, the bill will give three and four-year-olds 600 hours of free nursery education. That represents an increase of almost half on the figure of 412.5 hours that we inherited, and we are extending that provision to the most vulnerable two-year-olds. In total, around 120,000 children will receive more childcare, more nursery education and a better start in life. Families will be saved the equivalent of £707 per year per child.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am grateful to the minister for giving way and for the additional spending on that front.

How will the Scottish Government respond to the criticisms that Reform Scotland has levelled about the difficulties to do with when a child's birthday falls?

Aileen Campbell: I will touch on that later in my remarks, but the increase in free nursery education that I have set out represents a huge step forward for children and families. In delivering

a tangible increase in the number of hours of early learning and childcare, we will benefit families by protecting their budgets, as they will be able to save the equivalent of £707 per year per child. That first step should be recognised. We can look at what Reform Scotland has said, which will contribute to the wider debate that we must have in this country about how we transform childcare.

Those are the principles that steer our proposals. I am pleased that in its report the committee agreed that the bill's principles are sound, and I am pleased that the bill will set our country on a path towards becoming the best place in the world in which to grow up—a Scotland that takes active and shared responsibility for the wellbeing of our children and young people and that recognises the continuing challenges and is never complacent. That is an ambition that I think members share.

We have listened carefully to everything that has been said during the bill process, taking full account of all interests in and perspectives on how to improve the delivery of services for all children and young people and ensure that their rights are respected across the public sector. Of course, there has not been agreement about all the detail of the bill. Throughout the process, we have welcomed constructive discussion, and in that spirit of positive debate I will address some of the issues that have been raised.

On the children's rights provisions, I note the committee's view that incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law does not represent the best way to progress the rights agenda at this time. That is our view. The whole premise of the bill is to make a practical difference in children's lives, and we think that the balance that we have struck in the bill achieves that. We agree with Ken Norrie, who said:

"to incorporate the convention into the domestic legal system of Scotland would be bad policy, bad practice and bad law."—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 3 September 2013; c 2682.]

We recognise that the committee feels that there is scope for the current ministerial duties to be strengthened. Our view is that the proposed package of legal measures represents a major and significant step forward, but we remain open to suggestions on strengthening the provisions.

On the new powers available to Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, we welcome the committee's comments on the proposed changes. We recognise that the new investigatory function will undoubtedly have resource implications for the commissioner. The financial memorandum suggests a staffing structure to support the new functions. However, staffing and governance issues are entirely a

matter for the Parliament. Indeed, the commissioner's ability to operate entirely independently of Government is a key strength. Nevertheless, we remain willing to support the commissioner and the Parliament in considering some of the practicalities associated with the proposed changes.

On the role of the named person, I am pleased that the committee endorsed the value of the role and shares my determination that GIRFEC should be implemented consistently and effectively throughout Scotland. I note the committee's comments about areas in which the practical implementation of GIRFEC needs further clarification and support from the Scottish Government. We will seek to clarify, through guidance in many cases, many of the issues that are raised in the report. On resources, we have set out our estimate of costs in the financial memorandum, but we recognise that costs will need to be monitored as implementation goes forward. We will reflect further on how best such monitoring can take place.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): The Royal College of Nursing Scotland said that the Scottish Government must recognise the Education and Culture Committee's concerns about the capacity of the health visiting workforce to deliver on its existing duties, let alone the duties that are associated with the named person role. The people on the ground think that 450 additional health visitors will be required. Does the minister recognise those concerns? Will she give a commitment to increase the number of health visitors?

Aileen Campbell: We recognise very strongly the important role that health visitors have in the early years of a child's life. Our ratio of health visitors to the people with whom they work is healthy compared with that in other parts of the United Kingdom. I have given a commitment to monitor implementation.

We note what the committee and some stakeholders said about information sharing. I think that all members understand why information sharing is such a critical and difficult area. Every inquiry into a child's death in the UK over past decades has echoed the same crucial finding: that effective sharing of information within and between agencies is fundamental to improving the protection of children and young people. We have seen that too often to risk the same happening again. Proportionate, appropriate and timely information sharing is essential to ensuring that our children are kept safe from harm.

On our early learning and childcare proposals, we are delighted that many of the organisations that were invited to the Education and Culture Committee welcomed our focus on quality

alongside the increased hours and flexibility. This is the first time that flexibility and choice have been put on a statutory footing and the first time that local authorities will be required to consult local parents to identify their needs.

The bill also introduces a new concept of early learning and childcare to replace the traditional concept of pre-school education. It recognises that the learning journey begins from birth, and sets the stage for our longer-term aim to develop high-quality and flexible early learning and childcare that is accessible and affordable for all children, parents and families.

We know that a number of organisations would like us to go further, especially in relation to additional vulnerable two-year-olds. Research shows that high-quality provision makes a difference to those children. We will not compromise on quality in ensuring that we improve the outcomes for our children.

I have, of course, dealt with some of the issues that Liz Smith raised in relation to Reform Scotland's publication today. I look forward to continuing the debate with it.

I want to discuss the bill's provisions for looked-after children and young people.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: In 15 seconds, please. Regrettably, we are extraordinarily tight for time.

Aileen Campbell: The kinship care order recognises that the extended family has a responsibility to help when children are at risk and ensures that when kinship carers step into a parenting role, they will receive the support that they need. That is a huge step forward. Previously, any support that was provided to that group of carers was provided by local authorities on a discretionary basis only. The kinship care order will empower families to provide each child with a safe, stable, loving and nurturing home and will help some children to avoid formal care, if that is not in their best interests.

We also have strong commitments to ensure that we get things right for our looked-after children who are moving on to independent living. Our engagement on that with Who Cares? Scotland and others can ensure that we get things right in the final draft of the bill and that the bill works for our looked-after children.

I have set out the principles of the bill. Those principles represent the highest level of ambition for our children and young people, so it is not surprising that the bill covers a lot of ground.

I sincerely look forward to hearing the views of other members and the rest of the committee as we work together to ensure that the bill works for Scotland's children.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are extraordinarily tight for time. I invite members to speak for their allocated time or for less than that in order to allow as many members into the debate as possible.

15:22

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): I am, of course, speaking today as the convener of the Education and Culture Committee.

As the minister said, the bill contains a wide range of proposals across its 13 parts. Consequently, we took a large amount of oral evidence and considered more than 180 written submissions. The input of all the organisations and individuals who submitted views to us has been essential, and we thank everyone who contributed. I also thank the committee clerks for all their hard work, my committee colleagues for their efforts in scrutinising the bill, and our Scottish Parliament information centre researcher for assisting us.

The Education and Culture Committee has spent significant time in this session examining issues that are linked to child welfare—specifically, the educational attainment of looked-after children and decision making on whether to take children into care. It is clear from our inquiries that much more is needed to improve outcomes for disadvantaged and looked-after children. That work has helped to inform our scrutiny of the bill. We support the bill's central aim of promoting early intervention and preventative action to give children the best possible start in life.

A number of areas received particular comment in the evidence, which is reflected in our report. I cannot cover everything in the time that is available, so I will focus on five areas: children's rights; named persons; information sharing; the extension of early learning and childcare; and aftercare for young care leavers.

Part 1 of the bill relates to the rights of children. Many children's organisations supported the full incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law. They considered that that was the best way to embed children's rights into the culture of our society, enhance respect for our children and send a clear message about how we value them.

Those are laudable outcomes, but the committee was unanimous in its view that the case had not been made for full incorporation of the convention. Our main difficulty was that it was not always clear what practical improvements such a move would bring for children and their families.

Our view is that, although the outcomes arising from incorporation are important, it does not necessarily follow that incorporation is the best or the only way in which to achieve them. In addition, the convention is already implemented in Scotland in a number of ways, such as under our obligations in the Scotland Act 1998.

Although we are not persuaded by the argument for full incorporation, we agree that the duties on the Scottish ministers and public authorities should be strengthened. Ministers must report every three years on what they have done to further the convention, for example. We want the bill to go further, so we have called on ministers to set out their vision on what they will do for each three-year period. We have also asked the Government to explain why it has chosen to require public authorities to report on

"what steps they have taken ... to secure better or further effect"

of the convention and not to require them to act on those findings.

The second area that I want to focus on is the introduction of a named person for every child and young person up to the age of 18. I should of course acknowledge that one committee member, Liz Smith, did not agree with the inclusion of that proposal in the bill. However, it was supported by the rest of the committee. The named person proposal forms part of the wider policy of getting it right for every child, or GIRFEC.

As members will be aware, the proposal to introduce named persons has received considerable comment. Some of the most compelling evidence that we received was from Highland Council, which is seen very much as a trailblazer for GIRFEC. The council told us that the named person role was developed through practice and experience, and that it was based on what families and professionals wanted. The initiative has been fully implemented since 2010 and the results are encouraging. Families like having contact with someone whom they know and who knows the child, and they do not have to deal with bureaucratic systems to get some extra support. Professionals, too, have welcomed the initiative. Teachers, health visitors and midwives feel that the named person role has not changed what they do but has made them feel empowered.

We also heard evidence from health and teaching professionals that the named person role could lead to a reduction in neglect. According to Highland Council, the introduction of named persons meant that children were more likely to get the help that they need when they need it, and fewer children were referred to the children's reporter. However, the committee is mindful that some of that improvement is due in part to the

culture of integration and collaborative working across front-line services in Highland.

