



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 15 January 2015

Session 4

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 15 January 2015

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

## General Question Time

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Good morning. We start with general questions. Question 1, in the name of Paul Martin, has not been lodged. The member has provided an explanation.

### Alcohol at Football Matches

**2. George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what impact the recent fan zone at St Mirren Park will have on its policy on banning alcohol at football matches. (S4O-03902)

**The Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health (Jamie Hepburn):** I understand that the fan zone that was set up at the match between St Mirren and Motherwell was located outwith the restricted areas covered by alcohol at football grounds legislation. We have no plans to remove the existing restrictions on alcohol at football grounds.

**George Adam:** The minister will be aware that, in the St Mirren fan zone, adults were allowed to consume alcohol at the ground before the game. The event passed without incident. A family atmosphere was encouraged, with various sections within the zone, including a play area for younger people. It was enjoyed by most of the fans, including me and my wife, Stacey.

Would the minister support the use of St Mirren as a pilot club to examine the reintroduction of alcohol at football stadiums on match days?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I am sure that Mr Adam and his wife, Stacey, enjoyed that experience more than he enjoyed the last time that our teams met, when Partick Thistle won 1-0. I thought it important to place that on the record.

Decisions on the specific matter at hand are informed by Police Scotland, which confirmed that, at this stage, it is not minded to seek a relaxation of controls on the selling of alcohol in stadiums at football matches. However, it is engaging with interested parties in reviewing the matter. As a member of the Scottish Professional Football League, St Mirren Football Club is one of the interested parties that would be part of any review.

**Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):** George Adam makes an eminently sensible suggestion. I cannot understand why the minister

will not look at a pilot project that encourages football fans to be treated as responsible adults, in the same way that rugby fans are.

**Jamie Hepburn:** We will always be willing to consider any particular proposition that is put before us, but the position remains that we are informed in these matters by Police Scotland, which has confirmed that, at this stage, it is not minded to seek a relaxation of the existing controls.

### Employment Tribunals (Fees)

**3. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will review the impact of employment tribunal fees prior to their proposed devolution. (S4O-03903)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government is concerned that the current fee system unfairly impedes access to justice. In preparing for any new devolved responsibilities, we will want to review the impact that the fees might have.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Figures obtained by *The Herald* reveal a 68 per cent fall in Scottish cases—a fall of almost 5,000 cases in the nine months since the fees were introduced. Does the cabinet secretary agree with the Law Society of Scotland that the fees have had a catastrophic impact on claimants and that they are basically a charter for rogue employers?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The member might be interested to know that Fergus Ewing, the Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism, wrote to Jo Swinson MP on 24 June 2013 to outline this Government's opposition to the fees. He highlighted then that, for many people, fees represent an unaffordable risk, regardless of the strength of their case.

There is now a mounting body of evidence that highlights a sharp fall in the number of people bringing cases to employment tribunals, and the Law Society's statement is clearly based on that evidence. For members' information, we know that total cases in Scotland reduced by 65 per cent in the three months from January to March 2014 in comparison with the same period in 2013, and that sex discrimination cases fell by 84.6 per cent, race discrimination cases fell by 50 per cent and disability discrimination cases fell by 47.3 per cent. Those figures tell us that a great many people out there are now unable to access the justice that they should be entitled to receive.

### Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Meetings)

**4. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met

representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and what issues were discussed. (S4O-03904)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** The Scottish Government meets representatives of COSLA frequently to discuss shared policy interests. In addition, the Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment and I meet COSLA bimonthly to discuss issues of mutual concern.

**James Dornan:** We know that the political posturing over leaving COSLA has resulted in civil war breaking out among Labour councils. Two of the councils have U-turned on an initial decision to leave COSLA, with West Dunbartonshire Council saying that it wants to

“remain part of the organisation which provides the national voice for local government in Scotland.”

Unfortunately, Glasgow City Council has still not changed its mind about leaving. What does the cabinet secretary consider could be the impact on the people of Glasgow if that Labour council chooses not to follow Inverclyde Council and West Dunbartonshire Council by reconsidering its original decision to leave COSLA?

**Alex Neil:** Membership of COSLA is a matter for individual councils. At present, all councils remain members of COSLA, and we continue to discuss shared policy interests with COSLA. I would not dare to interfere in internal matters.

**Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con):** Will the Scottish Government consult local authorities, whether they are members or non-members of COSLA, on an equal basis regarding national policy?

**Alex Neil:** Absolutely. We are more than happy to discuss all those matters in a very inclusive manner, as always.

### **Public-facing Workers (Protection from Abuse and Violence)**

**5. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to protect people who serve the public from abuse or violence at work. (S4O-03905)

**The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Paul Wheelhouse):** All workers, including those who serve the public, deserve protection from abuse and violence. That is why Scotland's justice system provides for protection for all workers under the common law of assault, threatening and abusive behaviour and breach of the peace. We fully support our police, prosecutors and courts in dealing robustly with people who offend against public-facing workers.

In addition, the Scottish Government provides financial support to the Scottish business resilience centre, which works with employers to put in place measures to help keep members of staff safe from abuse and violence while they are at work.

The Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced additional provisions to extend protection to Scottish Environment Protection Agency officers in the conduct of their duties.

**Hugh Henry:** Those are warm words, but there is no commitment from the minister to actually do anything. There is also some indication of double standards.

Can the minister tell us why the Scottish Government believes—quite rightly—that emergency workers need specific protection and why the Solicitor General believes that victims of domestic abuse need specific protection, yet they believe that workers who are assaulted at work do not?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** As I outlined in my first answer, we took action in passing the 2014 act to protect front-line workers in SEPA. Hugh Henry's point about us not taking action and just offering warm words is entirely false. We recognise the issue that he raises with regard to emergency workers.

We supported the Crown Office's views on the difference between emergency workers and public-facing workers. The Lord Advocate, Colin Boyd QC, took part in 2004 in the parliamentary debates on the bill that became the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005. He said:

“It is completely unacceptable that anyone should be the subject of assault or abuse at work. We want to make sure that the law is an effective tool in ensuring the safety and welfare of emergency workers and all public service workers. We are prudent to recognise that legislation is not the answer in every case. In some situations the best possible solutions lie within existing law. I am firmly of the view that this is true for the protection of public service workers.”

We take the issue seriously but, as I said, existing laws can be enforced in respect of assault, offensive behaviour and breach of the peace, and that is what we intend to do.

### **Business Start-ups**

**6. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to assist business start-ups. (S4O-03906)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government is committed to providing the economic environment to enable businesses to start up and thrive. Support includes our

competitive business rates package; the advice and assistance for entrepreneurship and innovation that is delivered through our enterprise agencies and the business gateway and through other channels; investment in infrastructure; and international assistance.

The latest official statistics from the Office for National Statistics, which were published in November 2014, showed that there were 21,540 new business registrations in Scotland in 2013, which was an increase on 17,385 in 2012. That represents a 23.9 per cent increase over the past year, which takes the business birth rate to a record high.

**Jenny Marra:** I saw the cabinet secretary's press release heralding that progress. However, the statistics show a bit of disparity between the main cities in Scotland. Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow are consistently in the top five for business start-ups, but my home city of Dundee languishes in the bottom third of the table. What additional support will he put into Dundee to encourage economic growth?

**John Swinney:** I do not know why Jenny Marra is so desperate to consistently talk down achievements in the city of Dundee. There was a 28.8 per cent increase in business start-ups in Dundee between 2012 and 2013. That increase in the business birth rate was higher than that for the whole of Scotland, which was 23.9 per cent, as I have just told Parliament. It is beyond me why Jenny Marra is so determined, question by question, to talk down the achievements of Dundee, which is delivering a faster increase in the business birth rate than the rest of Scotland.

The Government is committed to business start-ups through all the interventions that we make and through the delivery of our enterprise agency support throughout Scotland and the work that the business gateway undertakes. Just this morning, I was at the launch of some new initiatives with the Prince's Trust, which deploys support to new business start-ups the length and breadth of Scotland, including in Dundee. All of those are measures that the Government will support, and our "Scotland can do" entrepreneurship framework is attracting international attention as a successful strategy in encouraging improvement in the business birth rate—I hope that it will attract support from Jenny Marra in the period to come.

**Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree with me about the importance of small business to all our local communities and does he therefore think that anyone wishing to start a new business should be given every support from both national and local government? Further, does he agree that this is an element of the work of the East Kilbride task force that should be treated very seriously?

**John Swinney:** Yes. For the reasons that Linda Fabiani has outlined, the Government has prioritised support for small business through the maintenance of the most competitive approach to small business taxation in the United Kingdom: the small business bonus scheme. In addition, the Government works very closely with the business gateway, ensuring that companies in all localities can have access to the support of the enterprise network.

I know that in East Kilbride there have been economic challenges that have had to be addressed by the East Kilbride task force. I certainly hope that due priority will be given at local level to ensuring that every business development opportunity can be taken forward and that what has been an essential part of the business growth environment in East Kilbride and Scotland over many years will continue in the future.

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that many personal licence holders in the licensed trade have not had their personal licences renewed recently. That is inhibiting small businesses and is perhaps doing so for business start-ups. Can the cabinet secretary, in conjunction with his colleague Paul Wheelhouse, seek a change in the legislation that is currently denying individuals the right to work in existing and new businesses? It is a huge problem.

**John Swinney:** If Mr Scott will forgive me, I will explore the issues that he has raised later in some detail. If he writes to me about them, I will certainly ensure that they are given strong exploration. My colleague Mr Wheelhouse is in the chamber and will have heard the comments about the licensing system. We will certainly explore whether there is anything within the responsibility of the Government that can be taken forward. Obviously, licensing decisions are invariably taken at local authority level through licensing boards, but we will explore the issues that Mr Scott has raised with me.

## Organophosphates

**7. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment's investigation into the use of organophosphate products by farmers and crofters in the 1980s and 90s. (S4O-03907)

**The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt):** As background, the Committee on Toxicity published a statement on organophosphates on 13 March 2014 following a comprehensive systematic review of peer-reviewed research on exposure to organophosphates that was published

up to September 2013. The review concluded that exposure to organophosphates does not cause significant long-term neurological toxicity in adults. The review took account of extensive research in peer-reviewed journals on the use of organophosphates by those in the agricultural sector and their exposure to them. It appears that independent scientific evidence over many years, including the latest independent statement, which was published this year, has identified no risk to human health from the appropriate use of organophosphates in sheep dip.

To date, the Scottish Government has not had discussions with the UK Government on the issue. However, I would be willing to raise it with my counterpart in the UK Government if substantive new evidence emerged.

**Angus MacDonald:** I note the minister's reply. However, she will be aware of the continuing concerns among some farmers, crofters and agricultural workers who were exposed to organophosphates through compulsory sheep dipping and application of pesticides in the 1980s and 1990s. She will also be aware of the calls at Westminster for an independent inquiry into the issue, including full disclosure of any UK Government documents that could shed light on how hundreds of farmers and crofters have suffered ill health over the years. Will she join me in backing those calls, as there are still too many unanswered questions regarding the possible links between exposure to OPs and ill health among the farming community?

**Maureen Watt:** As a farmer's daughter, I am well aware of the calls. The issue of the impact of organophosphates on health is complicated and controversial. I understand that there are calls for that down south. As I have said, I am happy to meet the member and indeed other members who may have constituents who believe that they have been adversely affected by organophosphates.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 8, in the name of Jackie Baillie, has not been lodged. The member has provided me with an explanation.

### Rail Services (Edinburgh)

**9. Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what improvements will be made to commuter rail services into Edinburgh as a result of the awarding of the franchise to Abellio, which is due to take effect from April 2015. (S4O-03909)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** The next franchise will build on existing improvements by delivering new trains, enhanced services and improved facilities. In its bid, Abellio recognised the need to increase train capacity throughout the country and it included

plans to introduce 70 new electric trains in and out of Edinburgh, which will boost capacity by more than 20 per cent on peak services by 2018.

**Colin Keir:** The minister may be aware that, over the years, many of my constituents who use Dalmeny and South Gyle railway stations have had to deal on occasion with trains being shortened from six to three carriages, resulting in overcrowding and passengers being left at stations, as well as the regular use of extremely old rolling stock. Will he ensure that Abellio is aware of those past shortcomings and that they are addressed after the April takeover?

**Derek Mackay:** Yes, I will. To assist, Abellio is obliged to fit 30 per cent of trains with passenger counting equipment, which will allow it to monitor patronage levels more accurately. That, in turn, will enable it to deliver and, through its franchise obligations, to focus capacity in the train fleet. In general, capacity issues are focused on, there are penalties and we will strengthen the relationship with the operator to address any overcrowding and crowding issues that present themselves in the new franchise.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** Does the minister welcome the Smith commission's recommendations on more rail powers? Does he acknowledge that postponing the decision on Abellio could have seen improvements via the public sector? What are the prospects now for a public sector-run railway in Scotland?

**Derek Mackay:** Of course, the Scottish Government has been consistent on having those powers. If only the Labour Party had been consistent on that, maybe we could have made different decisions from the ones that we have. However, we will now enter the franchise in good faith, get the best deal for Scotland and look to our options in future. We will welcome the new powers to Scotland, but if previous and successive Governments had made different choices, we could have done things completely differently.

### Rail Services (Disruption to Glasgow to Edinburgh Services)

**10. Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to alleviate the planned disruption to Glasgow to Edinburgh rail services in summer 2015. (S4O-03910)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** Network Rail is working closely with ScotRail to ensure that the route electrification work between now and the introduction of the first Edinburgh to Glasgow electric services in December 2016 is delivered with the minimum of disruption to the travelling

public and that services and connections are maintained throughout.

**Annabel Goldie:** We understand that the Winchburgh tunnel will be closed between 13 June and 27 July. Trains will be diverted via Dalmeny and will then have to reverse. Some journeys are expected to take up to 50 per cent longer and some trains may have to be cancelled. In the meantime, thousands of fans will be heading to the open golf championship at St Andrews. Surely First ScotRail, as a matter of urgency, should be contemplating express services and, if appropriate, special golf excursion trains via some of the alternative rail lines between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

**Derek Mackay:** We will work closely with everyone to try to minimise the impact on the network, but with such a major programme of investment and improvement, some disruption is inevitable. That is why, working with Network Rail and others, the works will take place during the summer months. We will make sure that they stick as close to time as possible and we will work to get information out there and minimise the impact on any national event. We will work closely with the new franchise to ensure that we can support the event that was mentioned as best we can.

The line electrification and wider improvements will be a massive investment. It will involve disruption, but it will be worth it. We will do everything that we can to minimise the impact on the travelling public as we improve rail services right across the country.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Engagements

**1. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02518)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

**Kezia Dugdale:** On 8 January, Alex Salmond told *The Courier* that the Scottish National Party would contest the general election arguing that "full fiscal autonomy" should replace the Barnett formula. Did Mr Salmond speak for the First Minister on that issue?

**The First Minister:** Here is another hold-the-front-page moment: I believe that Scotland should be in charge of our own resources.

Labour is trying to divert attention from something rather embarrassing that happened this week. Labour has a cheek to come here and throw bogus accusations at the SNP—as I am sure that Kezia Dugdale is about to—when on Tuesday this week Scottish Labour MPs trooped through the lobbies of the House of Commons with the Conservatives to vote for an additional £30 billion-worth of cuts. That is what we face if Labour gets its way. It is far better for Scotland to be in charge of our own resources.

**Kezia Dugdale:** I will not take a lecture from a First Minister who cannot even spend the money that she has. What is more, the Labour Party stands for a 50p tax, a mansion tax and a bankers tax—all things that the Tories do not support and neither, by the way, does the SNP.

On the radio this morning, Fergus Ewing said that the oil crisis is the

"most serious jobs situation Scotland has faced in living memory"

and yesterday the First Minister said that jobs were under threat. That begs the question why she took so long to find Aberdeen on a map.

During her visit, the First Minister admitted that falling oil prices posed a threat to jobs in Scotland. Will she admit that falling oil prices pose a risk to revenues as well?

**The First Minister:** I remind members across the chamber exactly what Labour stands for. Here it is: the Tories' "Charter for Budget Responsibility"—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Order!

**The First Minister:** —which the Tories themselves say demands £30 billion of additional cuts. That is what Labour voted for with the Conservatives in the House of Commons this week.

Diane Abbott, Labour MP, said that in doing so Labour had done a “great disservice” to hardworking people across the country. The only Labour MP in Scotland who had the gumption to vote against Tory cuts was Katy Clark, Kezia Dugdale’s opponent for deputy leader. I am sure that a few Labour members today are wondering whether they picked the wrong person.

Let us get on to the serious issue of the jobs concerns in the North Sea. It is because there is a serious concern that yesterday I established a jobs task force to work to maintain employment levels in the North Sea, give practical assistance to those who face the prospect of redundancy and give a guarantee to every apprentice working in the oil and gas sector of continuing employment or training. People want that kind of practical help from the Scottish Government, not the petty political point scoring that we are getting from Labour.

**Kezia Dugdale:** Thousands of jobs are at risk in the North Sea and Nicola Sturgeon’s priority is to have a pop at the Labour Party.

The First Minister spent two years telling us how important the Barnett formula is to Scotland. I agree, and the Bank of England governor’s comments yesterday show how important being part of the United Kingdom is for Scotland. The reality of the First Minister’s plan for full fiscal autonomy is that it would trade the stability of Barnett for the instability of oil prices. What assessment has the First Minister made of the cost to public spending in Scotland of her plan to bin Barnett?

**The First Minister:** Westminster parties really have no shame—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** If their argument—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. Mr Baker!

**The First Minister:** If their argument is that Scotland’s finances are not equipped to cope with a period of low oil prices, the simple fact is that that is a direct result of decades of Westminster mismanagement. Does Kezia Dugdale never ask herself why we never hear anyone question Norway’s ability to run its own affairs during periods of low oil prices? It is because Norway has accumulated a £500 billion oil fund. By contrast, Westminster parties have raked in £300 billion from the North Sea and have not saved a single penny. If the problem is Westminster

mismanagement, it strikes me as incredible to suggest that the solution is even more Westminster mismanagement.

On the past two or three years, let me tell Kezia Dugdale what this Government has been doing to help the sector in the North Sea. In 2011 we voted against the 12 per cent hike in the supplementary charge, which has crippled exploration and investment in the North Sea. Labour did not vote against it. Labour has been silent as we have been calling for the tax change that the industry told me yesterday that it desperately needs.

Why does the Scottish Labour Party not get behind the efforts of the Scottish Government and desist from petty political point scoring?

**Kezia Dugdale:** It is a new First Minister but it is the same old song.

At my first outing at First Minister’s question time, I offered the First Minister the Labour benches’ support if she could tell us specifically what she was asking the United Kingdom Government to do. Since then, Jim Murphy has written to Nicola Sturgeon twice to ask her to spell out what she wants from the UK Government, and twice she has failed to respond—we checked that again this morning.

The First Minister’s figures on how much money we would have to spend on public services have been out by billions in the past two years. The experts tell us that Barnett is worth £16 billion for Scotland. The First Minister continues to base her economic and social policy on an oil price that is double the reality. Is it not the case that, although Nicola Sturgeon thinks that it is smart for the SNP’s election campaign, her plan to bin Barnett is downright bad for Scotland?

**The First Minister:** Kezia Dugdale says that she does not know what the Scottish Government is specifically asking the UK Government to do to help the North Sea industry, so let me repeat it for her—Fergus Ewing said it in Parliament in a statement just last week.