As we have said in our report, we want the Scottish Government to give details of the range of support that it will provide to ensure that local authorities and health boards can replicate the successes that have been experienced in Highland, recognising the different circumstances that will prevail in different parts of the country. We also highlighted a number of practical issues that need to be resolved, such as the types of intervention that a named person will be expected to make and how the role will operate during school holidays. We believe that the success of the named person role will depend on the Government's ability to work with its local partners to clarify those and other issues.

The Scottish Government must also be prepared to ensure that health boards, but particularly health visitors, can cope with the demands placed on them. The Finance Committee raised that point with us, and we have asked the Government to explain how capacity issues will be managed to ensure that the bill's good intentions can be put in place.

Linked to the introduction of named persons is the proposal to lower the threshold for sharing information about individual children or young people without consent. The bill will allow professionals to share information where there is "concern about the wellbeing" of a child rather than only where, as the current test requires, there is "risk of significant harm". It is crucial that all those who share information are properly trained. Training and guidance must cover all relevant service providers, including the private and third sectors, and must engender a common understanding of what constitutes proportionate, necessary information sharing.

We also refer in our report to the concerns that were raised by witnesses about the drafting of the information sharing provisions in the bill. For example, Professor Norrie described the provisions as "contradictory" and the Information Commissioner's Office felt that the scope of section 27 was too wide and wanted it to be redrawn. We therefore welcome the minister's commitment to look again at the drafting of those important provisions. I know that the Government will carefully consider the comments of the committee and others before we approach stage 2.

The bill will also extend the number of free hours of pre-school early learning and childcare to which children are entitled from 475 to 600 hours per year. That is indeed a positive step and it reflects the crucial importance of early years intervention in children's development. We also very much welcome the plan to introduce

increased flexibility in the provision of the new entitlement, which will make it easier for parents to take up employment opportunities. However, we urge the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to work to ensure that flexible arrangements are made available as quickly as possible to enable families to take advantage of the new provision.

Finally, I want to touch on the important proposals to extend support for young care leavers up to the age of 26. Currently, local authorities must provide support up to the age of 18 and have discretion for those up to the age of 21. As we heard during our previous inquiries, young care leavers are particularly vulnerable. We must do all that we can to ensure that they receive adequate and appropriate support so that they can enjoy exactly the same outcomes in life as many of us take for granted. We recognise the difficulty of that and we recognise that the transition from being in care to independent living can often be an extremely difficult time in a young person's life. We therefore support the bill's proposals but invite the Government to respond to the three questions that are asked in paragraph 178 of our report. The minister referred to that earlier in her comments about the campaign led by Who Cares? Scotland.

I should mention that the committee will take evidence on school closures before stage 2. The Government intends to lodge amendments on that, and we want to hear from stakeholders, which will inform our scrutiny of those amendments.

The committee supports the bill's aims of putting children and young people at the heart of the planning and delivery of services and of ensuring that their rights are respected throughout society. We welcome the Government's aim of improving outcomes for children and young people and particularly those who are disadvantaged.

Other than on the named person provisions, the whole committee agreed with the bill's general principles and we hope that our suggestions for improvement will help to make the bill stronger still.

15:30

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased that we have finally reached the stage 1 debate on the bill. As we are all aware, it is a substantial piece of legislation, which is not surprising, given its origins as two separate bills. With that in mind, I will not explore in detail all the points that we hope to cover in the bill's later stages.

Labour will support the Government and vote for the bill at decision time. We will go into stage 2 in a constructive and positive frame of mind. We will

test the elements of the bill that concern us and look to enhance and improve other areas of it, where we feel that it is not ambitious enough for Scotland's children. When considering our proposed amendments, we will focus on early learning and childcare, which my colleague Neil Bibby will address in his closing speech, and on issues that relate to care leavers, which my colleague Kezia Dugdale will focus on.

The potential for the bill to have a real impact on Scotland's children should not be underestimated. Everyone in the Parliament is ambitious for Scotland, and that can be realised through improving our young people's life chances. That is why I am pleased that Labour's newest MSP, Cara Hilton, will make her maiden speech in the debate. I hope that the Parliament will join me in welcoming her.

Too many children's life chances are determined by the circumstances in which they are born and grow up and not by their own unique potential to achieve, develop and thrive. For too many children and young people, access to opportunities is bound up in a tangled web of poverty-related issues that impact on their health, their home life, their interaction with their peers and their educational attainment. The key to the bill achieving its potential will be our making inroads into those issues, many of which are deeply rooted in our communities.

There are some headline-grabbing figures in the bill. Scottish Labour welcomes the increase in the statutory provision of free early learning and childcare, although it has been a long time coming, as it was a Scottish National Party manifesto commitment back in 2007. However, the danger is that introducing the bill places too much focus on the headlines, at the expense of working through the details of how the measures will be achieved. An increase in free early learning and childcare sounds excellent, but unless those hours support the childcare needs of the parents and guardians who use the service, they might not have the impact that many of those people are looking for.

Aileen Campbell: I reiterate that the bill will put flexibility on a statutory footing, to ensure that the provision works for the parents and carers whom Jayne Baxter refers to.

Jayne Baxter: I will touch on that as I proceed with my speech.

Earlier in the year, I was privileged to speak at the launch of a report by Fife Gingerbread and the Poverty Alliance on the impact of lone parenthood on families in rural areas. That report and the feedback from many conversations with parents supported by Save the Children have highlighted how important flexibility of childcare provision is to

many parents who are in work or trying their hardest to get work.

I remain concerned that the proposals do not address that point in the short term. I look forward to hearing from the minister whether increased flexibility in early learning and childcare provision and in out-of-school childcare could be incorporated in the bill.

The point has been made at committee that we need to have a clearer understanding of how the bill fits in with other legislation that is aimed at planning services for children and young people. I referred to the value of framing the measures in the bill in the context of how poverty can be tackled. We will examine the extent to which the bill fits with or supports the Scottish child poverty strategy. One example would be to extend early years provision to include two-year-olds who are in poverty, as many children's charities have recommended. We will also seek an amendment so that all three-year-olds receive the same entitlement regardless of where their birthday falls in the school year. For many parents, those few months could make an enormous difference, as Reform Scotland has said today.

Much of the controversy about the bill has concerned the named person provisions. If we cast our minds back to the Conservative Party debate on that a few weeks ago, we will be aware of the many concerns that have been raised. However, we are minded to support the principle of the named person, just as we support in principle the entire bill.

I return, however, to comments that I have made previously: this is the nugget of a good idea, but we need to ensure that it can work well and be effective. I want the positive outcomes that have been experienced in Highland to be replicated across the country, but the devil will be in the detail.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): The member makes a wise point about ensuring that the bill is implemented well. I am sure that she will wish to do this anyway, but I recommend that she visits Angus, for example, or goes to see some of the excellent work that is being done in my constituency, in Argyll and Bute, to find out how policy is being converted into practice in a most impressive way. I think that it will set her mind at rest to know that people's imagination, hard work and resources are resulting in that.

Jayne Baxter: I agree that resources will be fundamental to making the bill work. I reiterate that everywhere is different. What works in Highland might not work in other places. We need to take time to consider individual circumstances in different communities, and we need to work out

what works for each place. It is not as simple as saying that things will happen in a certain way. It will take a bit of time, imagination and commitment to make the policy work in every area.

The training and support that are necessary for effective implementation of the role of the named person must be appropriately resourced, and I hope that the roll call of concerns in the committee report is considered carefully. In their evidence, both the Royal College of Nursing Scotland and the Educational Institute of Scotland highlighted concerns in relation to funding and support. Further clarification of the role of the named person needs to be provided by the Scottish Government. Although we support the principle of what the minister is trying to achieve, we will continue to push to ensure that the proposals are fit for purpose. The volume of comment and debate surrounding that point is an indicator of Scotland's wish to do better for vulnerable children and our desire to get this right. We have a golden opportunity to do so, and we must be able to say with confidence to parents, children and practitioners that the wholesale adoption of the named person model will promote a step change in how services are delivered to children and their families.

With that in mind, the Government must also address the concerns of kinship carers. My Labour colleague on the Education and Culture Committee and I have offered cautious support for the proposals at stage 1, but we will consider the matter carefully, with a view to lodging an amendment to provide greater clarity in the bill, rather than waiting for the detail on kinship care orders to emerge in secondary legislation.

I am pleased to have heard the minister reflecting on the publication of Together's report on the "State of Children's Rights in Scotland". I was keen to read the assessment of where we are now on the implementation of the UNCRC. The report makes a fairly brutal judgement on the bill, stating that it

"lacks a coherent child rights framework through which the Scottish Government's policy intention to 'make rights real' can be achieved."

Clearly, improvements can be made in that area of the bill, and I support looking towards having a duty on ministers to "have due regard to" the UNCRC when making policy decisions, as has been adopted in Wales. Our Welsh colleagues also require ministers to produce reports, and I hope that the minister will reflect on the committee's recommendations in that regard.

In supporting the bill in principle, we will aim to be as constructive as possible in our comments and to reflect the huge amount of evidence and information that has been shared with us from the

children and young people and care sectors throughout the country.

We are lucky to be able to work with such a range of organisations, which have such knowledge, skills and a genuine commitment to improving young Scots' lives, and I thank them all for their hard work. I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate and to working with colleagues to improve the bill.

15:38

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Scottish Government has made it clear in its introduction to the bill that its primary function is to ensure that there is a much more collaborative and integrated approach to the provision of children's services, so that all young people can access the opportunities and support that they need. Given the better outcomes for young people that have been achieved by those service providers that have engaged in that greater collaboration and integrated approach, that is a reasoned approach for the bill, and it is an approach for which there is clear cross-party support.

Too many young people are losing out—whether they are children with foster families or kinship families, young carers, children with long-term illnesses who are unable to go to school, or children who cannot access the full entitlement for nursery provision.

On that last subject, I welcome the opening that the Minister for Children and Young People gave us to discuss the matter further. The issue about when the child's birthday falls is different from the issue about the monetary provision. We will wish to pursue that matter at stage 2.

The Parliament knows that we have serious concerns about certain parts of the bill. In some cases, those concerns are substantive. In others, they are administrative and resourcing issues. Sometimes, it is a matter of drafting.

The legal profession rightly asks politicians to be mindful of what constitutes good law: whether proposals are clear, coherent, effective and accessible and therefore easily understood. Throughout the bill's early progress, we have examined the proposals against those criteria and questioned whether new legislation or a change in culture and attitude is required, or perhaps a mixture of both.

For the most part, the Scottish Government has decided on a legislative route, so I will deal first with some substantive concerns in that respect. First, there has been a move to legislate with primary regard to the child's "wellbeing" rather than to their "welfare", which is a term that

underpins most of the existing legislation. I well understand why there is a certain attraction in that, as it is generally assumed that wellbeing has a deeper and much more holistic meaning that might bring some added qualitative value. However, it has exposed the tension between the theory and the practice. Although I think we can all agree that wellbeing is a good thing, it is exceedingly difficult to define, notwithstanding the SHANARRI—safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included—indicators and their subdivisions, which have been operating in some local authorities. The bill is not entirely clear about the definition of wellbeing and it is too often conflated with welfare. The more the Scottish Government has tried to make legislative provision for improved children’s services, the more it has encountered difficulties with those definitions.

Aileen Campbell: In evidence to the committee, Barnardo’s Scotland spoke about how the SHANARRI indicators that go along with wellbeing give professionals who work with children a much greater understanding of what they are all talking about and enable them to work more purposefully with the child to ensure that their wellbeing needs are met and they achieve positive outcomes in later life.

Liz Smith: They do, but the point is that the terms “wellbeing” and “welfare” are sometimes conflated in the bill, which causes difficulties in how the rest of the bill hangs together. We have to consider that carefully.

Secondly, there is the issue of inconclusive legal advice, foremost with regard to whether to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. There is a wide divergence of opinion on that, as the minister indicated in her speech. Opinions include the one that the minister quoted, which suggests that incorporation

would be bad policy, bad practice and bad law.”—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 3 September 2013; c 2682.]

However, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People and some of the children’s charities say that incorporation is essential if we are to embed clear and robust means of accountability. The divergence in legal opinion is nothing new, but what has made life difficult for the committee is the relative lack of detailed evidence to support the contrary views, and the fact that the evidence that we took on this crucial issue is rather incomplete.

The Parliament already knows that the Scottish Conservatives oppose the section of the bill that includes the universal provision of a named person for all young people up to age 18. We have done so for several reasons, and I will not go over them again, as we have already held a debate on the issue.

We have been very persuaded by some of the evidence that was presented to the committee by the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, the Faculty of Advocates, the Law Society of Scotland, the Govan Law Centre, churches and experienced practitioners such as Maggie Mellon. They have all made the point that a universal provision for a named person clearly undermines the role of some parents, and the family and communities, and instead places professionals in the front line of responsibility for the child.

When that is taken together with the proposed extent of data sharing and the extension of powers to the children’s commissioner—and, in some cases, to Scottish Government ministers—in a way that Kenneth Norrie described as “open ended”, it makes the bill a bit too statist in its approach for our liking. We will abstain from the vote this afternoon because we are not yet satisfied that the bill is dealing with those issues in a way that would suit.

I have heard SNP ministers and back benchers claim that local authorities are facing incredibly difficult—and differing—challenges in their respective areas. That is absolutely true, and we must be careful to acknowledge that in the bill and ensure that we are not putting on large structures that take that away.

We have been very careful and we have thought about the bill and the vast number of submissions that have come in. The rights of children do not stand in isolation; they should be seen in the context of the rights of parents and families and all the communities that they represent. We are looking to develop the area when the bill reaches stage 2. We have a lot of sympathy with many of the bill’s principles, but there are still some fundamental issues that we want to tease out at stage 2, so we will abstain in the vote at decision time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate, with speeches of up to six minutes.

15:45

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): It has been enjoyable and a great honour to be involved in the work of the Education and Culture Committee on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill. We took a significant amount of written and oral evidence. Unfortunately, we could not see everybody who wanted to appear at the committee, but we took on board the written evidence that the committee received. The care and attention that had been given to the briefings on the bill that members received are a testament to how much the people and agencies that are involved want the bill to work and to improve outcomes for young people.

The policy memorandum sets out that the fundamental reforms of children's services are in line with the Christie commission report, which highlighted

"the importance of early years, prevention and personalised service delivery".

We should remember that the Christie report received significant cross-party support on its publication. It is to be commended that we are moving towards that.

We need to take stock of what is happening in Scotland, because we are not starting from zero in respect of children's services. Colleagues in the national health service, local authorities and education services have all been working hard to take on board the recommendations of the Christie report. They are moving towards more collaborative working practices, not only in the early years and children's services but in services for elderly people. A great deal of change is already happening in the sector.

I want to highlight some of the work that is being done in the area. The committee is on record as commending NHS staff, local authority workers and education staff for their dedication and commitment to their roles. I want to highlight the Roots of Empathy programme pilot that happened in North Lanarkshire. From the research that underpins the bill, we all know about the importance of early intervention. We know that a child's emotional development can be badly damaged by poor parenting in the early years and in early schooling. The Roots of Empathy programme was piloted in the Berryhill primary area in North Lanarkshire. It is a Canadian programme, founded by Mary Gordon, that is designed to improve the emotional capacity of young children and their capacity to empathise with other people. It involves a young baby being brought into a primary classroom, with a structured series of questions and engagement with the baby, such as game playing and song singing. I shall spare members my rendition of the song for baby Ruben that I heard in Berryhill primary, but it was a delight to see the reaction of the young baby on hearing the children in the class welcoming him with that song.

The programme is well documented and the research has shown how much it improves the capacity for empathy in young people. Of course, for many young people, that will not be necessary because they are growing up in warm and nurturing homes with good responsible parenting and the opportunity to engage with other people. However, for children who have been denied that upbringing, the results are impressive in relation to anger management issues and reducing the behavioural problems that sometimes result from the complex issues that Jayne Baxter so

eloquently described in talking about the damage that poverty can do to young people.

Far from starting from new on the issue, there is much good work going on in Scotland. We should acknowledge that and recognise the dedication and commitment of the people who are involved in that work. As the minister said at the launch of the roll-out, the Roots of Empathy programme shows

"our commitment to early intervention and the importance of positive relationships as the cornerstone of a better Scotland."

She continued:

"This is an investment in the future; by encouraging empathy and respect in children we are giving them the foundations to be positive, successful adults who will pass those skills onto their own children."

In its support for the principles of the bill, the committee is showing how important that is for moving forward. Putting that in statute will create a marker that sets Scotland out as one of the foremost countries in its support for young people and their development.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The member is in her final minute; I mention that because we are tight for time.

Clare Adamson: Thank you.

The report was based mainly on consensus and I do not need to repeat its recommendations or conclusions. The one issue on which committee members differed was the named person. We should therefore consider some of the support for the named person role. The Royal College of Nursing said that the named person role was working well in areas where GIRFEC is being implemented. Children 1st said that it supported

"the idea of the named person, as we believe it could offer a way to avoid children 'slipping through the net' when they are at their most vulnerable, and a useful point of contact for families so they can access advice and services without having to deal with excessive delay or red tape."

In addition, we should take on the success of Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council and other authorities that are working on and rolling out GIRFEC successfully and implementing the named person role.

15:51

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I do so from the pack and in recognition of the hard graft that my colleagues Neil Bibby and Jayne Baxter have done in working through the detail in committee.

I want to use my time to talk specifically about looked-after children and, in particular, parts 7 and 8 of the bill. Why? From everything that I have

read and learned, every story that I have heard and every person whom I have met, nothing has angered me more than the experiences and life stories of looked-after children.

Let us go through some of the key statistics. There are 16,200 looked-after children today, which is up 25 per cent from 2006. Thirty per cent of them have experienced homelessness and up to 80 per cent of our young offender institutions' population have been in care at some point; that figure was as high as 88 per cent of Polmont's population when Barnardo's published its plan B report. A person is far more likely to go to jail than to university if they have been in care—and that is before we even look at the difference in educational attainment between those in care and those beyond it. Such wasted potential somehow now feels inevitable.

While I was reading ahead of the debate, I followed the footnotes through to the 2007 report in the name of the then education minister, Hugh Henry, titled "Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better." It is a fantastic report, brimming with statistics and action points to make things better. I was struck by just how little has changed in the six years since the report was published. When I put that to Who Cares? Scotland today, I was told that 17 different reports have been written on looked-after children since the dawn of the Parliament. One care leaver told me that each one somehow reads like an apology. Perhaps that is an apology for inaction, but it is more likely an apology for what feels like the inevitability of poorer life chances for looked-after children, which is a problem that somehow seems too big to fix.

I am not interested in a blame game of how we got here, because that care leaver could not care less about that. She wants to know what will happen now, and she is looking to the bill as a huge opportunity that must not be missed. That is why I am committed to lodging a number of amendments at stage 2, in conjunction with Barnardo's, the Aberlour Child Care Trust and Who Cares? Scotland.