First, we want a general investment allowance, which our modelling shows could protect 26,000 jobs every year. We want that allowance to be basin wide, as does the industry. Secondly, we want a reversal of the increase in the supplementary charge. Our modelling shows that that could protect up to 5,600 jobs every year. Thirdly, we want the UK Government to introduce an exploration tax credit. When Norway did that in 2005, the rate of exploration increased fourfold.

Those are the practical measures that we are calling for. If Kezia Dugdale has not heard them, I really do not think that she has been listening hard enough.

When it comes to the fiscal future of Scotland, let me repeat this point: this week, Labour trooped through the lobbies in the House of Commons—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** Labour members trooped through the lobbies, with their allies in the Conservative Party, to impose £30 billion of additional cuts on Scotland. That is what will have an impact on Scotland's public services and Scotland's economy, and Scottish Labour MPs should be deeply ashamed of themselves.

### Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

**2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the First Minister when she will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S4F-02515)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** No immediate plans.

**Ruth Davidson:** Two years ago, this Scottish National Party Government started producing a series of oil and gas bulletins to predict the tax revenues from the North Sea. Those bulletins allowed SNP ministers to tell Scotland that

"There can be little doubt that Scotland is moving into a second oil boom."

We all wish that that was true, but it is not. However, anyone who questioned it was shouted down.

The issue matters because, today, again, the First Minister has confirmed that, after the general election, the Scottish Government wants to get rid of the block grant and use oil to pay for Scotland's schools and hospitals. We might think, therefore, that it would want figures to show how much revenue that would raise in the coming years. Can the First Minister confirm today that the Scottish Government has now decided to stop publishing those bulletins?

**The First Minister:** No. We will publish an oil and gas bulletin in due course. *[Laughter.]*

There is a serious point to be made. In order to predict tax revenues from the North Sea, we have first to know what the tax rates that will apply to the North Sea are going to be. That brings us right back to the point that we are making. The United Kingdom Government has not yet told us what the position will be on the supplementary charge, on an investment allowance or on exploration tax credits. If Ruth Davidson wants to join me in calling today on the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to stop prevaricating and introduce the tax changes that the industry is crying out for, I will welcome her support.

**Ruth Davidson:** I am pleased to hear the First Minister say that the SNP Government is going to produce further oil and gas bulletins. That response seems to be slightly at odds with her oil minister's answer to a parliamentary question that was lodged by my colleague on 18 December, which did not say the same thing. I am happy to make that answer public through the Scottish Parliament information centre.

I would like to know whether future oil and gas bulletins will use exactly the same methodology as the ones that suggested that there would be a second oil boom for Scotland.

I welcome not just the bulletin but all concrete steps to help the oil and gas industry, including the task force that the First Minister is setting up. However, I note that it seems to be reporting to a body whose stated remit is to allow "rapid response" to oil industry needs, but which has not met in seven months.

When it comes to oil, this Government has inflated the figures for political ends and its response has been insufficient and, frankly, anything but rapid.

Yes—let us all work together on short-term issues. However, given that there is an industry in crisis, jobs are being lost and the governor of the Bank of England is saying that Scotland's spending is being protected from such a crash, does the First Minister agree that it is only damaging to talk of ripping the industry out of its current UK framework?

**The First Minister:** First, I welcome Ruth Davidson's commitment to support all practical measures. It is certainly a welcome change of attitude from a supporter of a UK Government that increased the supplementary charge from 20 per cent to 32 per cent, which has had a damaging impact on the industry.

On the first part of her question, the task force that I established yesterday will meet before the end of this month. It will report to the Scottish energy advisory board, which will meet on 16 February—the same day as the Scottish Cabinet will be in Aberdeen—under my chairmanship.

This Government will do everything that we can to help the industry during this period, and we will continue to consider all practical suggestions for what we can do.

When I met industry representatives yesterday, they were universal in their demand for action from the UK Government. They want action now—not sometime in the future—on tax and on accelerating the pace of implementation of the new oil and gas authority, which will be the new regulator for the industry.

Instead of coming here—as she does because it is First Minister’s question time—and suggesting that those things lie within my gift, Ruth Davidson would be far better advised to join me in calling on the UK Government to get its act together and implement the changes now. If she does so, she will have not only my support but the support of the industry.

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** The First Minister will be aware of the announcement of job losses at BP, which is headquartered at Dyce in my constituency, and that today’s *Press and Journal* has suggested that Premier Oil, which is based at Kingswells in my constituency, might follow suit.

I welcome the establishment of the energy jobs task force. How will it interact with those companies and the affected employees? Many of my constituents will be affected by the announcements.

**The First Minister:** The task force will implement a co-ordinated response to the current challenges with all partners in Government, our agencies, the trade unions and industry working together across the sector to maintain jobs and to mitigate the potential impact of any losses. The task force will decide how best to address specific circumstances and will liaise with the companies and the individual employees concerned to identify what practical advice and assistance might be provided. In the process of doing that, they will raise awareness of existing initiatives and of the support that is available from organisations including Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Development International, Skills Development Scotland, local authorities and partnership action for continuing employment. Crucially, the task force will have a role in matching skills requirements to market demand, and will encourage the industry subsectors to collaborate to ensure that core transferable skills are retained here in Scotland.

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab):** Over the past few days, the people of Malawi have been affected by severe flooding in a number of areas in the south of the country and in Rumphu and Karonga in the north. It is reported that at least 48 people have been killed and that 69,000 people have lost their homes or been forced from them. The President has declared a state of natural disaster and has appealed for international help to provide shelter, food and basic sanitation in the affected areas. It is rightly said that it is the poorest and most vulnerable people who are most affected by climate change. In Malawi this week, unfortunately, we have the proof of that.

I ask the First Minister to say what additional help the Government can provide at this time, and

to put on the record the Parliament’s solidarity with our colleagues and friends in Malawi who are struggling to deal with the consequences of the disaster.

**The First Minister:** I commend Patricia Ferguson for raising this important issue in Parliament. I am sure that I speak on behalf of everybody in the chamber when I say that our thoughts are very much with the people of Malawi. I have no hesitation in expressing solidarity with Malawi, as Patricia Ferguson has asked me to do, not just on behalf of the Parliament but on behalf of the entire Scottish nation.

Patricia Ferguson will be well aware of the very good work that the Scottish Government does in Malawi. We stand ready to help with the current situation in any way that we can. It may be helpful if Patricia Ferguson were to meet Fiona Hyslop and Humza Yousaf, the ministers who have responsibility for these matters, both to hear what the Scottish Government is doing and might be able to do, and to pass on her suggestions and those of others to help to develop our thinking on the matter.

### 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-02516)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Matters of importance to the people of Scotland.

**Willie Rennie:** I think that an oil worker in Aberdeen who is about to lose their job would be appalled by what we have witnessed over the past 20 minutes. The First Minister’s response has been completely inadequate. We are all interested in the future of the oil sector, and to claim otherwise lets her down. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Willie Rennie:** Working in partnership is essential. I was pleased to see the establishment of the Scottish Government’s task force yesterday, but I was surprised that United Kingdom bodies such as Jobcentre Plus, the Department of Energy and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills were excluded. I invite the First Minister to open up the task force to include all those who have an interest in the future of that important sector.

**The First Minister:** I agree with Willie Rennie in many respects, including the tenor of his question. I believe that the most important thing that we have to deal with right now is the jobs situation, which is why yesterday I announced the jobs task force and the apprenticeship guarantee. The first question that I was asked was not about jobs; it

was an attempt to score political points. I am glad that Willie Rennie has brought us back to the question of jobs.

Nobody is being excluded from membership of the task force. I want to ensure that we work with all interested parties and everybody who has a contribution to make. As Willie Rennie has just heard, we are making specific calls on the United Kingdom Government for the action that we believe it should take, but I am also open to the UK Government's contributing to the work that we are doing. I am happy to take forward Willie Rennie's suggestion in that spirit.

**Willie Rennie:** If the First Minister is changing the Government's policy to include Jobcentre Plus, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department of Energy, I welcome that. However, that is not what she said on television last night, when she deliberately excluded those organisations from having a role in the task force.

She started her premiership by claiming that she wanted consensus, but all she seems to be interested in now is exclusion. When so many people's jobs are at stake, will she change her mind and clarify whether Jobcentre Plus, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department of Energy will be included? That is what Parliament wants to hear.

**The First Minister:** I do not know what Willie Rennie thinks he saw on television last night, but I said nothing at any point yesterday that excluded anybody from the work of the task force. In direct answer to Willie Rennie's question, I say yes—I would welcome the contribution of all the agencies that he has spoken about, and we will seek to procure the engagement of those agencies.

Willie Rennie might be interested to know that, with the recent jobs task force that the Government established in relation to the closure and job losses at Vion, the Scottish Government worked seamlessly with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus. Our record says that when it comes to protecting jobs and standing up for crucial sectors of our economy, this Government will work with anyone. Therefore, I will be happy to have the contribution from all those agencies and departments that Willie Rennie has spoken about. Instead of continuing to suggest that there is some disagreement between us, he should be welcoming the outbreak of consensus on that point.

#### **National Health Service (Front-line Services)**

**4. Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government is taking to support national health service front-line services. (S4F-02522)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Scottish Government has protected and increased NHS Scotland's front-line budget, which has enabled boards to increase NHS staffing to a record level. That has been achieved against a backdrop of the current Westminster Government's slashing of our fiscal resource budget by 10 per cent. This week, we announced a further uplift for NHS territorial boards of £65 million in the next financial year, which will ensure that all boards' funding increases by at least 1 per cent above the rate of inflation.

**Jim Eadie:** Given that 60 per cent of the cuts to the Scottish revenue budget that are being imposed by Westminster are still to come, does the First Minister agree that, to give the NHS, its dedicated staff and the people who use it day in and day out the certainty that they need for the future, all parties in this chamber should commit to increasing the NHS revenue budget in real terms for the remainder of this session of Parliament and for each and every year in the next session?

**The First Minister:** Yes, I agree strongly with that. That is exactly why we have committed to increasing the NHS budget in real terms, not only for the remainder of this session of Parliament but for each and every year of the next session. That commitment to the resource budget of the NHS is extremely important for planning purposes, and it is incumbent on every party in the chamber to give an unequivocal commitment to match those plans so that our NHS has that degree of certainty for the years ahead.

**Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Does the First Minister anticipate further pressure on NHS services over the next few weeks?

**The First Minister:** The NHS always works under pressure. It has worked under pressure since the day and hour that it was established in 1948 but, under pressure, it does a fantastic job. Those working on the front line do a fantastic job.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport and I closely engage with and have oversight of the current winter pressures that the NHS is coping with, and we will continue to do that. Yesterday, the health secretary spoke in the chamber of our determination to learn for the future and to look at what we can do better with NHS boards to prepare even better for winter. Given that we are still in the grip of winter, it is important for all of us in the Parliament to record our thanks to all our staff across the NHS for the fantastic work that they are doing.

#### **Budget Underspend**

**5. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister for what reason the Scottish Government's budget underspends have

increased over the last few years when its budgets have been reduced. (S4F-02525)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I am glad at last to hear Jackie Baillie at least acknowledge the fact that the Scottish Government's budgets have been reduced. In fact, over the current spending review period, we face a real-terms cut in our fiscal departmental expenditure limit budget of about 10 per cent, with our capital budget being cut by over a quarter in real terms. As we have just heard, Labour has signed up to continue with those cuts by voting for the Tory budget plans this week.

On the budget underspend, the claims that I have heard from the Labour Party go some way to explaining why Labour is no longer in charge of our public finances. In terms of the money that the Scottish Government actually has discretion over, the underspend amounts to £145 million, which is 0.5 per cent of our budget. As John Swinney told Parliament in June, every penny of that will be spent this year. By contrast, by the time that the last Labour Government left office in 2007, it had accumulated an underspend of £1.5 billion.

**Jackie Baillie:** That—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Jackie Baillie:** The budget underspend has risen to £444 million. That is double the amount in the previous financial year. That has happened at a time when teacher numbers are being cut, college places have been slashed and police stations have been closed the length and breadth of the country. When John Swinney said,

“Long gone are the days when hundreds of millions of pounds of government money would be underspent each year, doing nothing to help communities around the country”,

was he just indulging in wishful thinking?

**The First Minister:** Jackie Baillie has just demonstrated why the entire country should cross its fingers and hope that she is never in charge of the Scottish Government's budget. It is obvious from her question that there is one important fact that she, as Labour's shadow finance spokesperson, does not understand. The figure that she cites is £444 million. Does she not know that 80 per cent of that figure reflects variances in annually managed expenditure programmes and other non-cash accounting budgets? Those are underspends of money over which the Scottish Government has no discretion; we cannot decide that it is spent in any other way.

That is a pretty basic fact about Scottish Government budgeting, and I suggest that if Jackie Baillie wants to go any further in the role that she is in, she does some studying and gets herself familiar with it. The underspend of money

that we control is, as I said, £145 million, which is 0.5 per cent of our budget. I think that most people would describe that as prudent budgeting. Every single penny is being spent now to protect our public services. I will take John Swinney's prudent stewardship of our budget over Jackie Baillie's budgetary ignorance any day.

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** Is it true that, last year, the Scottish Government had an underspend of millions of pounds on the youth employment Scotland programme at a time when youth unemployment was more than 15 per cent?

**The First Minister:** Any underspend in the money for which the Scottish Government is responsible carries forward into this year to be fully spent on programmes of the type that Gavin Brown is talking about. Not a single penny of that money is lost to what the Scottish Government seeks to support.

Given the Scottish Government's record on improving the position on youth employment and unemployment—there is still much work to do—Gavin Brown should welcome the initiatives that we are taking and, into the bargain, welcome the prudent financial stewardship of John Swinney, which has allowed us to do so much to help so many people throughout the country.

### Terrorist Attacks in France

**6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with the United Kingdom Government in light of the recent terrorist attacks in France. (S4F-02517)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Scottish Government officials have been in regular contact with UK Government counterparts and Police Scotland regarding the recent terrorist attacks in France and what the implications might be for Scotland. I have also been in contact with the French consul general and have written to President Hollande expressing Scotland's support for, and solidarity with, the French people.

**Liz Smith:** I thank the First Minister for some reassurance. It is clear that one of the most sensitive aspects of the current situation is the debate about a possible ban on extremist speakers at universities and other educational institutions. Will the First Minister confirm whether the Scottish Government is also engaged in those discussions with Universities UK and whether, prior to the new anti-terrorist legislation that is expected at the end of February, advice is being sought for Scottish educational institutions?

**The First Minister:** I thank Liz Smith for raising those concerns and for the way in which she did it.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill will require specified authorities such as further and higher education institutions to

“have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.”

There will be statutory guidance to those authorities on how they might exercise that duty. It is vital that the legislation is appropriate and proportionate to Scottish circumstances—I raised that point at the last meeting of the joint ministerial committee. Therefore, we are working closely with the UK Government to draft the guidance specifically for authorities in Scotland. Officials are linking closely with our stakeholders, including universities, to ensure that the draft guidance is fit for purpose.

I hope that that gives Liz Smith the reassurance that she was looking for. Obviously, the Government will keep the Parliament updated on the matter as appropriate.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** When it comes to anticipating and preventing terrorism, under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 the intelligence services can make an application for a warrant to intercept communications. What co-operation is there between the UK and Scottish Governments in that regard? Does the First Minister consider that that legislation, together with other legislation, is sufficient without even further legislation being introduced on such matters?

**The First Minister:** As the member is no doubt aware, all applications to intercept communications on national security grounds are a matter for the relevant secretary of state in the UK Government, so there would be no routine co-operation on such decisions.

I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice would be happy to meet Christine Grahame to discuss how those decisions are taken and the division that exists between the various issues for which responsibility is devolved and those for which it is reserved. If that would be of interest to Christine Grahame, I am sure that Michael Matheson would be happy to accommodate such a meeting.

## Living Wage

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11325, in the name of John Mason, on equal pay. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the recent report from the Resolution Foundation, which suggests that a record five million people in the UK are stuck in low-paid jobs, including in Glasgow Shettleston; believes that the statutory UK national minimum wage of £6.50 per hour is too low to counterbalance the ever increasing cost of living; understands that the living wage of £7.65 is only a voluntary scheme and is not statutory, therefore does not ensure equal pay protection to all workers in the public, private or voluntary sectors, and notes the belief that the only way to ensure that genuine pay equality is achieved would be to make the living wage a statutory scheme for all employers.

12:32

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I thank the members who signed the motion and thereby allowed the debate to go ahead. They include Neil Findlay, John Finnie—who is not well—and Jean Urquhart.

I should start by noting that the figures in the motion are now slightly out of date. The statutory minimum wage is still £6.50 per hour but, as of 3 November, the living wage has increased to £7.85, whereas it was £7.65 in October, when I wrote the motion.

I will make three main points, the first of which is that the voluntary living wage is good. I first became familiar with the concept of the living wage while I was in London, where there was an active campaign to expand its adoption. There, the gap between the living wage and the statutory minimum wage is even wider, as the living wage in London is currently £9.15.

The Living Wage Foundation tells us that more than 1,000 employers throughout the United Kingdom have signed up to the living wage, 70 of which are in Scotland, and I am sure that there are other employers, including me, who pay the living wage but have not formally signed up to the campaign.

The foundation also tells us that 5.28 million workers in the United Kingdom are being paid less than the living wage, some 400,000 of whom are in Scotland. Of those, 150,000 are on the minimum wage. Many of those employees are in the retail, catering and care sectors.

**Alex Salmond (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** As the member knows, the support that the Scottish Government provided in 2011 to put

public sector workers on the living wage was crucial. The Labour Administration that preceded us did not manage to provide that. It is also crucial that large companies in Scotland such as SSE and Abellio have signed up to the living wage.

Does John Mason welcome the fact that, this morning, Keenan Recycling near New Deer, which is a small company in rural Aberdeenshire, became the latest signatory to the living wage campaign? Does he agree that it is particularly important that smaller employers in Scotland sign up to what is an incredibly important campaign?

**John Mason:** Yes—I absolutely welcome that. I will say something now that I was going to say later. Paying the living wage is a huge benefit for a company. It says a lot about a company and its social responsibility and says that it has a conscience. Obviously, there are economic factors. The company must be able to pay the living wage, but it is positive if it makes that commitment.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** John Mason mentioned the care sector, which is one of the sectors in which there are problems with low pay. Does he agree that one of the main issues is that local authority budgets have been driven down and that contracts that have been externalised have ended up being based on price competition rather than the quality of the service that is paid for, so largely the only place to take money from to get the price down is the workers who deliver the service, which is increasingly poor?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will reimburse John Mason's time for the interventions.

**John Mason:** That is very generous, Presiding Officer—thank you.

I broadly agree with the point that has been made. I am certainly not happy with the outsourcing that has gone on in councils such as Glasgow City Council. That has been a way of getting around providing proper pay and conditions, which a lot of councils seek to adhere to.

**Neil Findlay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**John Mason:** No, not again. I am sorry. The member can make a speech if he wants to.

The key factor is that employers should pay their employees enough to live on. There is something far wrong in someone working full time and not being able to live on that. Their wage or salary has to be topped up with tax credits or other benefits. I very much welcome the system of tax credits, which tops up wages to a level that folk can live on—obviously, that is good for the individual and the family—but they are in effect a subsidy by the state to employers that, for

whatever reason, do not pay a proper wage. It also holds good, of course, that if employers paid a living wage, the state would save the money that is used for tax credits and could use it for other purposes.