The legislation alone is not enough; we need a cultural shift in the public's attitude towards looked-after children. I have two reflections on that issue. First, the public are largely ignorant about care leavers—how many there are, what being looked after at home is and means, and how poor their life chances are. Too many people think that those are bad kids worthy of little sympathy from anyone other than the biggest softies, rather than them being fundamentally good kids who find themselves where they are because of a life that has been free from care and full of neglect, and kids who have more experience of violence than affection and more experience of physical contact

defined by restraint rather than by love. We need to put those children at the front and centre of our public discourse. We can start to do that with the bill.

Aileen Campbell: I agree entirely that we must change the myths that surround looked-after children and ensure that they are given the support and nurture that they need. Does the member welcome our support for Who Cares? Scotland's time to listen campaign? Has she signed that pledge? If not, how can we work together so that more people sign the pledge? We need to listen to looked-after children. They are our responsibility and we must ensure, in our corporate parenting duties, that they have no less fulfilling a life than their non-looked-after peers.

Kezia Dugdale: I would be delighted to support the minister with that ambition and I speak for all my colleagues when I say that we are willing to work with the Government to improve the life chances of looked-after children. The minister can count on that not just throughout the bill process, but throughout this parliamentary session. I will speak more about that in a second.

We need to talk more about looked-after children and we need to challenge the media to do the same. We need to unite as a Parliament and agree that nothing should be inevitable about looked-after children's life chances except the fulfilling of those children's potential. They are our children and we should demand that their lives are full of love and expectation. In this Parliament we should create the rules by which that might happen.

My second reflection is on care leavers. It was put to me that the stigma associated with being in care is so strong that when a young person turns 16 they want to rid themselves of that label and everything to do with it. In so doing, they lose their rights to expect support as they transition into adult life. I can understand that, but I would like to get to a place where young care leavers can wear their label with pride and demand support to enhance their lives. In many ways it should be a liberation issue: care leavers should have more rights to support into their adult life exactly because of where they have come from and who they are. That will require a cultural shift in our attitudes to looked-after children, but it also requires care leavers themselves to make demands and exercise their rights.

Every care leaver whom I have met can name the date on which they left care. I cannot imagine that many people around the room can remember the date on which they left their family home. Why is that? The reason is that leaving home is a process, not an event. I want to see the bill greatly enhanced in that respect.

I hope that the Government will engage constructively on the bill. I appreciate that we cannot change society's attitudes to looked-after children overnight, but I hope that by the end of the bill's passage we will have a clear vision of our ambition for care leavers and a clear route map for how to get there.

Let me make it absolutely clear: I will do everything that I can to work with the Government to improve the lives of looked-after children, not just on this bill but throughout this parliamentary session. I have a strong and clear ambition for where we might be in 10 years' time.

15:57

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): We often talk about wanting Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up in. I believe that the bill will help us get to that ambition. It will build foundations for us to ensure that we can do something. Whether we need one bill, two bills or whatever, this bill is very ambitious and deals with Scotland's most important commodity: our children and young people. What we do here will make a massive difference to young people's lives.

Clare MacFarlane is quite right when she says that various charities are still involved in the bill and want it to do extremely well. That is how important the bill is and we appreciate that. Charities have engaged with the committee and various other groups throughout the process.

It is interesting to see how the committee got to this stage. Before we started considering the bill, the committee had looked at length into looked-after children and their educational attainment. We heard some of the stories about what happened to young people, which made a big difference for every one of us on the committee, because it brought the issue into the real world. We were discussing not just a bill—a piece of paper—but real people's lives. Every one of us took that forward into this process.

Not so long ago, I visited HM Young Offenders Institution Polmont, where Barnardo's is running a project. I met a lot of young people who were in that secure unit because of various things that had happened in their life. Barnardo's had a programme to help educate younger people in the system. We talked about the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill and when the young people explained some of the things that had happened in their lives, they started to come round to the idea that the provisions in the bill might have been a way—although not in every case—to help them not get into the position of being in a secure unit.

That is the most important thing that we have to take from this. We live in challenging times and

young people have challenging lives. We have to look at that and do what we can for those people.

When I was on that visit, I had instant credibility. One of my constituents was there and when I told him that I came from Seedhill in Paisley, he said to one of his colleagues, "George is one of us, so we can listen to him."

The whole point of the bill is to put children and young people at the centre of decision making, empower them and give them opportunities.

Much has been said about the UNCRC but my view is that its principles actually inform GIRFEC. Indeed, the great work that has been done in Highland Council has clearly made a difference. When we took evidence on that project, we heard that, in many cases, problems arose when parents did not have a named person; once they understood what the named person did, they wanted to engage with them. With my constituency in mind, I certainly see how that approach can work in areas of deprivation and areas where there are various challenges.

We are here to get something that deals with the various issues. We can of course discuss at stages 2 and 3 how we might further develop the legislation, and I am glad that the Labour Party has decided to work with us and move things forward. As the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning made clear at question time, this Parliament is at its best when, as in last night's debate, it looks at how problems might be dealt with and solved and when members do not simply play the political game. The exciting thing about this bill is that it gives us an opportunity to make a difference in every young person's life. That is not hyperbole or exaggeration; if we get this right, we can ensure that young men and women do not end up in places such as Polmont or in care.

I know from my time as a councillor in Renfrewshire that issues can arise when young people in care become adults and move out into adult life. Of course, going out into the big bad world is challenging for those of us with the best of lives—after all, the world is not an easy place to live in—but while I was at Renfrewshire Council we worked with one of the local housing associations to provide housing to these young people and support them in that respect. However, as a social housing provider, the council found that within two or so years of giving a young person the keys to their new home it was trying to evict them from it. We have to find a way of looking after these young people, and there are other ways of doing that than through legislation. We can, for example, work with other partners and organisations to offer support.

Today is about the vision; it is about the idea that we can make Scotland the best place for young people to grow up in. As long as we all work together and stay focused, we can make that difference.

16:02

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Like other members, I thank the very many people and organisations that submitted oral and written evidence on the bill and those responsible for the veritable snowstorm of briefings that we have received over the past few days. I also thank the clerks and committee colleagues for their contributions to what I think is a very reasonable report on a very wide-ranging bill.

Let me be clear: the Scottish Liberal Democrats support the bill's principles and believe that it actually delivers on them, which perhaps distinguishes it from the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill. Like any bill, it needs to be improved in many areas—indeed, the Finance Committee's report on the financial memorandum was particularly critical—but I welcome the minister's willingness to address areas of concern pretty much across the board.

I am not sure, for example, that the bill properly reflects children's rights at this stage and do not think that the committee was convinced that the case for full incorporation of the UNCRC had been adequately made. However, we were seized of the importance of looking again at incorporating specific rights, and the Law Society of Scotland's description of the duty placed on members as a

"diluted version of the existing obligations"

and the Faculty of Advocates' view that the bill does not further develop the rights of children and young people in Scotland to a significant extent suggest that more work needs to be done, particularly in relation to putting children's rights impact assessments at the heart of the legislative process.

One of the most controversial areas was the named person provision, which the Parliament has already debated. Although I again make clear my support for the principle, I, like all committee members, must acknowledge the inherent practical and resource issues, some of which arise from uncertainty about roles and responsibilities, the interaction with lead professionals and some of the training requirements.

That, in turn, has consequences for resources—a point that was picked up by the Finance Committee, the education unions and the RCN, which in its briefing suggests that

"concerns regarding the capacity of the health visiting workforce to deliver existing duties let alone those associated with the Named Person role"

need to be borne in mind.

The practicalities stem from the lowering of the threshold to one of wellbeing, which has implications for information sharing and, indeed, where the consent of the individual is sought. Professor Kenneth Norrie, the Information Commissioner's Office and others have highlighted their concerns in relation to sections 26 and 27. I am grateful to the minister for acknowledging that and for agreeing to take that issue away. There are practical and resource issues and we need to maintain a ruthless focus on welfare. I hope that the Government will ensure that there is a presumption in favour of consent in relation to information sharing.

The political heart of the bill is to be found in part 6, on early learning and childcare. It is a vehicle by which the Government can deliver on its commitment to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare for three and four-year-olds. I restate my welcome for that policy, which I believe will deliver real benefits. The concerns that have been raised by Liz Smith, Jayne Baxter and others about the points that were made by Reform Scotland have been taken on board by the minister. However, there is scope for more ambition, particularly in relation to two-year-olds. The minister will argue that the bill represents a first step. I acknowledge that, but I do not think that it shows sufficient ambition. The Scottish Liberal Democrats have put forward reasonable and costed proposals for extending that provision to two-year-olds from the poorest backgrounds. In its briefing for the debate, Save the Children says that

"to be effective at meeting its aims, we believe there is a strong case to also include two year olds growing up in poverty".

It goes on to say:

"Evidence shows that every month of pre-school provision after age 2 is linked to improved outcomes including increased educational performance at age 14".

That is picked up by Children in Scotland, which points to the provision for 40 per cent of two-year-olds that is delivering to 92,000 two-year-olds south of the border.

Aileen Campbell: Will the member give way?

Liam McArthur: I do not have time. I know that the minister will pick that up in her winding-up speech.

That is achievable and the bill offers a vehicle for delivering it. It can be done without impacting on quality, allowing the flexibility that the committee pointed to in ensuring that two-year-

olds from the poorest backgrounds in Scotland do not fall behind those south of the border.