As I said, there are also business benefits from paying the living wage, including a higher employee retention rate and better productivity.

My first point was that the voluntary living wage is good; my second point is about what is wrong with it. The main problem is that it is voluntary. We as a Parliament, a Government or individual MSPs can all ensure that we pay it, other parts of the public sector and the voluntary sector often pay it, and we can encourage other employers to pay it. At this stage, I mention James Kelly's amendment to my motion, which seeks to help workers who are on public sector contracts. The Government advice is that that is not within our legal powers. I think that my colleague Nigel Don will touch on that.

If we can expand the use of the living wage, I would absolutely welcome that, but the underlying problem is still that it is voluntary and it helps only workers in the public sector or workers who are on public sector contracts. Are we just going to give up on all the other workers? What about the workers in the private sector and the voluntary sector? Do we not care about them?

Problems are also created if one employer pays the living wage and another does not. The unethical employer will be able to undercut the ethical one—I think that Mr Findlay made that point—and the public sector can be made to look artificially expensive compared with much of the private sector. The living wage is only a halfway house—a stepping stone to something better.

My third point is that the real answer is in the statutory minimum wage. To give credit where it is due, Labour did well to introduce the statutory minimum wage for the whole UK at Westminster. I remember that, before that, security staff—certainly in the east end of Glasgow—were paid £1 an hour. Even allowing for inflation, that was total exploitation.

That statutory minimum wage was a good start, but it always needed to be increased by more than just wage inflation in order to get to a decent level—that is, the living wage. Sadly, successive Labour and Conservative Governments at Westminster have failed to do that. I accept that, when the statutory minimum wage was introduced, there was a lot of scaremongering from some employers that it would lead to a huge loss of jobs. That has proved not to be the case, so the argument for the low introductory rate for the statutory minimum wage no longer exists.

What disappoints me most about James Kelly's amendment is that it would drop from my motion the statement that the

"UK national minimum wage of £6.50 per hour is too low".

As Mr Kelly is not here, I would be delighted to hear from any of his colleagues that a future Labour Government at Westminster would bring the statutory minimum wage up to the full £7.85 as quickly as possible. To be fair, I would also like to hear from the Scottish Government that, if the Scottish National Party were ever to support a minority UK Government, increasing the statutory minimum wage would be a priority.

I must say that I was very disappointed that paragraph 59 of the Smith commission report said that the national minimum wage should remain reserved. I hope that the power can still be devolved. I believe that there would be an appetite here from at least two parties to increase the minimum wage further than a Westminster Government might do.

We could touch on a range of other issues, including whether younger workers should get the same wage as others who do the same job and whether the living wage should be the same throughout the country. I will not go into those matters today. However, I hope that I have made clear my fundamental point: although having a voluntary living wage is a good thing, it will always be second best, and the answer must be a proper statutory minimum wage.

12:40

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I congratulate John Mason on securing a debate that deals with an important economic and social issue.

Poverty and low pay eat away at people. They put strains on family relationships and impact on children's education, nutrition, wellbeing and happiness. They also have a huge impact on the health of individuals and whole communities. Dr Gerry McCartney, a public health expert, recently said that the living wage is the policy that would impact most on health inequalities. Putting money into the pockets of the lowest paid is the best way to reduce health inequalities; it also stimulates the local economy.

I agree with John Mason that the statutory minimum wage is far too low. In my county of West Lothian, 16,000 people are earning less than the £7.85 an hour living wage. There are 427,000 people across Scotland in the same position.

We have witnessed the gap widen between top earners and those at the bottom of the earnings scale. Under the coalition Government, we have seen tax cuts for the rich and pay and benefit cuts for the poor. We should not be surprised by that,

as that is central to the political ideology and ethos of Gavin Brown and Murdo Fraser's party. Furthermore, the gender pay gap is still evident—women workers in Scotland earn around 17 per cent less than their male colleagues.

Only today, the UK Government has named and shamed 37 employers, including some in Scotland, that failed to pay the minimum wage. I am surprised that the UK Government did that, although I congratulate it on doing so. The employers include the multinational fashion chain H&M. It claims to be an ethical retailer, yet it did not pay the minimum wage to some of its staff. In 2012, that company earned \$400 million in profit in one quarter.

All of us across the Scottish body politic have a responsibility for policy in this area. The UK Government has responsibility for the national minimum wage, while the Scottish Government has responsibility for a host of policies, including spending a £10 billion procurement budget. Local government and many public agencies have responsibility for pay policy and contracting. All those bodies can take decisions to increase the level of pay if they have the political will to do so.

Mr Mason is wrong about Glasgow City Council and Cordia, which pay the living wage to their care staff. It would be good for him to make a correction on the record.

It was unforgivable that, when we had the opportunity in this Parliament to use our powers to ensure that under public sector contracts all contractors are paid the living wage, the Government failed to take it. What a missed opportunity that was to improve the lives of people in Shettleston and West Lothian and across Scotland.

Under the Scottish Government's watch, we see a dispute at National Museums Scotland. Although the lowest-paid workers are paid the living wage, the removal of weekend allowances will mean that they will lose around £3,000 a year from their pay packet. The dispute has gone on for a year. I hope that Mr Mason agrees that the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs needs to resolve the dispute immediately.

**The Minister for Youth and Women's Employment (Annabelle Ewing):** Further to yesterday's tribunal ruling on the long-standing equal pay debacle, will the member be calling on his North Lanarkshire Council colleagues not to proceed with an appeal, to ensure that the people who are entitled to the pay that they should have received years ago now get it?

**Neil Findlay:** I think that equal pay claims, including that long-standing issue, should be settled as quickly as possible. That does not get us away from the fact that, on the Scottish

Government's watch, the lowest-paid people are going to lose £3,000 unless the cabinet secretary gets her act together.

Next week, we in the Parliament will be only too aware of pay policy issues, when staff in this very building go on strike as part of a rolling programme of action by Scottish Government staff protesting against pay policy. We all have a role to play in addressing low pay issues, and no person or party has a monopoly of compassion or interest in the issue. I know that Mr Mason's concern is genuine, but low pay and poverty are not inevitable. It is up to us all to work to eradicate them, but that will take political will and commitment.

12:45

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** I congratulate John Mason on securing the debate, and I note his consistency and persistence in pursuing the issue. It is easy to agree with elements of his motion and, in particular, with elements of his speech, but I disagree with and take a different view on other elements.

On the areas where we agree, I think that it is right to welcome the progress that has been made over the past couple of years, and I am prepared to acknowledge the efforts of the Scottish Government and other levels of government on that. Progress has been and will continue to be made.

We should also acknowledge and welcome the improvements that business has made. Mr Mason gave the statistics and referred to 1,000 employers across the UK, with a certain number—I do not remember whether he said 70 or 80—in Scotland. We support any initiatives to encourage improvements in pay conditions and to drive the living wage forward, but we in the Conservatives certainly prefer more carrot than stick and prefer the voluntary approach to any kind of statutory approach.

Like John Mason, I am interested to hear what the Scottish Government has to say to his closing question whether it will demand a statutory living wage in any negotiations or discussions. The white paper contains no commitment to a statutory living wage; it contains a commitment to increase the national minimum wage in line with inflation but says nothing about a statutory commitment to a living wage. I am interested to hear whether that position remains the same or has changed since the white paper's publication and the referendum.

My party and I take a different view from Mr Mason on the proposal to make the living wage mandatory and statutory. Every year, I look at the reports that the Low Pay Commission lays in the UK and think carefully about what they say. The

commission has to look at the effect of any increase in the minimum wage on low-paid workers and their employment prospects; in other words, it has to perform a balancing act. It has to look not just at improving those workers' standard of living through what they are paid but at the effect on jobs and employment prospects. The commission performs that balancing act pretty effectively.

It is important to look at the make-up of the Low Pay Commission. It is not an employers forum where only one side of the argument is put forward. Among the current commissioners—or at least those who were involved in the most recent report—we see a strong balance between employers, members of trade unions, local government representatives and academics. All factors and all parts of the matrix come into play, and the commissioners collectively agree an increase in the minimum wage that they think can help people without damaging the economy and employment prospects.

There are other issues to consider. After all, increasing pay by too much, too quickly will at some point—there will be disagreement in the chamber about where that point is—have a damaging effect on the economy. The Low Pay Commission takes a view on where that point ought to be, and the UK Government follows that recommendation, but I accept that others will take a different view.

We have to think carefully about the impact on smaller companies. I think that everyone will welcome Alex Salmond's comments about the employer that, I presume, is in his constituency, but for many smaller businesses, the issue is more troubling and difficult. In particular sectors—John Mason mentioned some of them—companies and businesses have tighter margins, and the objective is far more difficult to achieve.

We welcome the debate, and again I congratulate John Mason on securing it. However, we part company with him about making the living wage statutory.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Don, your request-to-speak button seems to have gone off. Will you confirm whether you still want to speak?

12:50

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** I do, Presiding Officer—thank you. I think I just moved some heavy paperwork and it did the rest for me.

I am grateful to John Mason for securing the debate. I am also grateful to Neil Findlay for representing Labour Party members, who otherwise did not seem to want even to debate

their own amendment. I will address the issues that were in the amendment and explain why I think they did not want to debate it.

I start by considering Gavin Brown's contribution. I listened carefully to every word that he said. He feels that the living wage should be a voluntary code because if we increase wages too quickly there will be other effects. Undoubtedly, that is an economic fact.

However, I would ask myself why on earth we have a minimum wage in the first place, because nobody seems to dispute that we need one. The answer is that it sets the norm. As John Mason has pointed out, if it is too low, Government has to top it up with benefits of one sort or another. That means that the Government is subsidising the inefficient employers who apparently have such poor margins that they cannot pay the appropriate minimum wage, which is actually the living wage. Gavin Brown might like to consider the economics of his argument. Quite frankly, we would not be having this debate if the minimum wage was set at something that was recognisably the living wage. It is because it has fallen behind that we are here.

The Labour Party has argued many times that we missed an opportunity in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. I take the opportunity to put it clearly on the record, in the context of the debate, that we did not have an opportunity in the act to demand that contractors and businesses pay the living wage. That is quite simply because all the legal advice that we got said that we should not.

Time does not allow for me to refer to the response that we got from the European Union. The Local Government and Regeneration Committee's report in 2012 on the living wage noted that East Renfrewshire Council, which I think Hugh Henry mentioned in a debate not so long ago,

"advised that it had no preconditions on its tenders for contractors to pay the living wage and added that it would have 'some unease' about such a rule, including concerns over its legality."

Even local councils, which the Labour Party prays in aid in terms of the missed opportunity, recognised that we could not do it. I, for one, would be extremely grateful if the Labour Party stopped suggesting that we should.

**Neil Findlay:** Mr Don will be aware that it all depends on who we ask for that legal opinion and what legal opinion we get back.

**Nigel Don:** The legal opinion that we get back is couched in terms that say that it is unlikely that the rules that Mr Findlay's party wanted would have been consistent with European law. When we are advised that something is inconsistent with law, we do not do it.

If I have half a moment, I would suggest that Mr Findlay looks up—

**Neil Findlay** *rose*—

**Nigel Don:** No, just a moment—please listen for a while. I would suggest that Mr Findlay looks up Clay Cross Urban District Council. Unfortunately, I cannot give the member my old administrative law casebook, because I have thrown it out; one never should. If he cares to go and look it up, he will discover that councillors have a fiduciary duty. The wise ones remember that and do not do things when the legal advisers tell them that they should not.

**Neil Findlay:** I make no comment on the validity of it, but why press ahead with minimum unit pricing then?

**Nigel Don:** There is a very different legal basis for that and it is somewhat of a stretch from where we are now.

Presiding Officer, I am conscious that my time is gone. This is a very interesting debate and there are numerous other things that I might have said.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Don, I will reimburse you for interventions.

**Nigel Don:** Thank you. In that case, the last point that I want to make is simply to suggest to anybody watching or listening that "The Spirit Level", a recent book by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, ought to be compulsory reading for anybody who can read because, quite simply, it discusses the economic justification for doing everything that we can to remove financial inequalities from society. Curious though it may seem—the Tories manifestly do not believe it—it is even better for those at the top of the economic pile, as well as those at the bottom. I encourage everybody to be familiar with what is in that book; we will have much better debates as a result.

12:55

**The Minister for Youth and Women's Employment (Annabelle Ewing):** I, too, congratulate my colleague John Mason on securing the debate. I know that he has a strong track record of working to tackle poverty and low pay for his constituents in Glasgow Shettleston.

I stress at the outset that the Scottish Government takes the issue of low pay very seriously indeed. Moreover, addressing low pay features prominently in the Scottish Government's programme for government, in which we recognise the real difference that the living wage makes to the people of Scotland and the real difference—to deal with one of Mr Brown's points—that progressive employment and social policies make to the long-term success of business and the

wider community. Indeed, Alex Salmond helpfully advised us of a small business in his constituency, in New Deer, that has just become a living wage accredited employer. That shows the desire on the part of employers across Scotland—whether they are small, medium-sized or large businesses—to recognise that progressive employment policies are the future for sustainable, long-term success in business.

As the chamber will be aware, the Scottish Government is leading the way by doing all that we can within the powers that we have to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from the living wage. For example, despite the sharp reductions imposed on the Scottish budget by the UK Government that we heard the First Minister talking about in First Minister's questions today, we have nonetheless been able to incorporate a number of distinct measures within our pay policy to protect the pay of our lowest-earning public sector workers, including a commitment to support the Scottish living wage for the duration of this session of Parliament—in fact, we are the first Scottish Government to do so.

Of course, absent statutory powers for Scotland over pay and employment law, that Scottish Government commitment can, by definition, only cover those workers who are covered by our own pay policy, not the wider public sector or private sector. At the same time, however, we are absolutely determined to do what we can to ensure that the inequalities of low pay are tackled in Scotland.

**Alex Salmond:** I do not know whether the minister is aware of just how serious the situation is with regard to the minimum wage not keeping pace with inflation. I have some figures from the Scottish Parliament information centre that show us that, in two out of the four years from 2007, the minimum wage did not keep pace with either rate of inflation and that for the three years after that—2011, 2012 and 2013—the minimum wage did not keep pace with either the consumer prices index or the retail prices index. Is it not astonishing that, over all those years, the statutory minimum wage did not even keep pace with inflation?

**Annabelle Ewing:** I thank the member for his intervention. I agree—I think that it is an absolute disgrace and it is a real kick in the teeth to workers across Scotland and indeed the UK. In my research for today's debate, I noted a comment from Michael Meacher on the minimum wage, made on his website on 5 November 2012, where he said:

“Blair appointed a Low Pay Commission headed by a CBI big-wig in order to ensure it started at far too low a level, £3.60, and it has never been increased at a rate slightly above the rise in average wages, as was intended, so that it would grow slowly but steadily towards the two-thirds target.”

I think that, in this instance, Michael Meacher sums up the situation very well in terms of Westminster's failure to act in the interests of the workers.

**Neil Findlay:** The minister quoted Michael Meacher. At least Michael Meacher and Tony Blair turned up to vote for the minimum wage, unlike some people.

**Annabelle Ewing:** I say gently to Mr Findlay that I am looking at the voting record and I helpfully suggest that he might want to look at it himself—it is in *Hansard*. I believe that Tony Blair missed all four Commons votes; Jim Murphy missed the vote on second reading; and 33 of 56 Scottish Labour MPs missed another vote. It would be helpful if Mr Findlay went to look at the *Hansard* record himself.

The Scottish Government has provided further funding to the Poverty Alliance to promote take-up of the living wage accreditation initiative, and it has set a target for at least 150 accredited employers by the end of 2015. That will help to increase the number of employers who are paying the living wage in all sectors throughout Scotland, and thereby help to make decent pay the standard in our country. As at 30 December 2014, the number of accredited employers had increased to 90—slightly higher than the figure that John Mason quoted—so we are evidently making good progress in that regard.

Although the Scottish Government is not able to set pay levels in the private sector or in the wider public sector in Scotland, we are doing all that we can to encourage all organisations to ensure that all staff on lower incomes receive a fair level of pay. We stated in our programme for Government that we will introduce a Scottish business pledge. We will make it clear that we want companies, in return for support from the Scottish Government and its agencies, such as Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to commit to paying the living wage and to fair work, among other things.

The key problem, as we know, is that power over pay is still held in London.

**Gavin Brown:** Will the member give way?

**Annabelle Ewing:** I will take a very brief intervention.

**Gavin Brown:** John Mason asked a question that deserves an answer. A statutory living wage was rejected in the white paper. What is the Scottish Government's current position on that issue?

**Annabelle Ewing:** It should be noted that the white paper set out that we would consider carefully the recommendations of the expert working group on welfare. We intend that, further

to that work, the fair work convention will look at issues of pay.

It is no secret that the Scottish Government has shown by its deeds that it is very supportive of the living wage, and we have tried to go as far as we can with the powers that we currently have to ensure that workers in Scotland get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

With regard to procurement, it is important for me to reply to the points that have been raised in the debate. I appreciate that I am going a wee bit beyond time, Presiding Officer, but I have taken some interventions.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Yes—I confirm that I can give you extra time.

**Annabelle Ewing:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

It is important that we recognise the key problem, which is that this Parliament does not have power over pay. That power is still held in Westminster, which is a position that the Westminster unionist parties wish to maintain.

Of course, the alternative would have been to ensure that we in Scotland could get power over pay, but, again, the Westminster unionist parties did not seek that power during the Smith commission process. Indeed, it appears that the Labour Party would rather have a Tory Government at Westminster than a Scottish Government here in Scotland in charge of pay for Scottish workers. As we look to the months ahead, with the Westminster election looming, the voters of Scotland will find that increasingly difficult to understand.

In addition to our work on statutory guidance for procurement, we will hold a summit with business leaders to see what further work we can do to ensure that the living wage becomes the norm for pay policy in Scotland. I referred to the fair work convention, which we will set up to look at workforce matters further to the publication of the report, "Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland".

I had many other things to say today, Presiding Officer, including on the important issue of the pay gap and female employment, so I hope that there will be another opportunity at hand. I remind members that I am always happy to come to the chamber to speak about the important issues of fair work, fair pay and gender equality in the workplace.

I thank John Mason for bringing this important debate to the chamber today. The way forward is to ensure that we in Scotland have the pay and employment powers that are necessary to tackle inequality in our country. At present, we operate with our hands tied behind our back. As I said, the

voters of Scotland will, in the months ahead, give some thought to where they wish those powers to lie.

13:04

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is the election of a member for appointment to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. I have received one valid nomination for appointment. The nomination is John Pentland.

The question is, that John Pentland be elected for appointment to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. Members should press the yes, no or abstain button.

### For

Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

### Abstentions

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the vote on the appointment of John Pentland to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body is: For 32, Against 0, Abstentions 16.

As a majority of members have voted in favour, John Pentland is duly elected for appointment to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

I congratulate John Pentland on his appointment and, on behalf of the corporate body members, thank Dave Stewart, who has been a member of the corporate body since 2011 and has done absolutely sterling work on members' behalf in it. I look forward, as I know that my colleagues do, to working with John Pentland in the future.

## Emergency Services

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-12060, in the name of Michael Matheson, on commending the people who keep Scotland safe in emergencies.

14:32

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** I am grateful for the opportunity to recognise the excellent work that is undertaken by the emergency services across Scotland.