In relation to part 8, which strengthens the support for care leavers, I associate myself very much with the comments that Kezia Dugdale made in her excellent speech. The area has been a focus for the committee in at least two inquiries, and the bill represents a real step in the right direction in aftercare up to the age of 26. However, as our inquiries show, we need a renewed focus. There is no magic bullet because the reasons why those who go through the care system struggle with outcomes are many and varied. In last night's excellent debate, the emphasis was on the need for strong, stable, loving relationships. That is very much the message that we got back time and again in our inquiries. More can be done on aftercare, building on the good provisions in the bill to deliver what Aberlour Child Care Trust, Who Cares? Scotland and Barnardo's have talked about:

"transforming aftercare into a much stronger form of continuing care, which combines the continuation of support and the continuation of the strong relationships that young people in care have come to rely on."

There are many issues that I have missed, which I will turn to at stages 2 and 3. We would all subscribe to the ambition for Scotland to be the best place to grow up in. We might disagree on how far we are from achieving that, but it is the right vision. The bill can play a part in delivering that, but it needs further clarity and ambition—clarity around resources and practical implications and ambitions around early learning for two-year-olds, aftercare and children's rights. At stage 2, there will be an opportunity to provide that opportunity and ambition, building on an excellent start.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is no extra time in the debate.

16:09

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): It is a privilege to speak in the debate. I will deal almost exclusively with kinship care and the development of the new kinship care order. I reiterate my belief that kinship carers should be given the same support as is given to foster carers. I made a promise to campaigners at a national kinship care hustings in Possilpark in 2007, and I have continued to champion the cause ever since.

The views that I express are heavily influenced by constituents of mine, such as Jessie Harvey and Ruby Grant who are members of the kinship care group in the north of the city that I represent, and by several other groups that I work with within the city. Put simply, kinship carers step in and take on a caring role for loved ones, for children, when

mum and dad are unwilling or unable to do so. If kinship carers were not there to pick up the pieces, the life chances and life outcomes for such children would be far worse. That would also cost Scotland's councils a small fortune, as they would instead need to use foster carers or residential care for those vulnerable children.

I pay tribute to our former children's minister Adam Ingram for advancing the cause of kinship care under the SNP Government that was elected in 2007. Putting a kinship care outcome into the Scottish Government's concordat with councils was vital. That sought to move to parity the financial support given to kinship carers and that given to foster carers. Clearly, although that aspiration was not fully met, that has made a real difference. I agree with the Child Poverty Action Group, which told the Education and Culture Committee:

"The initial agreement, which was to pay kinship carers of looked-after children at a rate equivalent to that for foster carers, has not become a reality, but all local authorities have shifted to a position where they are making payments of some sort to kinship carers of looked-after children. Quite a few local authorities are also making payments at some level to kinship carers of non-looked-after children."—*[Official Report, Education and Culture Committee, 24 September 2013; c 2821.]*

That is not enough, but we have driven a real change and it is important to put that on record.

Some kinship carers have asked me why the financial memorandum includes projected cost savings from kinship care. They ask how improvements can be made in the support for kinship carers while cost savings are also expected. However, the financial memorandum states that one reason for developing the kinship care order is

"to reduce unchecked growth in formal kinship care".

In other words, as children in kinship care come to the attention of social work or are placed in kinship care by social work—a vital distinction that, if I have time, I will return to later—they are less likely to become formally looked after. Kinship care orders will still provide support, but a crucial point is that the level of direct social work involvement will necessarily be less than if the child was deemed to be formally looked after.

I understand that the bill will lead to a projected saving in social work time, and that is the saving referred to in the financial memorandum. Fundamentally, those savings do not signal a reduction in direct cash support to kinship carers, but I would welcome some clarity and reassurance from the minister on that when she sums up the debate.

I also ask for some certainty that the bill does not put up any barriers to providing financial support to kinship carers. Can the minister confirm

that the bill contains nothing that would instruct councils to pay less or, indeed, hinder them from paying more?

Aileen Campbell: I just want to put on record—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, I am afraid that you must face your microphone.

Aileen Campbell: The kinship care order—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sorry, minister, we cannot hear you unless you face into the microphone.

Aileen Campbell: The kinship care order will enhance support for kinship carers by giving more kinship carers the help and support that they need. Whether financially or otherwise, support will be provided to them to ensure that they are the best possible family for the child to have a long and lasting and nurturing life.

Bob Doris: I thank the minister for that intervention.

I will move on to the financial working group that the Scottish Government has set up, which will report shortly. My understanding is that the financial package of support to kinship carers is not contained within the bill—that is not what the bill seeks to do—but is the job of the financial working group. Can the minister provide more information on when the working group might report and how long it will take the Scottish Government to consider the group's recommendations? If she can tease out how that will be taken forward, that would be very helpful.

Another issue that I want to mention is the postcode lottery or lack of consistency in how local authorities deal with kinship care. In Glasgow—I single out Glasgow City Council only because that is the local authority that I know best—the council provides payments of £50 a week for voluntary kinship care arrangements. Those payments are not enough, but I welcome them. However, the council makes a distinction between situations in which granny and granddad have decided to look after the vulnerable child, because they know that the child is at risk, and situations in which the local authority has turned up on the doorstep and placed the child with granny and granddad. In one case, the local authority has stepped in, whereas in the other case there is a voluntary arrangement, but I do not think that distinctions should be drawn when providing financial support for those families. I ask the Government to consider that.

The final thing that I would like to mention is the need for consistency in social work assessments of kinship carers across the country. Kinship carers in Glasgow believe that they are already going through an assessment process pretty similar to that for foster carers and they are asked for some deeply personal information and access

to their personal medical records. Better guidance, better training and more consistency in social work assessments would also be welcome.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am now very pleased to invite Cara Hilton to make her maiden speech in the chamber.

16:15

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): I am pleased to be making my maiden speech in this important debate on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill. It may be the tradition for members to pay tribute to their predecessors in such speeches, but on this occasion I think that the less said about my predecessor, the better.

I am extremely proud to have been elected as member of the Scottish Parliament for Dunfermline. Dunfermline is the community in which I live, it is where my children go to school and nursery and there is no greater honour for me than the opportunity to serve the people of Dunfermline at Holyrood. In my election campaign, I promised my constituents that I would always put Dunfermline first and that I would focus on the issues that matter to people in their everyday lives.

Anyone who took part in the by-election campaign will know that Dunfermline is a growing area. We certainly have a large proportion of young families, and the number 1 challenge facing many of the young families that I represent is childcare. They face the constant challenge of juggling work, childcare, school pick-up times and family finances. Politicians in all parties say that they want to address that challenge, but for too long they have failed to do so. That is why I welcome the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill and support its general principles.

However, for the constituents that I represent, the bill is a missed opportunity and I think that it lacks ambition. The 600 hours of free childcare is extremely welcome, but it is long overdue. When the SNP originally pledged 600 hours, my oldest son was almost three years old and was just about to start pre-school. Like all my friends, I was looking forward to the extra provision that was promised back in 2007. My son and his friends are now aged nine and they are in primary 5, yet the 600 hours of provision still has not been delivered. There are few better examples of Scotland being on pause than the seven years for which the SNP has made parents in Dunfermline and across Scotland wait for extra free childcare.

The reality is that we are still playing catch-up with England and Wales where, despite the coalition Government's best efforts to dismantle the good work that was done by Labour, families continue to benefit from better provision than exists here in Scotland. At the UK level, Ed

Miliband has pledged to deliver 25 hours a week of free childcare to working parents of three and four-year-olds if Labour wins in 2015, and to guarantee wraparound childcare for families of schoolchildren.

Why does the bill that we are discussing not include childcare provision for school-age children? Why does it do nothing to address the unfairness of birthday discrimination, which means that a child who is born after 31 August has to wait an extra six months—often until the end of January the next year—for a free pre-school place? Why is the SNP Government happy for Scotland to be lagging behind the rest of the UK when it comes to providing care for some of our most vulnerable two-year-olds? To quote a phrase from the Dunfermline by-election, Scotland “deserves better” than that.

The bill as it stands does little to tackle the number 1 issue facing families, which is the lack of flexible, affordable childcare. As the mum of three children, I was delighted when my five-year-old started school in August, not just because she was so looking forward to it, but because for the first time in years I was no longer paying every single penny that I earned in childcare. Up until then, with two pre-school children in childcare, even with juggling my working hours to finish at 3 o'clock and pick up my eldest from school and my daughter from pre-school, I was paying £1,200 a month in childcare, and that was for a four-day working week. Even now, with my oldest two at school and my youngest at pre-school, like families across Scotland, I pay more for childcare than for my mortgage.

Without the support of friends and family, I could not be standing here. I could not have stood for election to Holyrood, because getting home in time to pick up three children from different locations by 6 pm is simply impossible. I could never have afforded to return to work at all after having children if it was not for the support that a Labour Government at Westminster put in place with child tax credits to make work pay. That support has been cut by the coalition Government, which means that so many mums and dads now do not have the option of returning to work after having children.

As every parent knows, childcare costs do not stop when children start school. In fact, it is when children start school that some of the problems start. Parents face the challenge of juggling working hours around the school day, and let us not even get started on the 12 weeks a year of school holidays.

Many schools do not offer wraparound provision at all, and when they do the hours are restrictive. The only way that most parents I know manage is by working different hours and taking different

holidays. That cuts childcare costs, but it means that families rarely spend time together. The chance of a family meal at teatime is a rare event. The reality is that, for many mums and dads, just finding, organising and paying for childcare at all is like a full-time job in itself. Is it any wonder that a recent survey of mums by Asda found that seven out of 10 stay-at-home mums said that they would actually be worse off in work than they are at home?