Our emergency services are individually and collectively services that we can be incredibly proud of. Brave and dedicated men and women are prepared to put their lives on the line on a daily basis to ensure that we are kept safe. When they are called on, they respond quickly and without hesitation to rescue, provide care and manage any incident or event.

**Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** I am sure that the cabinet secretary is aware of the traumatic and tragic incident at Clydebank police station last week. Does he agree that people in the emergency services, particularly the police, are sometimes thought to have a suit of steel around their emotions, although, in fact, under the uniform is a mere human being who is to be commended for their professional conduct and attitude? I hope that all members will want to let them know that they have our full support in those circumstances and that, more important, they will get personal support, as well, should they need it.

**Michael Matheson:** I am aware of the terrible incident at Clydebank police station last week. Of course, the emergency services responded in an exemplary way to deal with that particular issue.

I am sure that the member will recognise that again, in 2014, we witnessed events of a catastrophic proportion in Glasgow city centre at the end of the year—a time that is traditionally reserved for family and friends, and good spirits. There was also the unfortunate accident that involved the Cemfjord cargo ship, which was en route from Denmark to Cheshire. Despite an extensive land and sea search, the eight crewmen from that vessel have not been found. Again, I pass on our thoughts and condolences to all the families and friends of the loved ones who lost their lives and pass on our thoughts to those who are still being treated and those who were caught up in or witnessed those tragic events. It is at times such as these that we see our emergency services act so bravely, selflessly, effectively and timeously.

We owe our gratitude for the immediate and fast work of the first responders, the NHS Scotland staff who provided the injured with the best care and attention and those who quickly put in place arrangements to support families and those affected members of the public. However, we should not forget that the men and women of our emergency services, although highly trained, feel the same pain, fear and emotion. They go home at the end of each shift to family and loved ones still carrying the scars of what they have witnessed.

Earlier today, I met some of the police officers who were first on the scene at the Glasgow bin lorry accident on 22 December—the deceased-victim identification officers and the family liaison officers who supported the families following the events. I was struck by their professionalism, their dedication and how they responded to the accident. The first responders included some who were off duty but were in the area, and a young new police officer who was only five weeks into his probationary training and was one of the first on the scene.

It is not just events at home that raise our attention, concern and thoughts. Last week's chilling events in France make only too real the risks that are faced daily.

The work of the voluntary sector emergency organisations is increasingly intrinsic to Scotland's multi-agency approach to emergency response. Their commitment, dedication and courage are highly valued by the Scottish Government, by the communities that they serve and by Scotland's emergency services, with which they work shoulder to shoulder. They have a unique capability to put boots on the ground in communities during emergencies, as well as through tackling what can be long-term and challenging recovery processes.

We regularly witness that through the selfless work of the Scottish mountain rescue teams, who provide a front-line, world-class voluntary search and rescue service, helping those in need of assistance 24/7, 365 days a year. In 2013, 780 people were assisted across 590 incidents, during which the 27 volunteer mountain rescue teams gave over 27,500 volunteer-hours—a remarkable achievement by all those involved.

That selfless work on land is replicated at sea by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. In 2013, the 236 vital lifeboat stations around our coasts undertook 995 launches with 1,007 rescues, saving 29 lives. Altogether, more than 37,000 hours were logged by volunteer crews. That is a huge lifesaving resource.

Medical support is provided by the volunteers of St Andrew's First Aid and the British Red Cross, who give up their time to attend a range of events

across Scotland, from football matches to music events, to ensure that everyone can enjoy themselves safely.

Within the blue-light services, we must acknowledge the excellent work that is done by special constables and lay advisers in Police Scotland, as well as the work that is done through the retained duty system and by the volunteer firefighters, who play a vital role in keeping communities safe, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Scotland's communities continue to play an important role by using local skills, knowledge and commitment in ways that complement the work of the emergency responders. That includes local community resilience groups; the voluntary community first responder scheme, supported by the Scottish Ambulance Service; and the Police Scotland youth volunteers programme, which provides young people aged between 13 and 18 with the opportunity to gain confidence and develop leadership skills by working with the police and volunteering in their local area.

In 2013-14, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service attended almost 28,000 fires, and the Scottish Ambulance Service saw an increase in its emergency responses, responding to more than 650,000 incidents and reaching life-threatening incidents in an average of 6.5 minutes. Over the course of the past year, Police Scotland has responded to more than 497,000 emergency calls raised through the 999 route.

Of course, 2014 brought a lot to celebrate, but we must acknowledge the emergency services' role in delivering a successful Commonwealth games and Ryder cup. The high level of pre-planning and resource that was committed to ensuring that both events could progress safely, without incident and with the resilience to react if, where and when gave confidence to all those who took part and attended these events, and that fact will not have gone unnoticed by the thousands of visitors and spectators who came to Scotland and who, in turn, will have taken away a lasting impression.

We cannot overlook the significant prevention activities in which our emergency services and voluntary organisations are actively engaged. A good example is the ready for winter campaign, which has been delivered for the fourth year this winter and has been a true success, due in no small part to the work of our emergency responders in delivering its important message.

I also highlight the work that Education Scotland is carrying out with schools and local authorities as part of curriculum for excellence to help pupils understand how to prepare for and cope with emergencies. Meanwhile, the Scottish Fire and

Rescue Service is committed to reducing the number of accidental dwelling fires in Scotland through a programme of home safety visits targeted at those who are most vulnerable to the risk of fire in their homes, and figures show that 71,000 such visits were carried out in 2013-14. Of course, it is not just front-line officers whom we have to thank but all the staff who in so many different ways help to make our emergency services exemplary.

However, while reflecting on the positives, we should not fail to acknowledge the challenges ahead. I reassure this Parliament and the people of Scotland that this Government is committed to supporting our emergency services and ensuring that the communities of Scotland continue to receive the excellent levels of service, protection and support that they have come to rely on, be that through our continued commitment to 1,000 extra police officers, our shared goal of keeping local priorities at the heart of our emergency services or the importance that we place on ensuring that the nearest and most suitable resources are available to respond to incidents, irrespective of their location.

Following the introduction of a single police and fire service, we have seen across the country the benefit of access to specialist resource and equipment, an example of which was their utilisation in dealing with the tragic incident at the Clutha bar in 2013.

In health, the highly skilled staff of the Scottish Ambulance Service special operations response team respond daily to major incidents across Scotland, working closely with their colleagues in the Ambulance Service and other emergency services to ensure that patients get the very best care, regardless of where they are. Moreover, the Scottish specialist transport and retrieval project— or ScotSTAR—which was launched in 2014, brings together under the auspices of the Scottish Ambulance Service the emergency medical retrieval and transportation of critically ill adults, children and babies. The initiative, which has rightly been recognised as world class, demonstrates clear collaborative working across NHS boards. The sharing of resources, increased collaboration and partnership working and the benefits that they bring will be key in meeting the challenges ahead, and I am aware that our emergency services are already jointly considering such opportunities, which will in turn improve the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Beyond the blue lights, there are a wide range of organisations that work together to facilitate a successful conclusion to emergency events, not least in difficult weather similar to the kind that we are experiencing at the moment. In emergencies, public and private emergency operatives, such as

the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Met Office, local authorities, Transport Scotland, and utility and telecom companies, meet resilience co-ordinators and Scottish Government resilience room officials to support the front-line response. They are key to ensuring that we co-operate in response, recover quickly and reduce disruption where possible.

We saw the benefits of that co-operation in the work only this week, when, due to bad weather, homes and businesses on the Isle of Coll were isolated from power, and ferries and aviation were cancelled. The Scottish Government, working in co-ordination with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and SSE, arranged for a helicopter to be provided on Coll in order to get power back on in extremely challenging conditions.

It is right that the work that is undertaken by the men and women of our emergency services be recognised by Parliament. Not all of us could easily adapt to going to work each day, not knowing from one minute to the next what we might be faced with, yet that is what all our emergency services colleagues willingly sign up to. Be it their management of significant incidents, their quick response to local accidents and emergencies or their ability to provide comfort and calm at times when individuals and communities are at their most vulnerable, there is a lot to commend the men and women of our emergency services.

I ask Parliament to join me in acknowledging the work of the emergency services and in a commitment to support them in the year ahead. I ask Parliament, too, to support the motion in my name.

I move,

That the Parliament applauds the excellent work undertaken by all of the brave and dedicated men and women of Scotland's emergency services, both blue light and voluntary, who meet significant challenges on a daily basis to help keep communities safe and respond where and whenever there is need; acknowledges that Scotland has been reminded of this again through the events over the festive period, and commits to support all of the emergency services in the years ahead.

14:46

**Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):** There are some things in life that we have come to take for granted. Thanks to the struggles of previous generations, we take for granted the right to an education, a health service and decent housing. We expect our power supply to be available when we need it and we expect that in an emergency our emergency services will be there for us.

In one respect, it is good that, as a civilised society, we have high expectations; mostly, those

expectations are met. However, taking things for granted should never be an excuse for ignoring or saying nothing about those whose efforts help to meet our high expectations.

Emergency services are a good example of services that we want, need and value but always hope that we will never have to use. The Scottish Government is right to pay tribute to those it describes as

“the brave and dedicated men and women of Scotland's emergency services”.

They are there for us 24 hours a day, each and every day of the year. They do not ask for praise or recognition. They just do their job and, by God, they do it exceptionally well.

The cabinet secretary is right to mention the contribution of emergency services to the Ryder cup and the Commonwealth games. In a sense, that passes without comment, because there were no serious incidents. Unfortunately, we focus on what the emergency services do only when there is an emergency or a disaster. Tragically, such incidents happen all too often—that is sometimes through malice, neglect, accidents or the force of nature. I think back to the Lockerbie tragedy—human destruction in Scotland caused by an evil attack on a scale that we have not seen in recent times. The response from our emergency services was swift, thorough and professional, and the situation must have been harrowing for all those who had to respond.

Over the years in Glasgow, we have witnessed a number of devastating fires leading to major loss of life, including the loss of fire service personnel. It is fitting that the fire service still remembers its comrades who lost their lives. We saw again the professionalism of the fire service in the Stockline disaster, which was caused by neglect. I know that Patricia Ferguson will speak about that.

In the space of just over 12 months, Glasgow has witnessed two horrific events that will live with us for a long, long time. It was our emergency services that had to respond to the dreadful consequences of the bin lorry crash in Glasgow just before Christmas.

Just over a year ago, when the police helicopter crashed into the Clutha Vaults pub, all our emergency services responded magnificently. They worked tirelessly for three days in difficult and dangerous conditions, which included having to tunnel through rubble to help victims who were trapped at the scene. The fire service area commander Paul Connelly was right to speak of his pride following his crew's bravery in the face of what he described as a truly harrowing scene.

It is worth repeating that all our emergency services show not just dedication and commitment

but often bravery. The bravery of ambulance staff at the Clutha Vaults incident was also recognised, as was the contribution of watch manager Stuart English, based in Paisley, who normally covers my constituency. He was off duty, enjoying a night out at the Clutha. He escaped from the crash scene but went back in with members of the public to attempt to locate and rescue those who were trapped. Like other emergency workers, such people are never truly off duty; they are always ready to spring into action if required. It is also worth recognising that in those two tragedies, as well as in others, the public responded magnificently in support of our emergency services.

The tales of police officers' bravery are legion. The police are our front-line protection in towns and cities when drunken behaviour often spills over into violence. They are there to protect the public when very occasionally a minority act violently at major events or demonstrations. The police are the ones who have to step up to the plate when lives are threatened in firearm or knife incidents. They step in when arguments get out of hand and lead to violence.

Last year saw the launch of a book called "Beyond the Call of Duty", which features an incident that involved officers from Police Scotland. Police constables Craig McCall, Brian Manchester and Andy Kendall were attacked by a man wielding a samurai sword, and PC Craig McCall was left seriously injured.

It is not just attacks that endanger life. Last year, PC Tonianne Ewart rightly received a bravery award from the First Minister for risking her life to save the life of a man who attempted to jump from the top floor of a multistorey car park. The problem in one sense for the debate is that there are too many examples to be able to list every single act of bravery and dedication.

Let us not forget our accident and emergency staff, who have to cope with the consequences of accidents and disasters. As we know from recent press reports, they work under extremely difficult conditions. They have to cope with large numbers of patients, and the system is creaking even without any major incidents, but cope they do. Despite the pressures, they too do their best for those they serve.

It would be wrong to suggest that emergency services start and stop with the police, fire and ambulance services and with A and E. Over the past few months, we have been starkly reminded of the power of what is sometimes described as the cruel sea. The cabinet secretary mentioned this month's loss of the cargo vessel Cemfjord, with the loss of eight crew members. That was a stark reminder of the power and danger of the sea, as were the battering that a Spanish fishing trawler

took last month during the so-called weather bomb and the threat to the lives of the crew of the disabled fish carrier Norholm, which was caused by a force 7 gale in an Atlantic storm off Cape Wrath.

As is expected of them, the coastguards responded unhesitatingly, and so too did the brave volunteers of the RNLI, which operates 47 stations in Scotland. The RNLI is a voluntary organisation that depends on the public's contributions. In all those incidents, those brave volunteers were on hand to do their bit to save lives.

The cabinet secretary has rightly commended the work of our mountain rescue services. I defer to his greater knowledge and experience, but I too pay tribute to their heroism and bravery. We have 27 volunteer teams, involving 1,000 volunteers, to back up three police teams and one Royal Air Force team. Already this month they have been in action, helping to save lives, and I have no doubt that there will be further demands on them over the winter. In the past few months we have seen the dedication of power supply workers who have battled to restore supplies in fierce weather conditions.

A common theme that runs through the stories of staff and volunteers is that of heroism, bravery, dedication and selflessness. As I said, they do not ask for praise or recognition, but I am sure that it is nice when it comes, whether through bravery awards or from us taking opportunities such as this to put our thanks on the record.

While those staff and volunteers will not ask for thanks, there is perhaps a responsibility on all of us collectively in the Parliament to reflect on and consider whether we owe them more than warm words. Do we ever give them the opportunity to come and tell us what it is really like on the front line? Why do we not give them the chance to brief the Parliament on their work, their successes and the pressures that they face? Should we not repay their dedication by saying that we will look at the resilience and resourcing of our emergency services?

The saying goes that talk is cheap. Today, we have the chance to do more than talk and offer warm words. We have the chance to say to those brave men and women not only, "Thank you and well done," but, "Come and tell us how we can help to improve what you do. We know the outcome is that lives are saved, but we also know that, in doing that, you are putting your lives on the line, so the least we can do is listen." What have we got to fear in listening to those fearless heroes?

That is why I have lodged an amendment that calls for a parliamentary inquiry. Let us give a voice to those brave men and women and listen to

their stories. Let us pledge that we will repay their efforts by doing what we can to ensure that they are ready and equipped to face whatever is thrown at them.

I move amendment S4M-12060.2, to insert at end:

“; welcomes the cross-party support for the efforts of the emergency services but also recognises the challenges and pressures that they face and therefore commits to doing everything that it can to provide the necessary resources to enable them to do their jobs effectively; to that end, agrees to hold an inquiry into the resilience of the emergency services, including voluntary, to allow frontline staff and volunteers to have their voices heard and to explore the resources required to allow them to do their jobs effectively, and further agrees that the Justice Committee and the Health and Sport Committee should lead in relation to their respective remits.”

14:57

**Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con):** I endorse everything that the cabinet secretary—and Mr Henry—said on the scope, scale and range of services in which we have such confidence and pride. The extraordinary efforts of so many throughout Scotland are always made without fuss or celebrity; the hallmark is the professional, exemplary and compassionate way in which those involved go about their jobs.

I lodged the small but slightly significant amendment that is in my name for one reason only. I was shocked by the events last week in Paris, as we all were, and I reflected that our history is peppered with such incidents. They are always very much of the moment, but we can go back 100 years and find similar examples of incidents in which services were brought to bear on behalf of the public.

We depend in large part on an anonymous body of people: those who provide the intelligence that can potentially prevent such atrocities from happening in the first place. We have at GCHQ in Cheltenham a world-leading intelligence-gathering operation in which many Scots have assisted in providing services that are vital to the protection of the public beyond Scotland's boundaries. That work is not just keeping us safe in Scotland; it is recognised as contributing to keeping others safe way beyond our country. We will probably never know who those people are, and we can really thank them only in absentia.

Our tradition of intelligence began at Bletchley Park. By coincidence, I noticed that a book on Bletchley Park was published just this week: “The Bletchley Girls: War, Secrecy, Love and Loss—The Women of Bletchley Park Tell Their Story”. I was impressed to find that there are quite a few Scots still living who were among those responsible for providing that intelligence and security. They include a constituent of mine, Lady

Jean Fforde, who lives on the Isle of Arran. She was in hut 8 with Alan Turing—of whom she speaks fondly—working on providing the vital intelligence that saved lives throughout the whole United Kingdom.

Lady Jean Fforde amusingly relates that such work is incredibly dull, repetitive and unrewarding for those at the coalface, because they often do not know what they have discovered for others to interpret. I was amused by one incident that she related, which involved a German who was coding messages and who was so uber loyal that, unfortunately, he signed off every communication with “Heil Hitler”, which of course gave a magnificent way of decrypting everything that he said. I am sure that that was not his intention.

I thank Lady Jean Fforde. When I met her, I had no idea what she had done, because the hallmark of many people who have been employed in capacities of which the public are less aware is that they are so unassuming about the contribution that they have made that they do not mention it or make a fuss about it. It is probably only through thanking them in absentia that we can do justice to all that they do.

We could talk about a long list of people in this regard. There are the armed forces, of course, which assist in many ways—whether it be through adding to the complement of those who kept people visiting this country safe during the Commonwealth games or responding to the call when a bomb or suspected explosive device is discovered. There are also animal health people, who suddenly come to the fore when there is a crisis in that field.

Hugh Henry touched on those who are not in the emergency services but on whom the public depend—those in the public utilities, telecommunications and transport who step in with the same hallmark of professionalism, often at great inconvenience to themselves, to do something that is way beyond anything that they would naturally have to do. We have only to think about the isle of Arran two or three winters ago to remember how paralysed that community was by the weather that came and the extent to which the community totally depended on the efforts of the people who stepped forward to restore services, which thereafter kept people safe on that island.

More recently, when the First Minister had to take hold of the Ebola incident, we depended on the Royal Free hospital in London to step in, because it is the United Kingdom resource centre for providing the services that are necessary for Ebola cases. As we know, that situation is ongoing.

Despite all that work, as I pointed out in the recent recess, there is an underbelly that is not

quite so attractive. Six times a day, somebody in Scotland thinks it worth their while to make a hoax call to call out an ambulance crew. Six times a day, somewhere in Scotland, somebody thinks that that is a worthwhile pastime. Any of us who have made a 999 call know that the process is quite sophisticated. There are qualifying questions, so people who make hoax calls go to elaborate lengths to maintain the fiction that wastes the time of those who are called out. A hoax is often apparent only when the services present themselves at the location of the alleged incident.

We must be prepared to be much more robust about such hoaxes, because they are a completely unacceptable waste of public resource. We have seen at George Square and other incidents that have been referred to how much we depend on the dedication and commitment of particular individuals when a genuine emergency is occurring. It is totally unacceptable that they should, because of a hoax, be called out, have their time wasted and, frankly, be abused in that way by people in our society. I know that we all share that view, but it is sometimes harder to know how to deal with hoaxes. However, we should be prepared to do that.