Although I support the bill, I believe that it needs to go further. Childcare is a vital service for families and every family in Dunfermline and in Scotland should have the right to high-quality, affordable, flexible childcare. Childcare should not be a luxury that only the better-off can afford, but for many families that I represent in Dunfermline, work is simply not an option because of the high cost of childcare. A family at Pitcorthie told me during the by-election that they can never hope for their two-year-old daughter to have a little brother or sister, because even with both of them working they would never be able to afford the cost of childcare. A family in Duloch, where I live, told me that they have resorted to putting the childcare costs on credit cards, because rising food bills, energy costs and train fares mean that they simply have no other option. How many other families are in that position in the run-up to Christmas? A mum in Abbeyview told me that she loved being a working mum, but that because of cuts in tax credits she had to give up the job that she loved.

Parents in Dunfermline and across Scotland deserve better than a Government that talks about delivering a better deal on childcare but in reality lacks ambition. The Scottish Government has the power now to revolutionise childcare in Scotland. We can do it now and parents are fed up waiting, so although I will support the bill today, I hope that we can work together across the political divide to deliver the better deal on childcare that families across Scotland deserve.

16:21

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the bill as a significant advance for the position of children and young people in Scotland. As my fellow Education and Culture Committee members have said, the committee has, in two other inquiries, examined outcomes for looked-after children. We agreed in both those inquiries that we need to tackle the problems of underachievement, neglect and poor parenting before families reach crisis point. We need a fundamental shift in philosophy and approach towards a focus on prevention. I believe that the bill will help to do that, and it is the reason why so many child welfare organisations also support its broad principles.

In Scotland last year, there were more than 16,000 looked-after children. Although recent years have seen the number of new referrals fall, Scotland still has a higher proportion of looked-after children than other parts of the UK. The Government estimates that between 10,000 and 20,000 children live with drug-abusing parents, and that between 36,000 and 51,000 children in Scotland live with parents who have alcohol problems, so there is a crisis that we need to tackle.

I mentioned the bill's important emphasis on early intervention to prevent serious problems before they occur. An important means of delivering that step change is construction of a system in which it is easy for professionals to share information that could prevent a vulnerable child from coming to harm. As the minister has said, we are all familiar with the tragic cases that are covered in the news of children who die at the hands of their parents and carers. The common theme of the subsequent inquiries tends to be the same; someone had a vital piece of information that could have saved the child in question, but that information was not shared.

That is why I want to concentrate today on how the bill seeks to improve information sharing between relevant public authorities where there are concerns about the wellbeing of individual children and young people. Key to that is the introduction of the named person, which was supported by 72 per cent of respondents to the bill consultation. It is supported by the Royal College of Nursing, by Tam Baillie—Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People—and by the wonderful John Carnochan, who is the inspiring co-founder of Strathclyde's violence reduction unit.

There has been considerable misunderstanding about the role of the named person, which already exists and works well in the Highlands, and we have heard colleagues talking about the evidence from that region. The role of named person must be universal, because if it is not some children will slip through the net, which is exactly what we are trying to prevent. To some extent, we already have universal provision. For example, everyone who has a baby has a health visitor allocated to them. When I had my children, which is quite some time ago now, the health visitor made one visit, saw that I had lots of support and was then able to go away and concentrate on people who needed support. In that sense, the measure is an extension of what we are already doing.

The evidence from Bill Alexander of Highland Council showed how important the named person is as a means of ensuring that GIRFEC does what it is supposed to do. GIRFEC is rooted in co-operation between services, with the child being at

the centre, and it ensures that children and families receive holistic services that are underpinned by collaboration.

The committee's convener has outlined some of the operational concerns about how the named person would work in particular circumstances, and I would like to endorse his comments about the definition of "wellbeing" and the lowering of the threshold for information sharing. In Scotland, under GIRFEC, the wellbeing indicators are known by the acronym SHANARRI—members of the Education and Culture Committee are very used to acronyms—which stands for safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Those are all extremely positive things, which I think we would all want for our children, but how will different professionals apply SHANARRI when it comes to lowering the threshold for information sharing? I am sure that although most professionals will act responsibly, it is not unreasonable to raise concerns about overzealous individuals applying subjective views.

I will give an example of what I mean. My children did not travel to primary school by themselves. Some people might think that I was an overprotective mother. That was my way of keeping them safe but, equally, it could be argued that I was breaching other SHANARRI indicators, because my children were not as active as they could have been, they did not get as much fresh air as they could have done and they were not included. People have different forms of parenting, so I would welcome reassurance that the use of the wellbeing indicators—which I know are already established—to lower the threshold for information sharing will be monitored by the Government, so that we can ensure that there are not cases in which it is abused and that interference does not go too far.

That said, I support the bill and I support the principle of information sharing as a way of protecting the most vulnerable children.

16:27

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): I congratulate Cara Hilton on her maiden speech, which I thought was pretty thoughtful. I predict that if she makes a similar speech at stage 3, she might get a couple of interventions from members on the Government benches and perhaps elsewhere, but we will see what happens.

I want to focus the bulk of my remarks on the named person and, specifically, on what the financial memorandum says, which was the subject of Conservative business just a few weeks ago. It is something that I and other members of the Finance Committee looked into in some detail. Our difficulty with the financial memorandum

centred on the costs that it puts forward. The prediction is that the named person will cost local authorities just shy of £8 million in the first year of implementation and that it will cost them nothing—zero pounds and zero pence—in year 2. When I first read the financial memorandum, I did not think that that was realistic or credible. When I read the evidence that was submitted to the committee by various councils and others, it became even less credible, and when the committee took oral evidence from various councils, it became still less credible, to the extent that the committee felt that that was not something that was likely to happen in practice.

I listened carefully to what the minister said and her response appeared to be—I hope that I have written it down correctly—that

“costs will need to be monitored as implementation goes forward.”

I do not take huge comfort from that because, in my opinion, any policy that the Government implements must be monitored as it goes forward. That should happen regardless of whether the policy is controversial or whether questions are asked about it. Every policy ought to be monitored as it is implemented.

Aileen Campbell: Gavin Brown said that he had read the submissions to the committee. I wonder whether he read the one from City of Edinburgh Council, which said:

“The Council believes that the costs and any savings for Children’s Rights, GIRFEC, Early Learning/Childcare and Other Proposals are accurately reflected based on our understanding of the requirements of the legislation.”

Given what he has just said, how does he respond to that? Did he read the submission?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are very tight for time now.

Gavin Brown: Presiding Officer, I think that the minister’s tone is a little uncalled for. Of course I read that submission; I read every submission to the Finance Committee, and I have read every report to which the minister has referred the committee since her response. She will know that City of Edinburgh Council had already implemented the approach, so the financial costs on the council will not be the same as they will be for other councils. The minister has cherry-picked the submission of one council, which had already implemented most of the approach.

Let me quote another council. Scottish Borders Council said that it

“believes that additional funding to support the Named Person needs to be available for more than one fiscal year. The Highland Pathfinder”—

on which the Government rests almost everything—

“showed it took several years to implement the cultural changes required within and across organisations in order to implement GIRFEC. Scottish Borders Council believes funding requires to be available over three consecutive years starting in 2014/15 to ensure the successful establishment of the Named Person role.”

That could not be clearer. It took a number of years—

Stewart Maxwell: Will Gavin Brown give way?

Gavin Brown: Give me a moment.

The process took a number of years in Highland Council. I read in detail the Highland Council report to which the minister referred me—I will return to that, but first I will take an intervention from the convener of the Education and Culture Committee.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please be as brief as possible.

Stewart Maxwell: I am grateful to Gavin Brown and I am interested in what he has to say. Surely he accepts that a pathfinder project will always take longer to achieve change, because it is designing the system that others will follow. The time and money that it takes to do something will always be greater in a pathfinder project than in those that come after.

Gavin Brown: That is probably true, but I do not accept that implementation can cost £8 million in year 1 and zero by year 2. No doubt we learn lessons from pathfinder projects and change can happen faster than it happened in Highland Council, but no council with any credibility has suggested that the cost will be zero in year 2. If anyone has evidence that the cost will be zero in year 2, I will be very happy to take an intervention from them, whether they are a minister, a committee convener or anyone else.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute, Mr Brown.

Gavin Brown: The same argument can be made about the NHS costs in the financial memorandum. The Government says that year 1 costs will be £10 million and that by year 3 they will be only £5 million—half the amount in year 1. Health boards that gave evidence to the committee described that as being not credible, as did the Royal College of Nursing Scotland. The experts who gave evidence to the Finance Committee made it clear that the costings are not credible, which is why the committee—en bloc, without division—expressed concern about the matter. In my view, the answers that we have received are not good enough.

The reason why all that is important is that by creating the bureaucracy that will result from giving everyone a named person, whether or not

they need or want one, the Government will be taking money away from those who need it most.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that you must finish, please. I have already cut the next speaker's time.

Gavin Brown: Thank you. I will leave it there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Colin Beattie. I am afraid that I can give you only five minutes.

16:33

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I am delighted to speak about the bill. I am a member of the Education and Culture Committee, so I have been very much involved with the bill.

As Stewart Maxwell said, the committee agreed on the basic principles of the bill, and it is evident that there is widespread support from children's charities and public bodies. Barnardo's Scotland, in its written submission to the committee, said:

"This Bill has the potential to be one of the most far-reaching and influential bills considered in this session of the Parliament. At the heart of the Bill is a vision that Barnardo's strongly shares—making Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up."

I think that we can all subscribe to that. We must ensure that we do not lose sight of the fact that the bill is about protecting vulnerable children. We must put that at the heart of all our arguments.

I have been struck by the level of support that the named person approach received in the Government's consultation. I note that 72 per cent of respondents supported the idea of providing a named person for all children and young people under the age of 18. It is also worth looking at the evidence from a survey that Children 1st carried out, which received 117 responses from kinship carers and support groups. Children 1st found that 90 per cent of respondents thought that every child in Scotland should have a named person, and that some 78 per cent thought that having a named person would have been beneficial to them and their families.

In this instance, we have a ready-made example to look at. In 2010, Highland Council successfully put the named person approach into practice as part of its getting it right for every child approach. In its evidence to the Education and Culture Committee, that council highlighted the fact that the named person approach has led to a clear process for ensuring that relevant information is passed to the correct person, in contrast to what happened under the previous system, in which information was bounced around various agencies in the hope that it would get to the relevant organisation at some stage. The consequence has

been earlier support to, and more effective intervention for, children. Getting that support to a child usually means that a successful outcome is more likely. We therefore have irrefutable proof that the named person approach can be successful if it is done right. It has the evidence to back up its success and it has widespread support, and it is an important element of the bill.

On childcare, I fully support an increase in free nursery provision from 475 hours to 600 hours for three and four-year-olds and looked-after two-year-olds. That will benefit 120,000 children throughout Scotland and will mean an increase of 45 per cent in free nursery hours provision since the SNP came to power in 2007. Perhaps Cara Hilton should reflect on that fact.

I feel that there is more to be done on that issue, but the Government has, with the powers that it has, acted and provided more support for families than any Government here to date has. I cannot help but consider the countless other things that could be done with the powers of independence. With those powers, we could work to ensure that there is further support for parents and their children. Scottish Government estimates suggest that Westminster welfare reform will put 50,000 children in poverty by 2020. It is time that we took control of our own affairs in order to protect our young people from Westminster.

I particularly welcome the First Minister's statement at the SNP conference. He said:

"I believe a transformational shift towards childcare should be one of the first tasks of an independent Scotland."

I also noted with interest his announcement that the Council of Economic Advisers has been asked to analyse the social and economic implications of raising levels of childcare in an independent Scotland.

I want to highlight the issue of kinship carers. The kinship care order, which is included in the bill, will provide great support for kinship carers. I am pleased to note that the Scottish Government is currently reviewing the financial support for kinship carers in order to address inconsistencies across the country.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute.

Colin Beattie: Again, I refer to the Children 1st survey, which shows that 60 per cent of kinship carers thought that a kinship care order would be a good thing. A further 27 per cent wanted more information. It was no surprise that 60 per cent said that they would apply for a kinship care order. We must remember that, before the SNP's election victory in 2007, there was no support for kinship carers in Scotland and that, since 1997, successive Governments at Westminster have

failed to consider the needs of children in kinship care through the benefits system.

I am proud that, in the previous parliamentary session, the Government launched the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, which allowed local authorities to give vital financial support to kinship carers, but I am deeply concerned that the Westminster Government is threatening to undermine the support that the Scottish Government provides.

I am running short of time, so I will go quickly to the end of my speech.

It seems to be self-evident that being proactive is always better than being reactive. Preventative spending will help us to ensure that our children get a better start in life right from the beginning, and it provides added benefit in that it helps to ensure greater value for the public purse. Spending now should always reduce spending later.

The bill is an important milestone in achieving better outcomes for our children. I commend the Scottish Government and my colleagues in the Education and Culture Committee for the huge amount of work that has been done and for bringing the bill before Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We turn to the closing speeches. I am disappointed to note that two members who participated in the debate are missing from the chamber.

16:38

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I, too, congratulate Cara Hilton on her maiden speech. She certainly made the most of our policy of not intervening in maiden speeches; I say well done to her. I am sure that she will continue with the same passion and commitment in future debates.

I remind Colin Beattie, who is a colleague on the Public Audit Committee, that we do not have independence in the Highlands. However, I think that every member in the chamber has commented on how well GIRFEC and other measures are working there. We can certainly do an awful lot without independence.

I congratulate the Education and Culture Committee on its excellent scrutiny of the bill. I am not a member of that committee, but I recognise the complexities of the bill, which, obviously, I am new to. Given my experience of many bills since 1999, I can acknowledge the measured and constructive speech given by the committee convener, Stewart Maxwell, which I thought was commendable.

As Liz Smith said, the Scottish Conservatives agree with many of the bill's proposals. In particular, we agree that we should do more to develop the collaborative approach to ensuring that children's services are delivered more effectively. Like other members, we very much agree with the plans to extend childcare, enhance nursery provision and better train nursery staff. In 1999, conditions such as autism and dyslexia—Margaret McDougall referred to dyslexia in a question earlier today—were not picked up in nurseries. I therefore commend the training that our nursery staff now receive, as well as the additional support for kinship carers, to which Bob Doris and others have referred.

Neil Bibby made a critical point about health visitors. Some years ago, Dr Phil Wilson said in evidence to the Health and Sport Committee that there was overwhelming evidence to support the retention of health visitors. However, over the past decade, we have seen the demise of health visiting in this country, which is not something that we have supported. Last week, I met Bill Alexander, the director of social work in Highland Council, and I was pleased to learn that Highland is now employing more health visitors. We very much support that and hope that it will be replicated throughout Scotland.

We have several concerns about the bill, one of which is that, as Professor Kenneth Norrie stated, the bill will give ministers more powers that are open ended and not sufficiently well defined. In some key written submissions to the committee, concerns were expressed about the proposed extent of data sharing and about the extension of the powers of Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People; the concern that parental and family responsibilities will be diluted was also expressed. I support COSLA's point that the children's commissioner should be the last resort after all local avenues of complaint have been exhausted. We will obviously keep a watching eye on that provision. Whether the additional £160,000 of funding for the children's commissioner's office is value for money, only time will tell. I say that with my Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body hat on, because members of the corporate body must decide on such additional moneys.

We are concerned that having a named person for all children in the terms stated by the bill might take resources away from the most vulnerable children. John Stevenson of Unison said that the bill's provisions would mean that children's services would have to deal with far more children than they deal with currently. Like the EIS, Unison also had concerns about the implications for resources and training in an already well-stretched budget.

Stewart Maxwell: Will the member take an intervention?

Mary Scanlon: No, if the member does not mind. I have less than two minutes left for my speech and I still have quite a bit to cover.

I was a lecturer for 20 years before I became a member of the Scottish Parliament. However, if I was the named person for any 16 to 18-year-olds entering further education now, I would not know where to start or what I had to look for. It is a bit naive to assume that no training would be required.

We also have practical concerns about the named-person role. What will happen if relations break down between the named person and the family? What will the relationship be between the named person and the lead professional? Will there be a single point of contact? Stewart Maxwell raised a good question about what will happen with regard to the named person during the school summer holidays. It is reasonable to raise such important questions at stage 1. I have no doubt that we will get more clarity on those issues at stage 2.

Unison stated that the named-person proposals were not clear and it felt that what it regarded as a rather woolly approach would mean that, to cover their backs, named persons would end up sharing information that strictly speaking they did not have to share. Joan McAlpine made some very good, constructive points about that.

When I visited Inverness College two weeks ago, I came across two Gypsy Traveller girls and wondered what their families would think about their having a named person. I wonder whether any thought has been given to the Gypsy Traveller community in that regard.

16:44

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I congratulate Cara Hilton on her maiden speech, in which she showed passion and commitment—the sort of passion and commitment that helped her to win the Dunfermline by-election.

As Cara Hilton and my colleague Jayne Baxter said, Labour supports the principles behind the bill. Labour wants to make Scotland a better place for children to grow up in. Labour believes that we need to get it right for every child and supports the aspiration of improving life chances for children and young people in Scotland.

However, as some of the evidence says and as has been said this afternoon, we believe that the bill lacks ambition and we have concerns about practical issues, wording, details and financial and resource issues, which will be difficult to sum up in a seven-minute speech. Put simply, getting it right

for every child means getting the bill right. We cannot let it be a missed opportunity.

The committee heard about a considerable number of issues from organisations and individuals and a significant number of them have been raised today. We have also received many briefings this week, which have contained specific concerns. I will raise a number of the issues that have been presented to us. I thank Children in Scotland and all the other children's and youth organisations for their helpful briefings in advance of the debate.

A while back, the bill was described to me as four bills in one. It is clear that we need a joined-up bill and a joined-up approach. We should be concerned when NSPCC Scotland says:

“there appears to have been little strategic thinking about the position of children's services in the raft of legislation currently underway in Scotland. We are concerned that the disparate nature of the various pieces of legislation which affect children's services indicates a lack of coherent vision for how the whole range of services meet the needs of children.”

The NSPCC is not alone in raising concerns. There have been concerns that the Government's proposals on children's rights will not extend those rights or make a practical difference to children's lives. The Law Society of Scotland described the duty on ministers as

“a diluted version of the existing obligations”

and it noted that the duty requires ministers only to consider the UNCRC and not to act on or explain those considerations. Children in Scotland noted that the proposals fall short of those that the National Assembly for Wales has embraced. A number of suggestions have also come from UNICEF and others about the use of child rights impact assessments and the duties on public bodies. We will have to look at that again at stage 2.

We have heard a great deal of concern about the controversial named person proposals. As I have said, the Royal College of Nursing has said clearly that

“The Scottish Government must recognise the Education Committee's concerns regarding the capacity of the health visiting workforce to deliver existing duties let alone those associated with the Named Person role.”

Health visitors—the people on the ground—tell us that an additional 450 health visitors are needed. I say gently to the minister that that needs to be not monitored but acted on.

In its briefing, the RCN makes the shocking statement that

“It is not currently known how many health visitors there are in Scotland.”

I am sure that I am not the only one who is extremely concerned by that comment. If the minister does not know how many health visitors there are, how can the figure be monitored and how can they be expected to take on the additional role?