Another point that I made in the aftermath of the Ebola incident is that there must be a responsible use of social media in keeping Scotland safe. Social media can be a terrific tool for ensuring that people know what they need to know, but it must be used responsibly. If people know nothing about an incident, they should keep quiet and realise that an incident is not entertainment but something distinct. That is important, because social media will be able to play an increasing role in keeping Scotland safe, if it is used responsibly.

I say on behalf of Scottish Conservatives that we are happy to support the motion. It is a worthwhile motion to put before Parliament and I know that Parliament will be united in making it clear to all those in the emergency services—although I do not know that bringing them here to watch our debate would be the inspiring vote of thanks that they would be looking for—that we support them. As Hugh Henry said, we should also ensure that they receive the resources that are necessary for them to undertake their functions.

I move amendment S4M-12060.1, to leave out first “services” and insert:

“and other services, together with those elsewhere in the UK.”

15:04

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in the debate and I will focus on voluntary emergency services. That

is partly because, for many years, I was a volunteer firefighter, so I can claim some insight into the valuable work that such volunteers undertake.

Nearly 30 years ago, I was one of the members of a newly formed volunteer unit that had the distinction of being the first in Scotland to include female firefighters. I am sure that it will come as no surprise to anyone in the chamber to learn that the women in the unit performed their roles every bit as effectively as the men. Strathclyde fire service, as it was then, was rightly proud of that pioneering initiative. It provided first-class training and back-up and, importantly, it did not use the volunteer service as an excuse to downgrade the professional service. At around the same time, it upgraded the Oban station from a facility that was operated by retained firefighters to one that was operated by whole-time crews. A few years later, it built a new and much better station.

Over the years, we dealt with many serious fires, including one in which there was a fatality—a man who was a friend and a neighbour. I know that, in some areas of the Highlands and Islands, fire services are being threatened because of difficulties in recruiting volunteer and retained firefighters. I strongly recommend that men and women take up those opportunities to serve their communities in such a practical way. I found my experience rewarding and interesting.

I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the many volunteer firefighters across the Highlands and Islands and beyond who contribute such a lot to their communities. As a result of my experience, I am very aware of the dangers of fire and of how dependent we are, when disaster strikes, on the skills and courage of our firefighters.

I pay tribute to the coastguard service, which is another organisation that relies on volunteers. Less than two weeks ago, we learned of the loss of the cargo ship the *Cemfjord*. That was a stark reminder of how dangerous the sea can be, how suddenly disaster can strike at sea and how powerless we are, at times, when it strikes. It is at such times—in daylight and in darkness, and often in ferocious and terrifying conditions—that we see our community of mariners and their friends ashore honour the ancient obligation to come to the aid of those who are in distress at sea.

As an islander, I have witnessed that all too often. I have participated in rescues. I have lost good friends to the sea. I have witnessed at first hand on more than one occasion the distress of bereaved families. I have seen skippers and crews put to sea for rescue efforts in weather that makes me shudder to think of it.

I owe my life to such courageous people—to the crew of a fishing boat who found me on a night of

such wicked weather that the lifeboat had to turn back, and a night when the wind was so strong that the helicopter that finally rescued me had to delay the rescue for several hours. The skipper of that fishing boat was sadly lost at sea a few years later.

It is because of that that I am angry beyond words, or at least any words that would be suitable in the chamber, about the UK Government's cuts to the coastguard service, which are surely unacceptable when recreational and commercial use of our sea is increasing. Only those who live such cosseted lives that they are wholly unaware of the conditions that are routinely braved by those at sea could contemplate such cuts. Only those who have no appreciation or understanding of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland could consider making them.

I do not believe that a single member in the chamber would condone such cuts, I do not believe that a Scottish Government of any political hue would make such cuts and I do not believe that those who advocate austerity fully consider that we will pay for that fatally flawed economic policy in lives lost at sea and on land.

15:10

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** At the time when this debate was scheduled, none of us could have foreseen the dreadful events that were to unfold in Paris at the end of last week. They demonstrated the extreme dangers that the public can face and the burden placed on those public servants whose job is to keep the public safe and whose responsibilities can cost them their lives—a price that tragically was paid by Parisian police officers Ahmed Merabet, Franck Brinsolaro and Clarissa Jean-Philippe last week.

Those who perform the front-line duties of the emergency services such as Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service routinely put themselves at risk as they seek to minimise damage to life and property. The Glasgow School of Art, for example, would have suffered considerably worse damage had it not been for the heroic efforts of the 120 firefighters who fought the blaze for more than seven hours on 23 May last year.

Of course, we are all relieved to learn that the life of heroic nurse Pauline Cafferkey is now out of danger, though her recovery process will take some time. Not only did Pauline risk her life to help Ebola victims in west Africa, but by joining the effort to control the disease there she was also protecting us here. As President Obama said back in October, the best way to tackle Ebola and prevent it from spreading across the world is to contain it and focus efforts, through aid and the

provision of health workers, on combating it in the west African countries that are affected.

In this season of poor weather, we should pay tribute to the workers who battle to keep our roads and railways functioning and those who work in horrendous conditions to try to restore power supplies to homes without power, which are often in remote areas. There are many others who risk their safety to protect and rescue others, often as volunteers. Mention has been made of the mountain rescue service. In my constituency, the Moffat mountain rescue service performs an invaluable service, and only last week the Galloway mountain rescue service rescued a walker on the Merrick who got into difficulty. Often those volunteers are called on to risk their lives in challenging and hostile environments to save climbers and walkers who have not taken the correct precautions or equipment. Nevertheless, they continue to make themselves available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to take those risks, in their own time, to serve others.

Members have mentioned the coastguards and the men and women of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, whose courage and dedication have since the early 19th century helped seafarers in trouble. Nith Inshore Rescue, which is based in Glencaple in my constituency, provides a voluntary search and rescue service covering the Nith estuary and the rivers and lochs in the area. The crew are all unpaid volunteers, like their mountain rescue counterparts, and they are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2010 they were worthy recipients of the Queen's award for voluntary service. They play a role when we have incidents of flooding, which is well known in our area. I should also acknowledge the SEPA floodline service, despite the fact that it called me at 3 am and 6 am this morning to advise me that my office could be flooded again—fortunately it was not.

While acknowledging and celebrating the bravery of both front-line emergency workers and volunteers who risk injury, disease and death in the course of their duties, we must also remember the contribution of those who support them and who take calls from members of the public in distress: the staff who work in the control rooms of the emergency services. Unfortunately, those staff have been at the sharp end of service cuts recently. The number of civilian police staff posts fell by 2,056 between March 2010 and June 2014. Police and fire and rescue service control rooms in Dumfries have recently closed. The police control room closed in May and its last message was a very moving message about how its staff had enjoyed protecting its front-line workers over the period of its work. The fire and rescue control room closed in November. Unfortunately we lost

staff with many years' experience of keeping us and front-line emergency services workers safe.

We need to celebrate and recognise the contribution of our control staff, the majority of whom are women. The SFRS is in the process of merging the eight fire control rooms into three. The best way of demonstrating our gratitude and making our recognition meaningful is by ensuring that the new control rooms continue to deliver the level of service that our communities have enjoyed, because they are staffed to a level that delivers safety. I ask the Scottish Government to confirm that staffing levels will be sufficient, with the appropriate balance of supervision, and to agree initial staffing levels with the Fire Brigades Union Scotland.

On a positive note, a national centre for resilience for Scotland is to be established in Dumfries at the Crichton campus, to improve the response to issues such as flooding and to co-ordinate preparation for the increase in severe weather that is anticipated as one of the consequences of climate change. As ministers know, I look forward to learning more about how the centre will operate and which organisations will be involved in it.

As Hugh Henry said, Labour's amendment makes reference to the resources that are required to maintain resilience. Resources can be called on suddenly and without warning. We ask the Parliament to take responsibility for supporting the people who keep us safe, by ensuring that the necessary resources are available and by asking the statutory and voluntary organisations who provide services what they need and how the vital tasks that they undertake might be made easier.

By all means let us record our gratitude to emergency workers throughout Scotland and beyond, but our actions in their support are even more important. We should demonstrate our commitment by providing the support that they need.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** I call Christine Grahame. Speeches can be six minutes or thereby—we have a little time in hand.

15:16

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** In this relatively consensual debate, I regret that I must take Hugh Henry to task for the Labour amendment, which asks the Parliament to agree

“that the Justice Committee and the Health and Sport Committee should lead”

in relation to inquiries into the resilience of the emergency services.

Quite apart from the fact that, given his new portfolio, Hugh Henry should know that the Justice Committee's forward work programme is crammed and has little space for anything else, there is a more basic objection to the amendment. During Hugh Henry's unsuccessful bid—and mine, too—to be Presiding Officer, I recall Mr Henry regularly and quite rightly banging on about the independence of the Parliament's committees and how they should be masters of their own agendas.

I cannot agree that a committee should take direction from the Parliament or anyone else about what it puts on its agenda. For that reason alone, no one should support the Labour amendment. It interferes with the independence of committees to decide their own agendas. I think that that was an oversight on the part of Mr Henry, but it is wrong.

On the substantive issues, I want to tell members a couple of stories that illustrate the practical and unseen co-operation between our emergency services. A few years back I was out on police patrol in the Borders—I am thankful that this was before health and safety interfered and sanitised any meaningful participation by members of the Scottish Parliament. We went to several potential and very diverse crime scenes.

One incident that night stands out, because it opened my eyes to the value of our services. A woman had jumped from Lawson bridge in Hawick, into the Teviot. The river was low and she had fallen on to the rocks. With the blue light going—I am no longer permitted to travel that way unless I am under arrest—we arrived to meet police cordoning off the road. The fire brigade was already there and firefighters were roped up and climbing over the rocks into the water. The ambulance was also already there and paramedics were wading in the shallows with an emergency silver foil blanket.

What struck me was that no one needed to explain what they were doing. They did not need to say much. They knew their roles and acted seamlessly to ensure that the poor woman was rescued and taken to hospital as soon as possible.

My second story, which comes from my previous life as a solicitor, relates to a woman who fell from a platform into the path of an oncoming train. I will keep it fairly anonymous. The woman was trapped beneath the train, so fire and rescue workers and paramedics crawled under it, with hot oil dripping on them. When the train began to move, because the driver was still in shock, they somehow managed to get him to hold it still, not because they were lying underneath it but because the wheels were acting as a tourniquet on the woman's legs and were stopping her bleeding to death. She survived.

The two stories brought home to me—in flesh and blood—the reality of what the emergency services do every day. The cabinet secretary talked about that. I could not do their jobs. I would not be able to sleep at night. Some politicians do not sleep at night, but that is for different reasons. I would not be able to take those day-to-day images home with me.

That is especially true in relation to firefighters, who are in the news with dreadful events. The public tend to forget that a lot of the work of firefighters concerns road traffic accidents, where they cut free the dead or the injured. The same is true of the police, the ambulance workers and attendants and the medics, who administer life-saving interventions on the spot, crammed into wrecked vehicles. Again, they all work together in a cohesive and mutually respectful society. There are no silos there. There are no professional policies that have to be put in place. They know what to do and they make way for each other when that is needed.

On the Borders roads, in particular, that is important, because, like many rural roads, they have a bad record for traffic accidents, particularly motorcycle accidents. Those accidents account for a huge amount—23 per cent—of all deaths and injuries on Borders roads in the past five years, which is well above the national average. In recent years, 10 motorcyclists have lost their lives, most of whom were aged 35 or over. Imagine how often police, ambulance and fire and rescue services are called to those scenes. They all deserve recognition. Only some incidents hit the headlines, but, regrettably, they happen daily across Scotland.

We must also recognise that the emergency services are not called only in relation to horrific circumstances. I am thinking of the various ridings and agricultural shows that take place across the Borders, where we see the police wandering about or people from the Red Cross with their van. They will have been involved at the very beginning of the planning of the event and they are there at the time to ensure that if anything untoward happens—if there is a horse-riding accident or somebody faints—they are on the spot. They are there, busily doing their job.

We have a lot to be grateful to emergency services workers for, but I will finish with a less serious story. Once, many years ago, I had the fire brigade turn up at my cottage when my lum went up on boxing day. It was a lovely, snowy day; my floors were polished and the house was lovely. All the firefighters knew me. They were local men. I am afraid that they were laughing as they came in, saying, “Ah, hen, you’ve set fire to your lum.” They had to put a hole in the wall to make sure the fire was not going up the chimney. My house was

soaking wet. I was bursting into tears. The children thought that it was wonderful and were all dancing in front of the fire engine and shouting, “Are you coming out to get your picture taken with the fire engine?” Members will understand why I just sat in the house, crying, but I was grateful that they turned up anyway.

15:22

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I gladly join members across the chamber in commending all those who work in many different ways to keep us safe.

My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I are incredibly grateful for the work that the emergency services do for all our constituents around Scotland. Police officers, ambulance crews, firefighters, doctors, nurses and many more routinely put the needs of the public before their own. Each time that they start a shift, they are prepared to deal with unexpected, distressing and traumatic situations; incidents that the rest of us might never encounter at all—we certainly hope that we do not.

Others have already spoken about the tragic event that occurred in central Glasgow before Christmas, and I note that the family of Jack and Lorraine Sweeney and their granddaughter Erin McQuade yesterday publicly thanked those who attended to their loved ones and who have provided assistance in the weeks since, including those from the emergency services. By all accounts, the multi-agency response to this awful incident was exemplary.

Responding to such events can be physically and emotionally draining. The appalling events in Paris last week also remind us that some sadly lose their lives in the course of their work—such selfless bravery.

Countless volunteers are immensely important in keeping our communities safe and protecting our health. They can be found assisting people in every part of Scotland, from the high street to the highest mountain peaks and the roughest seas. Volunteers are the backbone of our lifeboat crews and mountain rescue teams. Police special constables bring a wealth of local knowledge. As Mike MacKenzie pointed out, many parts of Scotland, including my North East Scotland region, depend heavily on retained and volunteer firefighters, who make up 40 per cent of Scotland’s firefighters and provide cover for 90 per cent of the country’s landmass, much of it rural or remote.

Volunteers gain new skills and they are rewarded with unique experiences and the satisfaction of being able to help others. Ultimately, however, they selflessly give their time and expertise for little or no recompense, and they

combine rigorous training requirements and varied deployments with work and family life. We owe them a debt of gratitude for that.

In the spirit of Jackson Carlaw's more expansive amendment, I take a moment to thank the engineers who have been working to reinstate connections in the past week, often amid atrocious conditions, removing trees from train tracks and restoring light and warmth to our homes. They, too, provide services that are vital, particularly to the most vulnerable in our society. I also commend those who drive our gritters and snow ploughs, who are up and out in conditions that most of us fear to drive in to make the roads safer for the rest of us.

As Hugh Henry's amendment suggests, members' praise and warm words are not enough; it is our responsibility to ensure that our services have the resources that they need. We know that services are under intense pressure. As individual MSPs and in our committee work, we regularly receive evidence to that effect from professionals on the front line, from independent observers, from unions and from scrutiny bodies. For example, the chief officer of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service told the Justice Committee last year of "long-standing" problems with the system of retained firefighters. The Scottish secretary of the Fire Brigades Union said that it was "on its knees". Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary reported to the committee in October that the morale of police officers and staff has been affected by the pace and nature of the change to Police Scotland. He said that many are unsure as to their role or future within the organisation.

Today, we learned that the number of police officers taking stress-related sick leave has risen by more than a quarter since the establishment of the national force, and we know that accident and emergency departments are currently struggling to cope with exceptionally high levels of demand. The director of the Royal College of Nursing Scotland, Theresa Fyffe, remarked:

"The whole system is creaking at the seams and the last few weeks have seen a perfect storm of conditions that demonstrate just how perilous the state of the NHS is."

Do we need an inquiry? I agree with Christine Grahame that it is up to the parliamentary committees to answer that question. I do know, however, that the real challenge for the Scottish Government and for members of the Parliament is to listen and respond constructively to those professionals and experts when they tell us the truth; to be open and fair to them; and to be willing to shift resources and priorities accordingly. At times, the Parliament will disagree on how best to achieve that, but no one should ever suggest that properly scrutinising justice, health or any other policy area is indicative of a lack of respect or

support for the personnel on the front line. Indeed, it demonstrates quite the opposite, and anything less would be doing them a disservice.

Services work around the clock to keep us safe in all circumstances and all weather. In return, they deserve our heartfelt thanks but also require our assistance and support.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I alert members to the fact that there is a little time in hand for interventions—even anecdotes.

15:27

**Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** Although I do not represent Glasgow, like most people in Scotland I cannot fail to note how that city, its people and its emergency services have responded to very real emergencies in the past 13 months, such as those at the Clutha Vaults bar and in George Square. When a crisis occurs, we all depend on the professionalism, bravery and integrity of the emergency services to cope with the distressing situation.

I remind members that Scotland has a vast coastline adjoining a sea that can often be very cruel, as Mike MacKenzie recounted vividly this afternoon. Events such as the loss of all hands on the cement carrier Cemfjord in the North Sea remind us of the dangers of working at sea. Although I do not contend that it would have made a difference in that situation, the demise of Nimrod aircraft, which were formerly based in Moray, meant that there was one fewer search and rescue facility available.

However, our coastguard service provides vital support. Despite the UK Government's plan to reduce the number of maritime rescue co-ordination centres, Aberdeen MRCC, which covers an area from Brora, in Sutherland, to the English border, has a vital role to play. Although it has, unfortunately, endured critical understaffing levels recently, it still provides a professional service in the face of adversity. I am not alone in considering the closure of coastguard services across Scotland, at both Fife Ness and on the Clyde, one of the many mistakes of the coalition Government.

Of course, emergency responses would be much less effective without the support of the army of volunteers who selflessly give their valuable time to help those who are in distress. The RNLI is well known as an emergency service that provides a high-quality life-saving service that is reliant on volunteers. It is a valuable asset to this country—indeed, to the United Kingdom—and many people owe their lives to it. With an average of 23 call-outs a day, it is likely that a lifeboat is out on a rescue right now. The cabinet secretary referred to the number of lifeboat stations round the coast. In my constituency, RNLI Anstruther,

which covers the Firth of Forth and the North Sea, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. The sea-going crew of only one score plus sacrifice many hours of personal time on rescue operations, exercising and, of course, maintaining the station and lifeboat.

Away from the sea, our mountain rescue service is another service that relies on volunteers. As the cabinet secretary mentioned, it provides a priceless number of volunteer hours and is more than worthy of mention, as are the staff and dogs of SARDA, the Search and Rescue Dog Association, which regularly assists the mountain rescue teams. Scottish mountain rescue teams regularly go into the mountains in what can be an unforgiving environment at any time of the year. Team members drop everything to react to the phone calls, which can come at any time and which often cause them to undertake long and dangerous rescues. The sacrifices that those volunteers make should not be underestimated nor left unappreciated.

The same could be said of our Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Our firefighters have had a good year, with 28 per cent fewer deaths caused by fire than there were last year. That was due partially to the lowest ever number of house fires. Last year, more than 71,000 house visits were conducted nationwide. In North East Fife alone, the number of home fire safety visits that were conducted last year was 50 per cent greater than in the previous year and more than in any previous year. That is coupled with more telecare installations and installations of hard-of-hearing smoke alarms, in partnership with NHS Fife and Fife social services. That shows that there is a correlation between community engagement, increased personal safety and a reduction in the number of casualties that are caused by fires.