Other concerns have been raised. Children 1st said:

“We remain concerned about the potential for confusion, which we already have experience of directly in practice—between the role of the named person and lead professional.”

YouthLink Scotland has called for clarity on the practicalities of a named person for a young person who is under 18 and who has left school. Questions have also been asked about inadequate funding for training and about who will take on the duty during school holidays.

Those issues are not going to go away. The minister and the Government need to take them seriously and address them accordingly if they want the provisions to be supported and to work.

We have been lobbied by Who Cares? Scotland and a number of our constituents about care leavers and we have been asked to speak up for them in the debate. I will speak up for them, just as Kezia Dugdale and others did. We should extend support for care leavers, and I hope that the Government will consider that request and look favourably on stage 2 amendments about that.

Jayne Baxter made a good contribution on kinship carers. The Government has more work to do to convince them of the merits of what it proposes.

I said that the bill should not be a missed opportunity. However, I feel that it will be a missed opportunity and that it lacks ambition on nursery education and childcare. I welcome again the Government's flagship policy of an increase to 600 hours of provision for three and four-year-olds but, as we know, that was in the SNP's manifesto in 2007. I have said it before and I will say it again: the Scottish Government will not solve the childcare problems of 2013 with a policy from 2007.

John Swinney was on television the other night, rightly saying that, if we increased childcare and female employment, that would be a good thing and it could create jobs. My message to the Government is this: do it, then! Actions speak louder than words. It has the powers right now to introduce more childcare than it is doing.

Labour in government acted to support and massively expand universal nursery education and childcare. The SNP in government has done very little in comparison. Instead, it has offered empty

and vague referendum bribes. Members should not just take my word for it that that is unambitious. As Children in Scotland and Save the Children point out, the bill does not go nearly far enough in providing support for two-year olds. Only about 1 or 2 per cent of two-year-olds are to be guaranteed nursery in Scotland, whereas 40 per cent of those in England are going to be offered it. You have a stated aim of making Scotland the best place to grow up in the world, but you cannot even offer the best nursery package in the UK.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute. Speak through the chair, please.

Neil Bibby: The SNP actually cut nursery funding for vulnerable two-year-olds when it first came to power.

Other concerns have been raised about the proposals' impact on quality, about the definition and split of early learning and care, about flexibility issues and about the need to consider the fact that some children are missing out on months of early years education.

As Children in Scotland notes, the bill says absolutely nothing about out-of-school care for primary school-aged children. It is shocking that the Scottish Government rejected Labour's call for a cross-party childcare commission to consider the issue back in May. That is deeply regrettable.

The challenge for the Government is to act on the suggestions that have been made and to deliver a better bill. We support the principles of the bill, but it is only good as far as it goes. At present, sadly, it will not be a “landmark bill”, as the minister called it, but a landmark opportunity missed.

16:51

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): This has been, by and large—with the exception of the last few minutes—a positive and useful debate. The purpose of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill was defined by Aileen Campbell at the outset, and I will repeat what she said: the whole purpose of the bill is to improve children's lives, and everything we do or say about it should be judged in that way. That is absolutely correct. By and large, members have responded to the challenge.

It is right to say that the bill is not a single bill, but the coming together of two bills into one bill. We thought about and consulted on how to improve lives, doing just what Aileen Campbell asked us to do. I pay tribute to Aileen Campbell's leadership on the issue—her leadership on the bill and her leadership within the ministerial team. She

has a strong commitment, as have I, to continue to work with members across the chamber to improve the bill and put it on the statute book. That is what we should be doing.

I thank everyone concerned with that process, particularly the Education and Culture Committee. The convener restated, cogently and eloquently, the constructive points that arose at committee—and they are constructive points, which are being considered by the Scottish Government. As with all proposed legislation, we are keen to improve the bill as it goes into detailed legislative scrutiny.

The bill will have material added to it. As the committee convener indicated, I will be lodging amendments at stage 2 regarding school closure proposals. I look forward to giving evidence to the committee on 3 December and to discussing proposals on the subject that have—by and large, albeit not completely—been well received.

I thank Jayne Baxter for her opening speech, and I welcome the support that she indicated in it. I am certain that, working together, we will be able to make the bill the best that it can be to ensure that Scotland is the best country to grow up in. I am positive that we can find ways to go forward together in that regard.

Liz Smith's speech was measured and positive, and I am grateful to her. It is wise that we acknowledge the concern within the Conservative Party about the named person provision. I think that the named person is a positive provision. I have taken some time to be persuaded of that, because I wanted to see the work that was going on and the actions that were being taken across Scotland, but the named person provision is immensely impressive to see in operation. It is wrong to define it as more work; it is about smarter work and how professionals change and develop what they do to meet the challenges that exist.

Liz Smith: I thank the cabinet secretary for his remarks just now. Our concern—as Gavin Brown mentioned in his speech—is that, if we are to develop those resources, we might detract from the issues that are facing some of our most vulnerable children. We have a lot of evidence before us from a variety of stakeholders who say that we will indeed have to spend a lot more on the named person provision.

Michael Russell: I understand that concern, and I think that Liz Smith—if I might say so without embarrassing her—put it much better than did Gavin Brown, who got trapped by his ideological views. However, there is contrary evidence from a variety of places, in particular from those who are doing the job, to say that the provision is not about increased activity or primarily about increased resource, but about different methods of operation.

In giving evidence to the Education and Culture Committee, Bill Alexander stated in respect of the named person provision that

“It is much easier to understand what is going on”.

He went on to say that:

“Teachers ... and midwives tell me that it does not change what they do but it changes how they are regarded” and that

“they feel that it has empowered them.”—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 24 September 2013; c 2861-62.]

Bill Alexander knows more about the subject than almost anybody else, and I have found what he says to be true when I have spoken to the people who are involved. I want that to be demonstrated to the committee and to the chamber, and if there are ways in which it can be demonstrated, it should be.

The named person provision is about enabling, not enforcing. It is about not interference or approved parenting, nor substituting professionals for parents, but helping and assisting. It is a very important innovation.

Liam McArthur: There have been some concerns about the lack of consent for information sharing. Can something be done in the bill to lay down a presumption of seeking consent except in those exceptional circumstances in which welfare issues are at stake?

Michael Russell: It is possible to envisage that being included in the guidance, but I—and the minister, I think—would welcome a discussion with Liam McArthur and other members on the matter, because there are ways forward. I am grateful for that contribution.

I will deal quickly with one or two other points. I share Kezia Dugdale's anger about looked-after children; I expressed it in an article that I wrote in 2006 about the fact that the Parliament had, until that stage, talked about the issue a lot with genuine feeling but had not brought about change.

The bill can help to bring about change, but it can also do what Kezia Dugdale wants it to do, which is to raise the profile of looked-after children—once and for all—in a way that makes us understand our responsibilities; makes society understand the issue; and ensures that we can make progress in a way that none of us has succeeded in doing until now.

I say to Bob Doris that there is nothing in the bill at all that will interfere with the opportunities or rights of local authorities in relation to kinship carers—it is quite the reverse, in fact.

I pay tribute to Cara Hilton for her maiden speech. She was quite right to drop the convention

of paying tribute to her predecessor at the beginning. To be fair to her, she dropped quite a number of other conventions too, including the convention of making a maiden speech of a consensual nature.

There was no harm in that at all—she has her mother’s passion for those whom she represents. I will be unconventional too, and pay tribute not just to the member but to her mum. Cathy Peattie is a loss to the chamber. We worked closely together in the first session of Parliament on the Education, Culture and Sport Committee; I regard her as a friend and I always will. She was a doughty fighter for her constituency, for education and schools, and for Scottish culture.

Cara Hilton asked a number of questions of the Scottish Government, and the answer to most of them lies in the need for this chamber to have full powers. Her election literature—[*Interruption.*] If questions are asked, they should be answered. Her election literature asked why the SNP Government would not match Labour’s commitment to 600 hours of free childcare. With the greatest respect, I suggest that the question was put in the wrong way. Why did Labour not deliver those hours when it was in power? Indeed, it did not even deliver the 475 hours that we have now—it was delivering only 412.5 hours. We are delivering, and we could deliver much more with the full powers of a normal Parliament.

Cara Hilton’s election slogan said that, “Dunfermline deserves better.” I agree, but I would go further and say that Scotland deserves better than the limit that her party has placed—and continues to place—on progress for her constituents. Let us have even more ambition for those powers.

The centrepiece of the bill is the 600 hours of free childcare. It is there on offer and it needs to be supported. In supporting it, we will make a difference and make this country the best country in which to grow up.

The bill is a major step forward, and the fact that members on all sides of the chamber wish to support it is incredibly welcome, but the task with all legislation is to make it as good as it can be. With the work that Jayne Baxter and Liam McArthur have offered to do, and perhaps with the consent and the work of the Scottish Tories—except on one issue, although I hope that we will be able to draw them into supporting that provision—we will have a bill to be proud of. We will have a country to be proud of in terms of how we look after and lead forward our children, and then, with independence, we can do even more.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill: Financial Resolution

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-08192, in the name of John Swinney, on the financial resolution for the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in paragraph 3(b) of Rule 9.12 of the Parliament’s Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.—[*John Swinney.*]

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

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S4M-08259, in the name of Joan McAlpine, on the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill and agrees that it should proceed as a private bill.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08326, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

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

Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)

Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 104, Against 0, Abstentions 14.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08192, in the name of John Swinney, on the financial resolution for the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in paragraph 3(b) of Rule 9.12 of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.

Meeting closed at 17:02.

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