We are already into the third week of the new year. While some of us might have been revelling and merrily bringing in the new year, the Scottish Ambulance Service was having its busiest night of the year. From midnight on hogmanay to 7 am the following morning, 2,394 calls at a rate of 250 an hour were attended to. More often than not, the paramedics who were on call were dealing with people under the influence of alcohol and endured threats of, or actual, physical attacks. We clearly must continue efforts to stamp out that sort of behaviour against our emergency services.

Our Scottish Ambulance Service is ably assisted by first responder units, which involve yet more volunteers and communities throughout the country. In several cases, they have been responsible for the installation of public access defibrillators in towns and villages, and education in their use. In North East Fife, I know of at least 20 defibrillators in the east neuk alone. The

Scottish Government is working on a national strategy for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, and I will meet the Ambulance Service tomorrow to discuss that further in the context of how it might affect first responders in my constituency.

Scotland's national police force has been referred to in the Parliament at great length in recent years. Police numbers have increased over the past seven years while numbers south of the border have fallen significantly. Fear of crime is falling to historic lows in Scotland. Police participation in the emergency services is of course well known.

Criticism has been made that the creation of the single police force has led to less community engagement by local police officers. Last Friday, I met Chief Superintendent Gary McEwan of Police Scotland's P division. On Monday, a pilot scheme started in Fife in which two community police officers are allocated to every single council ward in the local authority. Next Friday, I will meet the ward police officers in my patch. I wish that new scheme well. Although it is not specifically geared to emergencies, I have no doubt that it will not be long before the officers concerned are in an emergency situation.

Emergency services were necessary yesterday, are necessary today and will be necessary in future. We should all recognise their amazing contribution and the debt that we owe them.

15:33

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** I want to thank not only the blue-light services but all uniformed services for their contribution in providing emergency support and a 24/7 service across the board. Sometimes, however, we are guilty of taking the Scottish emergency services for granted. They are a credit to our country, and we should all be thankful for their hard work and commitment throughout the year, especially over the festive period, when it is sometimes necessary for people to work away from their families.

In my city of Glasgow, we have had our fair share of disasters. They unite us in sadness and grief and in heartfelt sympathy for those who are affected by such troubling events. The night of the bin lorry accident also unites us in support of the excellent job done by the emergency services, who worked tirelessly. In just a few minutes one afternoon, a scene of celebration and festive lights in George Square turned to disaster and despair. However, almost immediately, the first volunteers and our emergency services were on the scene attending and showing compassion, skill and dedication. I feel the pain and the burden carried in the hearts of those who have lost loved ones.

Members should note that our NHS is ready for Ebola and was ready to react to the Glasgow bin lorry accident and the helicopter crash. Those events revealed that Scotland has heroes in its emergency services, which are organised, well equipped and ready to react to any emergency.

I go further and thank all the charities that swing into action when there is a disaster or an emergency that needs their special skills. The charity Glasgow the Caring City was on hand when the Stockline plastics factory suffered a gas explosion that killed nine people and injured 33. Jointly with Glasgow Community Central Hall on Maryhill Road—another charity—it provided fresh water, blankets and one-to-one comfort to relatives and friends. After the Glasgow airport attack, Glasgow the Caring City once again provided similar support. After the helicopter crash at the pub, Glasgow central mosque opened its doors to provide support, facilities and hospitality.

In national troubles when local services cannot cope, the armed forces step in and are frequently called on to support emergency services.

While our emergency services are under pressure, we can never be too generous or more justified in offering our good wishes and support. However, we must also thank the volunteers, charities and donors who are involved in emergencies.

Emergencies show a growing dependency on volunteers and charities. Although it is welcome that they support our services, that should not happen as a routine. I genuinely believe that the reliance on charities and people's good will means that the emergency services might start to depend on them. I suggest that a parliamentary inquiry ought to be undertaken to determine whether there is a need for additional resources so that that can be addressed before any civilians or citizens are let down.

Christine Grahame was brave to give the cabinet secretary a public warning that the Justice Committee is a busy committee and does not want to do any more work. However, I have to say to the convener that, although I appreciate the fact that hers is a busy committee, people come first and, if we can save one additional life, it is worth the additional work and burden. I cannot emphasise strongly enough the point that, although the police and fire services are joined up and serving the people of Scotland, an assessment is important to find out what we have achieved during the past year or so.

Like many other members, I have served in the special constabulary and the Territorial Army and have done a fire protection and firefighting course, so I am aware of the difficulties that the emergency services face on the ground. We have

given our fire and police services responsibility to try to achieve the impossible at times, but it is essential that we show them some reality and responsibility by ensuring that we can support them in carrying out their tasks in a managed and controlled way so that they do not look for handouts or for people to be in place to assist them at any given time. It is dangerous to rely on public good will on all occasions. Therefore, I cannot emphasise enough that a parliamentary inquiry would be of benefit.

15:40

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on and to commend the people who keep Scotland safe in emergencies. We have had many recent examples of catastrophic situations that emergency services have dealt with in an exemplary fashion, from the recent horrific events in Paris to the rather less dramatic but unforeseen and very real human crisis in my constituency of Midlothian North and Musselburgh.

Disasters are created by nature and by humans. Being involved in the emergency services demands a remarkably wide variety of skills, and it frequently demands a degree of courage and ingenuity. Even with those skills, the members of emergency service teams often respond to situations at great personal risk. They do so to ensure safety and to minimise human cost and property damage. The emergency service teams of Scotland deserve our praise and admiration.

Last month, our emergency services responded to the dramatic bin lorry crash in Glasgow. Unlike the recent events in France, that emergency was no planned act of terror; it was apparently a horrific accident, as a bin lorry careered out of control and crashed. As we know, the tragedy resulted in six people dying and 10 being injured. Such emergencies do not call for an armed force response, as did the shootings in Paris. Instead, the emergency services were seen

“battling to save the lives of injured people on the street.”

The different branches of the emergency services worked quickly and cohesively together as the police, medics and firefighters all played their part in ensuring that the least amount of damage would be done as they conducted rescue operations. That is an example of the unstinting effort that was put in by members of Scotland's emergency services following an accident that can only be described as heartbreaking for those affected.

A year prior to that event in the same city of Glasgow disaster struck as a helicopter crashed into a local pub. The crash led to many of the occupants of the pub being trapped in the building,

which was damaged and in danger of collapse. That tragedy demonstrated some of the complexities that our emergency services can face. In its response, the local firefighting team displayed a mixture of skills and ingenuity. Dozens of people were trapped in an unstable building, but the firefighters were able to act cautiously yet quickly to extract them. Additional precautions had to be taken because of the danger of a collapse. The process was not easy, but in the end lives were saved because of the fire brigade's ability to analyse, plan and act swiftly. The reaction by the response teams to that emergency serves as testimony to the breadth of the skills of our emergency services men and women.

In my constituency, there have been similar acts of bravery from our response teams that highlight the tireless and commendable work of our emergency services. On Christmas eve in Musselburgh, an act of vandalism occurred as an attempt was made to set fire to a salon in the town's high street. The swift response of the police underscores the commitment that is essential for any emergency team to display. At a time of year when many of us were enjoying our holiday recess with our families, the officers of Police Scotland in the area were called to the scene and quickly began the search to find those responsible. For the men and women of our emergency services, there is no downtime—someone is on duty all the time.

We have strong and experienced police, medical and firefighting teams, but we must not forget the dedicated coastguard teams that protect and preserve the more than 10,000 miles of Scotland's coastline and its beaches. My constituency is home to the Fisherrow coastguard rescue team. Fisherrow in Musselburgh includes the Fisherrow sands, which is a beach area that is used by many for recreational activities throughout the year. Interestingly, as part of its role, the coastguard team answers calls to attend to distressed and despondent persons who might be in need of assistance. That is an aspect of the work of the emergency services that usually goes unnoticed. Caring for people with wounds and other physical damage is critical in situations that call for the involvement of the emergency services, but we must not forget that other facet of their job. The emergency services often receive calls to assist distressed or depressed people, and physical catastrophes are often accompanied by psychological ones. Members of emergency service teams must be prepared and trained to attend to psychological as well as physical issues.

The work of the Fisherrow coastguard rescue team emphasises a critical element in the provision of emergency services that it is vital for us as a Parliament to support and ensure—co-operation between the different teams and

branches of the emergency services. Just in November, the Fisherrow coastguard reported being part of a coalition of coastguard teams, including the South Queensferry and Kinghorn coastguards, that combined their efforts in the search for a missing person.

Similar operations that have combined teams and branches of emergency services can be seen in all the aforementioned disasters. From Paris to Glasgow, we see the police, medics, paramedics and firefighting teams working together and working closely to provide the best emergency services possible. I commend all those services, whether voluntary or otherwise, on their exemplary communication, which provides a joined-up approach in an emergency.

In any debate about our emergency services, it would be remiss if we did not refer to the incredible work of our mountain rescue teams. Those teams, based in our geographical diversity, ensure that the citizens of Scotland as well as visitors can safely enjoy all the wonders of nature that we have to offer. The great work of those emergency service organisations was on display in the past weekend, when the Cairngorm mountain rescue team was called out twice to perform rescue services in blizzard conditions. Closer to my constituency, the Tweed Valley mountain rescue team is seeking donations for a new state-of-the-art command and control vehicle. It has my very best wishes for that initiative.

I should also mention that the Scottish Government is providing funding of over £310,000 to our voluntary mountain rescue teams. In fact, it is the only Government in the UK that funds that type of service.

I offer my genuine gratitude to all our emergency services and note the sacrifices of all kinds that they make. I give my thanks to all of them for their unmatched efforts to keep us all safer in times of emergency or crisis. If I had anything but water to hand, I would raise a glass to them all.

15:46

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** There are very obvious recipients of the praise in the motion, and we have already heard them being referenced across the chamber. I echo much of what has been said and, like Alison McInnes, I pay particular tribute to the power workers who have battled horrendous conditions over the past week or so to restore services to many rural households. It is all too easy to look at the update emails that we as MSPs have received in recent days and to reflect on the number of houses that were left without power, but we should, of course, consider

the enormous effort that went on, in awful weather, to address the situation.

I want to focus on a little-recognised group of people whose efforts in rural parts of our country help to keep Scotland safe and moving when the winter ravages descend on us: farmers. Members around the chamber who represent rural areas will be entirely aware of the role that farmers play in clearing and gritting vital remote rural routes throughout our country. That not only allows residents to travel, but makes it possible for the emergency services to get to remote areas, in inclement weather, when they are needed.

It would be remiss of us not to take the opportunity to highlight that contribution to a wider audience. With the best will in the world, it is unrealistic to expect rural authorities to keep at their disposal sufficient resources to be able to clear every mile of road, however hard to reach, as soon as the snow starts to fall. That is why the arrangements with local farmers are so important. The nature of those arrangements can vary from area to area and between the formal and informal.

It is difficult to pin down exact Scotland-wide figures, but a 2011 survey identified that, out of 28 responding councils, 15 employed farmers on an ad-hoc basis and 13, including Angus Council, Perth and Kinross Council and Aberdeenshire Council, had formal agreements in place. Currently in Angus, 19 farmers and agricultural contractors are working through Tayside Contracts to spread salt and grit and plough snow. That mainly takes place on high-land category 2 rural routes that are treated just before school buses in the morning and category 3 non-priority routes, which are mainly rural routes, but in some cases are town residential routes, across the constituencies that Nigel Don and I represent.

In some instances, the council provides snowploughs to be attached to tractors, although sometimes the farmers use their own kit. The farmer is then allocated a route that they must keep clear, but they can also use the plough for any routes of their own choosing that they wish to clear—that happens.

Farmers I know go beyond that. I am aware of one farmer in Angus who adapted a piece of his own machinery to suck up snow along a track that serves a large number of properties and blow it into a neighbouring field. Of course, we will all be aware of instances of farmers coming to the rescue of motorists who have slid off rural routes into ditches.

It is important to stress the planning and organisation that have gone into Scotland's farmers being very much part of the response to emergency or severe weather incidents. In 2012, NFU Scotland, Transport Scotland and the Society

of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland produced guidance for both councils and farmers in "The Use of Farmers for Winter Service—A Code of Practice" to provide minimum standards and improve the services that were already provided. Although not mandatory, the code is being utilised widely, leading to greater consistency in winter service engagement between local authorities and farmers.

The code highlights areas of regulatory compliance and risk. I was interested to see in the *Scottish Farming Leader's* latest edition an article highlighting the legal issues relating to agriculture becoming involved in such activities.

It is welcome to see that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has relaxed the legislation covering red diesel and that its use is permitted while spreading materials to deal with frost, ice or snow.

A lot of smart thinking is going on out there in our rural communities. Just before Christmas, I was interested to read an article about a group in the Borders that applied for a wind farm community fund grant to buy a tractor with a snowplough and salt-spreader attachments, which local farmers have come together to use. I would suggest that that is a good use of community benefit.

The help farmers provide is not only limited to clearing routes of snow and ice; farmers are often drafted in by the council to help to remove trees that may have blown down in storms or to clear ditches when flooding poses a risk. Therefore, let us please add Scotland's farmers to the list of those whom we are crediting today.

I note NFU Scotland's work in conjunction with Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance and the Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure that call-outs to rural areas are best facilitated. The initiative is designed to encourage rural workers, if they are caught up in an emergency, to be able to pinpoint their exact location through the use of grid referencing. It is hoped that the initiative will be adopted widely by those working on our land so that, when the need arises, casualties or colleagues of casualties can identify their location, which facilitates the swiftest possible response by ambulance services.

The NFUS is providing pocket-sized grid reference cards to all its members and is looking for those to be filled in before the need arises. The cards will note unique landmarks such as lochs, prominent hills, masts, water features, churches, bridges or roads. The initiative is part of the farm safety Scotland partnership—the Scottish Government is a participant—which promotes safe working environments across rural Scotland and tackles a number of issues related to the farming fatalities and injuries that happen each year.

On the subject of farming and the part that the industry plays in responding to emergency situations, I commend the NFUS for its continued lobbying of the UK Government to commit to improving mobile networks across Scotland. The substandard quality of the networks in rural locations can present a health and safety issue when the need to call in the blue-light services arises.

15:52

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab):** It is probably true to say that no one expects to need the emergency services—we all imagine that it is only others who will need them—but that we feel safer knowing that they are there and ready to bring their considerable expertise and skill to our aid if needed.

When something goes wrong, the police, ambulance service or fire and rescue services are our first port of call. My colleagues across the chamber have spoken about recent tragedies and disasters and the magnificent response of those services. In recent years we have, unfortunately, been only too aware of their worth and value to us.

I want to speak from my own experience of two events that demonstrate the expertise and commitment of the emergency services and explain why I hold them in such high regard.

The first event took place many years ago when I was a teenager, so I will not mention the year. I was awoken by my parents in the middle of the night. At the time, we lived on the 21st floor of a 30-storey block on the Red Road in Glasgow. Fire had broken out on the 23rd floor, two floors above us.

My family was physically unscathed, although we were never to return to live in that home; but, tragically, one 12-year-old boy lost his life. We and our neighbours did what one does in such an incident—we ran down the fire escape to make our way to safety, as smoke from the fire and water from the sprinkler system began to penetrate the building. It was quite a frightening situation.

I mention the event because it occurred to me then, and has stayed with me ever since, that as we were running down and out of the building, the firefighters were running in and up to the source of the fire. They did not know what to expect when they eventually got to the 23rd storey, but it was their job and they would deal with it.

In 2004, a major explosion at a factory in my Maryhill constituency demolished a building, killing nine people and injuring many more. My colleagues Hugh Henry and Hanzala Malik have referred to that Stockline incident.

The initial explosion took place on a Tuesday, but it took until the Friday of that week to recover the last body. With that, the last hope of finding anyone alive was extinguished. For four days and four nights, the fire and rescue services worked in quite dreadful conditions. It was an unseasonably hot May; there was dust and rubble everywhere; and the building was still unstable. I was on the site with the chief fire officer when the last body was found, and I remember well the feeling of what I can describe only as utter despair that hit everyone.

When, a little later that day, my Westminster colleague Ann McKechin and I returned to the site to thank the staff who had worked so tirelessly throughout the week, we were completely taken aback to find that a number of the firefighters who had been involved most closely in the search of the building were very anxious, upset and quite desperate—that is the only word to describe it—to know whether people understood that they had tried their very best. I have to say that no one had ever doubted that, not even for a minute, but the fact is that they are human beings and we must never forget that.

Around the city, hospitals and NHS staff treated the injured, and police officers comforted and supported the families involved. Help was offered and came from around the country; Royal Air Force helicopters ferried the most seriously injured to hospital, and fire and rescue forces from as far afield as Leicestershire brought sniffer dogs and equipment, as did mountain rescue teams from Kirkby Stephen in Cumbria and the Trossachs.

As I have indicated, our emergency services are second to none, but the way in which local people and passers-by rally around is also inspiring. During and indeed after the Stockline tragedy, the normally busy and bustling Maryhill Road was, for a time, completely silent. Local shops and supermarkets donated food and other items to the families who waited for news of their loved ones and to the rescue service personnel. As Hanzala Malik said, the local community hall remained open as a base for the families; indeed, some staff who turned up for work on Tuesday morning did not go home until late on the Friday night as they supported and cared for people who were going through what was the worst experience of their lives. It is therefore important that we remember those who step forward from their daily lives and return to them again with little or no recognition.

It is clear that across this chamber we have nothing but respect and admiration for those whose job often exposes them to danger or to experiences that must haunt them for years afterwards. However, it is not enough to respect and admire them; we must also support them and give them the resources that they need. That is

why the Labour amendment calls for an inquiry into the resilience of the services. We need to hear at first hand their views and their ideas if we are to give them that support.

As Hugh Henry has pointed out, Stockline happened because of neglect and the failure to properly maintain one small pipe, but we found that out only at the outcome of the inquiry that was four years after the disaster. We owe bereaved families the opportunity to find out as quickly as is technically possible why such incidents happen and we owe it to the emergency services to understand those reasons, to take action to ensure that such incidents do not happen again and to ensure that we are not asking the people in those services to risk their lives anew. That is why I am pursuing a bill to reform the fatal accident inquiry in Scotland, and I hope that the Scottish Government and colleagues across the chamber will agree not only to the proposal in my bill but to the inquiry that Labour seeks.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Rob Gibson, to be followed by Stewart Maxwell. You may have a generous six minutes, Mr Gibson.

15:59

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** Although I join colleagues in praising the work of the emergency services, I want to take a slightly different view, particularly on the way in which we cope with extreme weather. It is my fundamental belief that we can help the emergency services by not being so unprepared. The emergency services often have much more to do because of people who are unable to cope with conditions that this country, and areas such as my constituency, often have to deal with.

For example, I heard on the radio this morning about some people whose car was stuck near Blair Atholl for nine hours. They described having only a bottle of water that was for the windscreen wash and not wearing any warm clothes. In the past few days, the weather forecast has been very clear about driving conditions in Drumochter and on many other routes. I say "Be prepared"—I used to be a scout—and, let us face it, many people need to be much more prepared.

The ambulance services in far-flung areas such as mine do sterling work that often involves far longer journeys. We hear that people in the cities are very concerned about the number of minutes that it takes to get to a major hospital. In our case, it is often a matter of hours, unless one is lucky enough to get a helicopter. We must ensure that our emergency services are resilient and able to fulfil their purpose. I have a lot of belief in our investment in the ambulance service in particular.

There are other services that we take for granted, such as Scottish Water, which can require electric pumps to keep the system going. That is why Scottish Water needs emergency equipment for when there is a power cut. It was put to me by someone from Skye that it was bad enough to be without electricity for three days, but if the water had gone off as well, it would have made life fairly intolerable. Fortunately, that did not happen. However, it is essential that our infrastructure is such that we do not have the kind of emergencies in which water bottles have to be distributed to far-flung communities through terrible conditions of snow and blizzards.

I asked some of my constituents about their experiences in the past week. The answers that I received back up my argument about needing to be prepared. For example, Shirley Munro, who lives in Easter Ross, said:

"My thought is it would be really good if local radio gave out more regular informative and accurate information, given the updates online are useless if you have no power and probably not mobile reception either. These blackouts sadly will happen now and then, and I am grateful for those who work in often dangerous situations to get our power back on".

Hear, hear.

The thing is that the BBC has cut the staff who do the journalism that provides us with the information. It has also cut the local bulletins in size. Because the power cuts are often in the areas with the poorest broadband coverage, people need a battery-operated or wind-up radio to get a service. As Shirley Munro says, as soon as the electricity goes off, so does people's access to the internet. The radio tells us, from a nice, warm studio in Glasgow, that we should look up our electricity provider's website. Get real. We need to find ways to ensure that people get the information. The only way is through local radio provision, and the BBC has a major role to play in that respect.

**Mike MacKenzie:** The Presiding Officer said that there was some time in hand so I thought that I would describe a situation that illustrates Mr Gibson's point. During the festive period a number of years ago, the water on the island that I live on was cut off due to damage to the submarine pipe. On that occasion, the weather was so bad that it was not possible to transport water by boat, so Scottish Water was obliged to bring water in by helicopter. When my young nephew, who had been staying with us over the festive period, went back to school he had to complete a diary of what he had done over Christmas. He wrote about the helicopter bringing water. The teacher got in touch with his parents and said, "We're a bit concerned about your son making up stories." That shows just how little understood some of the problems that Rob Gibson's constituents and my

constituents experience and take almost for granted can be in urban areas.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** Thank you. I am not sure how Mr Gibson feels about another speech within his speech. We do have some time in hand and I can reimburse him.

**Rob Gibson:** Thank you very much. It was an interesting illustration of the fact that people in urban areas do not really understand what it is like to live in far-flung communities. I represent many such communities; the largest settlement has 9,000 people in it. The point is that most people live in much smaller settlements.

With regard to the Tory amendment about working with services in other parts of the UK, the point that I was making about the BBC is that the BBC controls broadcasting, and it has been making the cuts. We need those services to be reinstated and increased in our areas. I hope that it is recognised that we do work with services in other parts of the UK and that it would be a good idea if the services from there worked with us. That would be very helpful indeed.

The radio situation was exacerbated by a transmitter fault, so there was no local radio service in the Highlands or in Orkney for two or three days. I do not know what the cause of it was but of course it happened just at the time of year when we are in the middle of the blizzards and the great storms. That is an example of where infrastructure needs to be resilient to meet such conditions.

My final thought is about our seafarers. Mention was made by Hugh Henry of the terrible deaths at the edge of the Pentland Firth due to the loss of the Cemfjord. A local fisherman sent me a note about it. He said that, with his 40 years of experience in the Pentland Firth, with those terrible waters that people can never know enough about to feel safe, he thought that there should be more broadcasts—every hour—particularly when there was a major east wind coming towards the Pentland Firth, because dozens of people have died in the firth over the years. That shows that we have to think about how we provide emergency services. We support the emergency personnel—all of them—but we should be able to do more to help them to do their jobs when they need to.

16:07

**Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):** I very much welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and to acknowledge the emergency services staff who work tirelessly on our behalf. I know that we are all in agreement that the way in which our emergency services have handled themselves in the face of tragedy has quite rightly

given them the respect and admiration of the Scottish public.

I can think of numerous examples in my lifetime of times when emergency services personnel have faced extraordinarily challenging situations. The nature of their work means that they sometimes have to put their lives on the line to protect others. As a former employee of the then Strathclyde Fire Brigade, the most obvious example for me of the bravery of our emergency services is the Cheapside Street disaster, which continues to be, 55 years later, Britain's worst peacetime fire services disaster. The disaster took place in March 1960, when fire crews attended a fire at Cheapside Street in the Anderston area of Glasgow. The fire broke out at a warehouse containing more than 1 million gallons of whisky. At the height of the fire, hundreds of firefighters battled the blaze. It took 11 hours to bring it under control, but during that time, 14 firefighters and five members of the Glasgow Salvage Corps were killed when an explosion within the warehouse caused the building's 20-metre high wall to fall on the men below.

Even though I was employed in the fire service in the 1990s, that particular disaster in Cheapside Street was still a regular subject of discussion, debate and concern all those years later. It is examples such as the Cheapside Street disaster that make us remember that we should never take for granted the risks that are taken by the men and women of the emergency services.

The first such events that I remember took place in 1971. In January that year, the Ibrox disaster resulted in 66 deaths and more than 200 injuries. In October 1971, there was the Clarkston disaster, in which 22 people died and about 100 were injured. I remember those incidents well not because they were large incidents or because they were relatively local to our south-side Glasgow home, but because, in the case of the Ibrox disaster, my father—who was and still is a Rangers fan—was at the game and was in the section of the ground at stairway 13 where the disaster occurred. He did not return home until very late that night. Unfortunately, he was completely oblivious to what had happened in the game because he had left the game early in disgust after Celtic had scored, leaving my mother and the rest of the family in a state of high anxiety for many, many hours.

Similarly, the Clarkston disaster hit home because a neighbour of ours worked in one of the shops that were destroyed by the blast. Information to families at that time was scant, to say the least, and much has been learned in the decades following those events. Organisational planning has been significantly improved, as have the technology and equipment that our services

use, which allows the emergency services to keep anxious families informed of what is happening. Contacting and supporting families who are waiting for news is one aspect of their work that we often forget.

Unfortunately, Scotland has experienced a number of incidents in more recent years that have required a response from the emergency services. In Glasgow and West Scotland alone there have been a number of incidents, including the Glasgow airport terrorist attack, the Glasgow School of Art fire, the Clutha Vaults helicopter crash and the tragic events of the Queen Street bin lorry accident so recently. In the case of the Glasgow airport terrorist attack, the hard work of airport staff in conjunction with emergency personnel ensured that, despite a serious terrorist attack, the airport reopened in 24 hours, thereby reducing the negative impact of the attack on individuals and businesses.

At the Glasgow School of Art fire, the quick action of more than 100 firefighters in a difficult environment prevented the complete destruction of a nationally and internationally significant building and a vital piece of Scotland's culture. The nature of the fire meant that fire crews had to tackle the blaze from inside the building. The bravery, skill and professionalism that was shown allowed the vast majority of the building to be saved, including the Mackintosh lecture theatre and museum and the Mackintosh archive.

Recent events have shown how our emergency services work in collaboration not only with different organisations, but with their own back-room staff, who provide the necessary support for front-line personnel to carry out their duties. Not that long ago, I was fortunate to visit the Scottish Ambulance Service, whose staff took the time to show me some of the work that takes place behind the scenes to keep their fleet of ambulances and transports running smoothly. Ambulance control centres received more than 1.8 million calls in 2013-14 and dealt with nearly 2,400 emergency calls on Hogmanay alone. I saw at first hand the professionalism of phone operators in responding to calls, and it was clear that staff understood the importance of maintaining the service at a very high standard.

Back-room staff must not be forgotten. They are crucial to ensuring that our front-line emergency personnel are able to carry out their duties as effectively as possible. It is that professionalism and teamwork across all our services that has helped to deliver real progress, including the reduction in fire deaths in Scotland to the lowest recorded level and the reduction in recorded crime to a 40-year low.

I also want to highlight the work of our community volunteer first responders. They are

often the first on the scene of a medical emergency, and their training with defibrillators and oxygen therapy can mean the difference between life and death for some patients. In West Scotland there are volunteer first responder units operating in Largs, Neilston, Uplawmoor, Arran and the Rosneath peninsula. The staff at Glasgow airport and the security staff at Braehead shopping centre are also part of the scheme. It is only appropriate that their willingness to sacrifice their own time as volunteers to protect the people of this country is recognised in the debate.

All our emergency services should be given the support that they require to undertake their duties effectively and safely. I therefore regret that the UK Government chose to shut the Clyde coastguard station at Greenock and to transfer its work to Belfast. I am also concerned by reports that the Belfast location is understaffed, despite assurances from Westminster that more staff would be recruited.

The Scottish Government called in its submission to the Smith commission for full responsibility for maritime transport to be transferred to the Scottish Parliament. I am therefore disappointed to see the commission's recommendations, which state that the Scottish Government will be confined to a "consultative role" and the ability to nominate one member to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency advisory board. That is a shame, and it is not the way to show our respect for our emergency services.

While most of us were at home enjoying our Christmas break, the emergency services were continuing to work hard. They are undoubtedly worthy of the praise that they have received today. They work irregular hours, and at times need to confront very distressing situations. I hope that our debate today goes a little way towards showing the gratitude not only of the Scottish Parliament but of all the people of Scotland, who rely on the efforts of our emergency services.

16:14

**Paul Martin (Glasgow Provan) (Lab):** As we come to the final stages of the debate, there can be no doubt that members are unified around working together to support our emergency services—not one member has said anything different. We do not often see members in the chamber agreeing with each other, but they have done that in this debate.

However, we should recognise that we are doing that in the comfort of the chamber. We find ourselves in a comfort zone here today, using words that, in many respects, come easy to us. We do not risk our lives every day when we come to work and do a job that we enjoy. We do not find

ourselves in the position of having to seek counselling services because of the job that we do, although we might occasionally joke about that. We should recognise, though, that the debate that we are having here today relates to people who have to seek that kind of support. The position that we are in as we debate our emergency services is in marked contrast to the challenging situations that the people in the emergency services often find themselves in.

The tragic events in George Square last month and at the Clutha Vaults in 2013 certainly gave me a different perspective. I was in Glasgow on the very street where the bin lorry accident took place 15 minutes later, which gave me a different perspective on what happened. When the reports came through about a major incident, as well as having a sense of concern about the fact that there could be fatalities, I felt alarm because I did not know whether family members were involved. I think that all of us have similar concerns following such events.

The feeling about such incidents intensifies when they happen in a town or city that we are familiar with. There are momentary feelings of panic as we seek information about the movements of loved ones and make frantic calls. The emotions of first responders to major incidents are not like that, though, because their emotions are involved in using the professionalism and expertise that are available to them to deal with the incident. We should acknowledge the professionalism and training of such individuals, who are prepared to do anything. We know that first responders were on the scene almost immediately at the George Square and Clutha Vaults incidents, because there were many witnesses to that. We should also recognise again today that the first emergency workers to attend the Clutha Vaults and George Square incidents undoubtedly saved lives. We should acknowledge the role that they played and the challenges that they faced.

The work of emergency workers is carried out every day. There are no Christmas day or new year's day holidays for the 24-hour-a-day services that are provided 365 days a year. All of those in the emergency services, whether firefighters, paramedics or police officers, provide a valuable service all year round. Every time they get a 999 call-out, they show the same proud professionalism that ensures that they deliver a good public service.

As well as recognising the emergency services who attended the events that I have referred to, I want to mention the members of the public who gave assistance. Many witness accounts of the events referred to members of the public giving comfort to the injured while trying to deal with the

challenging scene that surrounded them. We should give them recognition for that. I also want to mention the church leaders who played a crucial role in comforting bereaved family members who had experienced severe trauma.

Like other members, I support the Government's motion, but I think that members should also support Hugh Henry's constructive amendment. Far too often, we have debates in Parliament on issues that need to be taken forward that just deliver "warm words", as Hugh Henry said. Surely we as a Parliament should be looking at how we can learn from the experiences of individuals in the emergency services, who have so much to offer.

I appreciate the challenges that our various parliamentary committees and their members face, but surely the challenges that the Justice Committee faces are nothing in comparison with the challenges that our emergency services face. Surely we can look at ways to ensure that those individuals' experiences are carefully considered so that they feel that we are making a difference.

I was first elected to the Parliament in 1999. I recall meeting during the first session fire officers who advised me that they were being targeted by youths lobbing bricks at them while they were attending 999 calls, and that adults with airguns were using the fire appliances for target practice. As a result of the experiences of those individuals, I lodged an amendment to a bill. Later, we passed the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005, and in the following years we have passed a number of other pieces of legislation to protect our emergency services.

I would not have been able to bring forward those proposals if I had not heard from the fire officers who told me about the challenges that they faced. I also heard from paramedics, who told me about some of the challenges that they faced in Glasgow city centre. I was horrified to hear that people who had committed themselves to public service were being targeted. They have benefited from the legislation that the Parliament has come together to deliver, and many communities, including in the area that I represent, have benefited from the zero tolerance approach. Why can we not ensure that we give those individuals opportunities to amplify their concerns to our various committees?

This has been a good debate and it has been worthy of the Parliament. However, in the spirit of the newly elected First Minister's comments about working together and co-operating, I ask the cabinet secretary to consider Hugh Henry's amendment carefully and to give the emergency services opportunities to contribute to the Parliament.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Our final speaker in the open debate, before we come to the closing speeches, is Willie Coffey.

16:22

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** This debate has been a good opportunity for members to pay tribute to Scotland's emergency services personnel and to put on the record our thanks as parliamentarians for the vital work that they do to keep us all safe. Their vigilance on our behalf and their brave action when lives are in peril are appreciated the length and breadth of this country by communities, families and individuals, who can find themselves caught up in the most distressing of circumstances as they go about their daily business.

Colleagues throughout the chamber have reminded us of horrific events in Glasgow—at George Square and elsewhere—and have paid tribute to the victims who lost their lives, the injured and all the families who have been affected, and to the magnificent responders and crews who rushed to the scene to give assistance.

My constituency has not been without incident. Within two days, over 22 to 24 December, we saw our local emergency service teams rescuing passengers from a train that had run into floodwater down the line from Kilmarnock at Mauchline, and having to free about 30 people. More than 40 people had to be rescued by dinghies from the Asda store in Kilmarnock when the whole area was flooded, and there was a spate of road accidents in the area, two of which were separated by only a few minutes on the same stretch of the A77, which very sadly led to a fatality. Those incidents all presented different challenges to the teams and, as we might expect, their skill in carrying out those rescues in dangerous conditions is testament to their dedication and professionalism. I thank all the emergency staff who were involved in those incidents.

In 2008, my constituent Alison Hume lost her life when she fell into a mineshaft only yards from her home in Galston. That night, despite the issues that were subsequently raised on management of the rescue operation, there were some outstanding feats of bravery and compassion by the rescue personnel at the scene, who descended into the shaft to assist Alison despite the risks to their own safety. Ultimately, Alison's life was not saved. However, the bravery of the officers who did their best to rescue her has, to my knowledge, never been recognised. In my view, that is a mistake that should be corrected, and that view is also supported by Alison's family.

Our emergency services personnel are a unique breed of people. They go to work just as many of the rest of us do, but at the back of their minds they must be thinking, "This could be the day when I'm called on to act to save a life and in so doing to put my own life at risk, too." It takes a special type of person to do that type of work. Thankfully, in Scotland we have an abundance of such men and women, who are prepared to risk their own lives to save others. We should thank them for that at every opportunity. Perhaps the cabinet secretary could give some thought to introducing a Scottish Parliament award for outstanding feats of bravery in the line of duty by our emergency services personnel and, indeed, by ordinary citizens, who also come to the aid of their fellow citizens who are in distress.

In Scotland, we are lucky to be witnessing a 40-year low in recorded crime. We have 1,000 extra police officers on our streets, and the number of our citizens who are likely to become victims of crime has dropped again and the amount is lower than in England and Wales. More people feel safer in their communities and the number of people who perceive local crime rates to be staying the same or improving has also gone up significantly, to about 76 per cent.

On top of the extra police officers, numbers of ambulance technicians and paramedics have increased since 2007, by roughly 16 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. Numbers of consultants and nurses are also well up on the levels that they were at in 2006.

We see high levels of public confidence that our accident and emergency services can meet our needs over the winter: 63 per cent of people believe that, which is significantly higher than the figure of just 46 per cent across the other countries in the UK.

Now, in all parts of Scotland, as a result of the Alison Hume case, crews have direct access to specialist equipment and expertise in order that they can effect rescues wherever they are needed.

On performance, our call-out response times are the best in the UK and our ambulance crews respond to incidents in 6.5 minutes, on average. Our performance against A and E targets in September was 93.5 per cent; again, that is the best in the UK and it means that about 750,000 patients were seen within four hours. Our Ayr and Monklands A and E units alone dealt with more than 800,000 attendances, which would, of course, have been clogging up other A and E departments if those units had been closed some years ago.

In Scotland, we can be proud of our emergency services personnel and volunteers, who day in and day out put themselves at great risk in order to

keep us safe, or rescue us when called upon to do so. It is right that the Parliament has a debate such as this to pay tribute to those wonderful people. We have heard many examples of the professionalism and courage that our emergency services teams display every day in some part of Scotland. May we as a Parliament congratulate and thank them for everything that they do.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That brings us to closing speeches. I remind members that if they have participated in the debate they should be back in the chamber for closing speeches.

16:28

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I am pleased to close today's debate, which has been useful and largely consensual, as befits the subject. As Jackson Carlaw said, the Scottish Conservatives welcome the opportunity to commend and pay tribute to all those who help to keep us safe in emergencies. We are indeed fortunate to have such first-class emergency service workers and volunteers in Scotland, and it is right that the Parliament takes time to put on record our gratitude to all those involved in our emergency services, who often risk their lives to save the lives of others.

I associate the Scottish Conservatives with all the comments that have been made about the first-class work of the emergency services during the tragic Glasgow bin lorry crash just before Christmas and the Clutha Vaults bar tragedy last year, and with the tributes that members have paid to all our policemen and women, ambulance crews and fire and rescue service workers.

I am an MSP for the Highlands and Islands, and I want to highlight the work of our dedicated and brilliant RNLI lifeboat crews, as a number of members have done. I have a long family association with the RNLI. My late father, Charles McGrigor, became Scottish convener of the RNLI and travelled to lifeboat stations all over Scotland. It was a huge honour for my family when RNLI representatives played a part in his funeral, wrapping his coffin in a lifeboat flag and providing a detail to carry it to his grave in Dalmally churchyard.

The RNLI's 47 Scottish stations provide a vital, 24-hours-a-day search and rescue service and help to save the lives of hundreds of people, including fishermen, every year. Tobermory RNLI station, in my region, is one of Scotland's busiest, along with the Oban station. I pay special tribute to my constituent, Tobermory's Jane Griffiths, one of the RNLI's first female coxswains, who has just stepped down after almost 20 years of service. Her commitment and dedication are an example to us all.

Volunteers make up 95 per cent of the charity's lifeboat crew members and shore crew. We should also record our thanks to the people who raise vital funds for the RNLI and other charities that provide emergency services—the people who run the lifeboat tents at shows all over Scotland and who collect for the lifeboats and other charities on the street in all weathers. We are an island race, surrounded by sea, and the realisation of the perils of the deep is embedded in the bloodstream of our nation.

Another category 1 response group that is of great importance in my region, to residents and visitors, is the mountain rescue team. Scotland has 27 volunteer mountain rescue teams, the majority of which are based in my region. The teams are made up of more than 1,000 volunteers, plus an additional three police teams and an RAF team. They operate effectively and safely 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, in all weather conditions.

Mountain rescue teams help to save the lives of dozens of walkers and climbers. Just last weekend, three people were rescued from the Cairngorms in blizzard conditions in two separate operations by the Cairngorm mountain rescue team. The team's knowledge and expertise are world class. I commend all those who volunteer with our mountain rescue teams and who fundraise so hard to support them. The Order of St John sponsors our mountain rescue teams and has given wonderful support through the provision of Land Rovers.

I take this opportunity to reinforce the message that our mountain rescue teams consistently seek to put across: more people need to be aware of and prepared for the weather conditions that can be encountered in our hill and mountain ranges. Winter climbing is a rewarding activity for many people and is important to the economy, especially in the Fort William area, but the ferocious and fast-changing weather should never be underestimated. An experienced young mountain climber who narrowly escaped death in the Cairngorms last year after stepping over a blind cornice warned recently:

"You can have all the training and all the kit and skills, but that doesn't mean you're prepared to deal with ... the fact that poor visibility could make you that oblivious to what was three feet in front of you."

He went on to say:

"People just assume that, because it's in the UK, it must be nice and rambly ... But Scottish mountains can kill you, whether it's avalanches, or the weather being truly horrendous. It can change very quickly and people don't realise how hard it can be to get out of it if it happens."

I put on record my thanks to everyone who is involved in rescues on our freshwater lochs, rivers and inland waters. That is another important

service, but it is a bit spasmodic. For example, the Loch Lomond angling association has a rescue boat and Loch Ness is covered by the RNLI, but some of the other freshwater lochs are not covered by any specific bodies. On Loch Awe, where I live, we had the recent tragedy of the four people who were drowned. Since then, a charity called LochWatch Loch Awe has raised enough funds to buy a small boat. It has done well but, unfortunately, I do not think that it will be sustainable unless there is somewhere that will provide some sort of core funding for that operation. Until that happens, I am afraid that some of the bigger freshwater areas in Scotland will be without major cover. I suggest that that needs to be looked at. Local residents deserve praise and support for the actions that they take with regard to freshwater safety, but core funding must be called for in areas where there is none.

I support the amendment in Jackson Carlaw's name and thank all Scotland's emergency service workers, whose role is incredibly important to all our constituents.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before we move on, I note that a couple of members were missing at the start of the closing speeches. The chamber has received the courtesy of an explanation from one of the members, but I note that Hanzala Malik is still missing from the chamber. I regret that and trust that an explanation will be forthcoming.

16:36

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am pleased to be summing up for Labour and supporting Labour's amendment, following what has been, for the most part, a consensual debate that has allowed the Parliament to acknowledge the debt of gratitude that we owe to the men and women of our emergency services, whether they are fully employed by the major blue-light or uniformed services or are part-time workers, such as volunteer fire service workers. Mike MacKenzie told us that he used to be a volunteer firefighter, and Alison McInnes pointed out that volunteer firefighters make up 40 per cent of our service. I include those who employ their professional skills in a voluntary capacity, such as the doctors in BASICS—the British Association for Immediate Care Scotland, which has not been mentioned today but which supports the police, ambulance and fire services in relation to road accidents, and volunteers such as the first responders, whom Roderick Campbell talked about.

Many of the members who have spoken have done so based on their personal contact with or political experience of disasters. Patricia Ferguson spoke graphically about Stockline and reminded

us of the consequences of delays in FAIs and the impact not only on those who have suffered but on the emergency services. A number of members, such as Hanzala Malik and Colin Beattie, spoke about the Clutha disaster; Paul Martin spoke about the recent George Square disaster; Gil Paterson spoke about the incident in Clydebank; and Elaine Murray reminded us of the recent events in Paris, in which the army and various types of police were involved, and of the Glasgow School of Art fire.

From all those accounts, what is clear to me is the huge professionalism of our core services and the ability of various organisations to deploy their particular skills in the seamless and co-ordinated way that Christine Grahame graphically described in relation to the River Teviot incident.

However, linking volunteers with those core services is also vital. For example, there are 95 BASICS medics connected to the Scottish Ambulance Service, and that sort of connection is important.

In the past few days, we have heard of Pauline Cafferkey's improvement, and we should, today of all days, pay tribute to those from the health and fire services who volunteer to work at international disaster sites. Tsunamis, earthquakes and the flooding that results from climate change, such as the flooding in Malawi that we heard about during today's First Minister's question time, affect countries that do not have the resources to tackle the consequences. Our volunteers play a vital role in that regard. Médecins Sans Frontières, which I am a particular advocate of and is the British Medical Association's Christmas charity, is working in Syria, north Pakistan and west Africa in circumstances that we can only think about. We cannot imagine what those workers have to face on a daily basis.

I will not dwell on accident and emergency staff today, but I will say that anyone who has witnessed a busy shift—more and more shifts fall into that category—must applaud the nurses, doctors and other staff in our A and E departments. This is not just a winter issue; this is now an all-year-round issue.

I recently visited our only charitable air ambulance, which is based in Scone, in my constituency. Before the service got under way, people asked whether it would be fully utilised and whether we needed it in addition to the two NHS air ambulances. This is one of the few political points that I will make in my speech. The air ambulances flew 3,427 sorties last year and are becoming essential to our service. With the major trauma units about to come on stream, we will need more air ambulance provision, not less, and if the Kerr and Christie reports are acted on, rationalisation, primarily for patients' safety and only secondly for cost effectiveness, will

demonstrate that need. As elective procedures are carried out in one hospital and all acute cases are handled in another hospital, the acute cases will need that transport. Therefore, I encourage members to support the charitable air ambulance service.

Whenever we list all the emergency services, some groups are inevitably left out. For example, I would not have thought of the farmers without Graeme Dey's excellent description of the work that they do on our behalf. Jackson Carlaw also reminded us of those who are usually unsung, such as those who work for GCHQ, whose work often goes unrecognised. I would add to the list—as Elaine Murray did—civilian support staff. I am glad that we have, as a country, albeit belatedly, recognised the Bevin boys and the Arctic merchant seamen, who were important individuals during the war but who have only recently been recognised.

Jackson Carlaw referred to the unacceptable behaviour of hoax callers, and Paul Martin reminded us that, after listening to emergency service staff, we legislated for those who had been physically abused. Listening is important.

I join Alison McInnes and others in praising the electricity supply workers who have worked tirelessly in the recent past to reconnect supplies in remote areas. I also join in the thanks to Network Rail and transport staff for their efforts in the past few days to keep our rail and road systems functioning.

Many members, such as Roderick Campbell, have spoken eloquently about their local services and their personal experiences. Patricia Ferguson gave us the image of firefighters going up a tower block as she and her family were coming down. That resonated strongly with me. On one occasion, I received the support of a voluntary fire service officer in my practice. I had been called on to talk a mentally ill patient down from a ledge on the main street in Bridge of Allan but, having a fear of heights at that time, which I fortunately do not have now, I was terrified. The officer, who was about half my size and half the size of my patient, successfully managed to help us both to get down—my patient did not jump—so I owe that service a personal debt.

The cabinet secretary, Hugh Henry and others have referred to the mountain rescue service, and I will not add to their significant descriptions. Although 25 lives may have been lost in a year, how many more were saved? Many people owe their lives to the 1,000 volunteers.

Jamie McGrigor talked about his own family's experience of the RNLI, which must surely be one of the best examples of a voluntary service. As Mike MacKenzie asked, who among us would go

out on the sea in storms such as the weather bomb that we experienced recently?

St Andrew's First Aid and the British Red Cross are another two organisations that not only respond but attend many sporting and other events where one never knows what is going to happen. They also train others in basic first aid, so they spread the emergency service. In Bridge of Allan primary school, in my constituency, I was delighted recently to present training certificates to the teachers, who will now train the pupils in cardiopulmonary resuscitation. If we spread those skills among our community, we increase the resilience of our community, so schemes such as that one, which is supported by the British Heart Foundation, are important.

Our amendment asks that the Parliament go beyond warm words, and in funding the core services we do that. Nevertheless, this is about resilience, and we should interact directly with our front-line staff. I will not instruct committees to undertake inquiries, but I will ask the Health and Sport Committee to invite front-line staff—not just the managers, whom we have already interviewed about resilience—to give evidence. As some members have said, we must take the time to listen to those front-line staff, even given our committees' crowded agendas.

I will make two further points, one philosophical and one practical. In Scotland, we have a unique funding approach in support of our hospices, which is based on a promise that was made 30 years ago that the Government would match, pound for pound, every pound that the public contributes. That is controlled by budgets and things, but it is basically still the situation 30 years on. It is my belief that, in an era in which authority and Government have increasingly small standing, taking that approach to some of our volunteer services would renew a partnership between Government and people. If the funds that are raised for the Loch Awe scheme were matched by the Government, that would send a message to that community that we value what it is doing and want to support it.

That suggestion is contained in a very good discussion paper published by the Carnegie UK Trust that is entitled "The Enabling State". It is by Sir John Elvidge, one of our foremost former civil servants. I commend the suggestion to members as a way in which the state can support our communities.

The other issue that I want to mention is born out of my experience. In treating a police officer years after the Lockerbie disaster, I recognised that he was suffering from unrecognised post-traumatic stress disorder. Alison McInnes mentioned the number of police officers who are off with stress. We need to be mindful of the effect

on men and women in our emergency services. As well as putting themselves at immediate risk, they can pay a heavy price psychologically. We must be open about that and ensure that they know that we recognise the problem and will support them.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Draw to a close, please.

**Dr Simpson:** It is good that we have reflected on everybody who has a job in the emergency services, including the volunteers and those in the blue-light and uniformed services. I hope that we will agree to Labour's amendment to send a clear message that we will listen and will look at the issue. Not to agree to the amendment would send the wrong message, so I hope that it will be supported.

16:46

**The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt):** I welcome the opportunity to close the debate, which has been wide ranging and interesting.

We have all agreed that, without a doubt, our emergency services face tough and difficult situations on a daily basis. I echo what others have said and pass on my gratitude to each and every member of our emergency services, as well as those who volunteer their spare time to help those in need, no matter what the circumstances. At some time in our lives, each and every one of us, or someone we know, will rely on the skills and dedication of emergency service personnel. It is that dedication to deliver those services day in, day out that we commend today.

I echo Elaine Murray's and Patricia Ferguson's concern about the recognition of firefighters, which Patricia Ferguson raised in relation to the Stockline incident. I think that public opinion these days is very much in favour of our emergency services. The public recognise that things cannot be fixed immediately in certain situations but that our emergency services are doing their very best. I wish that sometimes the press would reflect that, too.

I agree with Jackson Carlaw's concern about hoax calls, although the majority of people use our emergency service call lines responsibly. Any malicious calls are taken very seriously, and the Scottish Government fully supports our police and prosecutors, who hold those who are responsible to account. However, I assure Jackson Carlaw that the services make every effort to identify calls that might be linked to mental health issues and to advise the relevant agencies accordingly.

The commitment of our emergency services is shown in the examples that have been shared in the debate of how the men and women who serve

in them respond on a daily basis to a wide and diverse range of situations of varying degrees of risk and challenge, some of which may put their lives at risk. It is great that members have recognised a huge variety of volunteers and services. In an emotional speech, Mike MacKenzie mentioned volunteer firefighters and the coastguard. Elaine Murray rightly recognised the people who clear our roads and railways, and Alison McInnes mentioned the engineers on our rail lines.

Hanzala Malik rightly recognised the contribution of the mosques and other faith services. We should acknowledge the Samaritans, the street pastors and the Red Cross. Who can forget the great work that Laurence Whitley of Glasgow cathedral did to support the families after the Clutha crash or what Archbishop Tartaglia did after the bin lorry disaster?

As Dr Simpson acknowledged, Graeme Dey mentioned farmers. As a farmer's daughter, I have had to help people out of snowdrifts and had to be rescued myself, so it was good that he mentioned them.

We should all remember that, as Rob Gibson mentioned, personal resilience is important. That adds up to community resilience, which is helped—as Stewart Maxwell recognised—by first responders and the availability of defibrillators in our society.

Saving lives and bringing new lives into the world is part of the day-to-day job, which must be daunting as well as sometimes exciting. Keeping Scotland safe must bring a sense of satisfaction that few careers can profess to offer. I encourage Scotland's young people to consider a career with the emergency services when they review their futures.

Job satisfaction rates from the recent 2014 NHS Scotland staff survey found that 85 per cent of Scottish Ambulance Service staff who answered the survey were happy to go the extra mile at work. I expect such survey results to be typical of all our emergency services, which reinforces the positive attitude that our workforce has and further enhances our trust and confidence in them. It should go without saying that the Scottish Government is equally committed to supporting our emergency services to ensure that they continue to keep the whole of Scotland's population safe.

We heard earlier that the Scottish Government is the only Government in the UK to provide annual grant funding to its national mountain rescue service. We want to ensure that Scotland's natural environment and alluring landscape are accessible to those who wish to explore them in the knowledge that help is at hand should the

unpredictable climatic conditions result in their getting into difficulty. However, as Jamie McGrigor said, people should still be mindful of the need to be well equipped when they go into the mountains.

In those circumstances, the Scottish Ambulance Service has a range of specialist services that it can deploy, including the national specialist emergency transport and retrieval service—ScotSTAR for short—which was launched in April last year. ScotSTAR is aimed at helping a range of critically ill patients by providing a single specialist integrated service throughout Scotland. Such services are world class and they highlight the fact that Scotland is leading the way in providing services that protect people the length and breadth of the country.

Of course we always want to do more and work together even more effectively. A key area in which we can do more is improving the co-ordination and effectiveness of the response to cardiac arrests. If we do that well, more lives can be saved. The Scottish Government is working with the Scottish Ambulance Service, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, third sector organisations and other stakeholders to develop a new strategy, which is to be launched in the spring, to ensure that the outcomes for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in Scotland are as good as those anywhere in the world.

Presiding Officer, 2014 saw both tragedy and triumph. Our emergency services demonstrated that, whatever the circumstances, they have tried and tested ways of working together to provide a professional, co-ordinated and immediate response to major incidents and events. As was mentioned, we all saw that most recently at the tragic events in George Square on 22 December. Despite what can only be described as the worst circumstances, everyone who helped during the tragedy acted courageously and with compassion. They should be very proud of that. Thankfully, most of us can only imagine how difficult that must have been.

Because of the distressing nature of the work, it is important—as several members mentioned—that emergency service staff are given the space, time and opportunity to look after their own health and wellbeing. The emergency services take their responsibility for staff wellbeing extremely seriously and have programmes in place to provide support. For example, the Scottish Ambulance Service provides formal counselling to all staff as part of its employee counselling service. That service supports staff with information on where to find relevant help, especially following mass casualty incidents.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service works with the Rivers centre in Edinburgh, which offers treatment for trauma-related problems to all fire

staff. That is an example of excellent working between our emergency services and NHS boards, and the Scottish Government welcomes and encourages more of such collaborative working. In addition, there are chaplains to support members of the emergency services, and there are chaplains who are trained in dealing with people who have been involved in major incidents.

To enhance that provision, last year the Scottish Government announced that money that was received from the UK Government as a result of London interbank offered rate—LIBOR—fines could be used for wellbeing projects to support staff in all three of the main emergency services, as well as staff in a number of voluntary services.

We should remember that the emergency services excel not only in times of tragedy, but in times of celebration. Our emergency services can be proud of their part in delivering the most successful and safe Commonwealth games, during which 1.2 million tickets were sold and around 690,000 games-related visitors attended events.

We should also acknowledge the many employers who recognise that their employees wish to be volunteers, to be retained firefighters, to crew our lifeboats or to be members of the mountain rescue service by allowing them to take time off to do that work.

I express my gratitude for being given the chance to offer my personal thanks to all staff in the emergency services, both onshore and offshore. We should remember that the emergency services cover our offshore installations, in relation to which there have been a number of incidents. I also thank all those members who expressed their thanks to the emergency services during the debate.

It would not be appropriate for the Government to direct Parliament, but if parliamentary committees wish to hold inquiries in this area, the Government will co-operate. I reassure Hugh Henry, Hanzala Malik and other Labour members that, day in and day out, Government ministers meet representatives of all the emergency services that have been mentioned to ensure that we are delivering the best possible level of service.

We have all been inspired by the stories that we have heard during the debate, and our emergency and voluntary services can be very proud of what they do.

## Standards Commission for Scotland

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-12062, in the name of Liz Smith, on the reappointment of a member of the Standards Commission for Scotland. I invite Liz Smith to move the motion on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

16:58

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I seek your permission to speak to the motion in my name as a member of the SPCB, which invites members of the Parliament to agree to the reappointment of Mrs Julie Ward as a member of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

As members know, the Standards Commission's role is to encourage the highest ethical standards in public life, and it does so by promoting and enforcing the codes of conduct for councillors and members of devolved public bodies. In addition to promoting the codes, the commission receives reports from the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland following investigations by the commissioner into alleged breaches of the codes. If the commission upholds the commissioner's findings, it determines—in accordance with the legislation—the sanction that is to be applied.

I turn to the reappointment process. Under the Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc Act 2010, members of the commission are reappointed by the SPCB with the agreement of the Parliament. The SPCB sat as a reappointment panel on 10 December 2014. I chaired the panel; the other members were Liam McArthur and David Stewart.

I thank Louise Rose for confirming by way of a validation certificate that the nomination has been made on merit following a fair and robust reappointment process that conformed to good practice.

Details of the information that the SPCB considered and the criteria on which Mrs Ward was assessed have been set out in the report that the SPCB lodged in the Scottish Parliament information centre.

We believe that Julie Ward will continue to promote high ethical standards in public life and ensure that they are upheld by councillors and members of devolved public bodies. We wish her continued success in her role as a member of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the reappointment of Mrs Julie Ward as a Member of the Standards Commission for Scotland under Schedule 7 of the Scottish Parliamentary Commission and Commissioners etc. Act 2010.

**The Presiding Officer:** The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

## Modern Slavery Bill

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-11999, in the name of Michael Matheson, on the Modern Slavery Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Modern Slavery Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 10 June 2014, relating to enforcement powers in relation to ships and the Anti-Slavery Commissioner, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament or alter the functions of the Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Michael Matheson.*]

**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 five questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-12060.2, in the name of Hugh Henry, which seeks to amend motion S4M-12060, in the name of Michael Matheson, on commending the people who keep Scotland safe in emergencies, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)

Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and  
 Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse)  
 (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)  
 (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 27, Against 78, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-12060.1, in the name of Jackson Carlaw, which seeks to amend motion S4M-12060, in the name of Michael Matheson, on

commending the people who keep Scotland safe in emergencies, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-12060, in the name of Michael Matheson, as amended, on commending the people who keep Scotland safe in emergencies, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament applauds the excellent work undertaken by all of the brave and dedicated men and women of Scotland's emergency and other services, together with those elsewhere in the UK, both blue light and voluntary, who meet significant challenges on a daily basis to help keep communities safe and respond where and whenever there is need; acknowledges that Scotland has been reminded of this again through the events over the festive period, and commits to support all of the emergency services in the years ahead.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-12062, in the name of Liz Smith, on the reappointment of a member of the Standards Commission for Scotland, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees to the reappointment of Mrs Julie Ward as a Member of the Standards Commission for Scotland under Schedule 7 of the Scottish Parliamentary Commission and Commissioners etc. Act 2010.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-11999, in the name of Michael Matheson, on the Modern Slavery Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Modern Slavery Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 10 June 2014, relating to enforcement powers in relation to ships and the Anti-Slavery Commissioner, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament or alter the functions of the Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

*Meeting closed at 17:03.*

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