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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 27 September 2016

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection, and our speaker is Mr Paul Carberry, director of children's services at Action for Children Scotland.

Mr Paul Carberry (Action for Children Scotland): Presiding Officer, members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for inviting me to lead time for reflection here in our Scottish Parliament.

Action for Children has been speaking out on behalf of disadvantaged children and young people for more than 147 years in the United Kingdom and for 60 years in Scotland. We aim to act early so that children and young people get the care and support that they need, as soon as they need it. In Scotland, we operate in 30 out of 32 local authorities, delivering services that support more than 14,000 children, young people, parents and carers every year.

A number of our young ambassadors are in the public gallery today. Those young people are not just service users or ex-service users. They make a real contribution to the way we develop and deliver services, and they have a positive impact on the lives of other young people, their families and local communities.

Scotland has always been at the forefront in promoting the voice of disadvantaged children and young people. Scotland was the first nation in the UK to have a Minister for Children and Young People and a Minister for Youth Employment, and the first to give 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote in elections.

Scotland has set a clear ambition to become the best place to grow up in. To achieve that we must work together to enable young people to play a key role and contribute their own solutions. What is clear from our young ambassadors is that harnessing young people's skills, ideas and enthusiasm is vital to Scotland's success.

One of the many inspirational young people I have met is John. John's early years were blighted by parental neglect and drug abuse. By 12, he was moving drugs for older people. Unsurprisingly, he ended up in prison. John's dad died of an overdose when he was in prison and John attended his funeral handcuffed. When John's wee

brother was asked by his primary school teacher what he wanted to be when he grew up, he answered quite seriously, "A drug dealer."

John is now 24 and has worked with Action for Children for four years, helping vulnerable young people who are involved in serious criminality. His impact on those young people and their families is immense and he is the role model for many. The impact on his own family is equally profound. The same wee brother now says that he wants a job like big brother John. That shows us the power of creating assets and unleashing potential.

Topical Question Time

14:03

National Health Service (Staff Concerns)

1. **Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that NHS staff feel able to raise concerns about the service. (S5T-00099)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): All staff should have the confidence to speak up and know that their whistleblowing concerns will be treated seriously and investigated properly. NHS Scotland already has robust whistleblowing procedures in place, and we have continued in recent years to put in place additional supporting measures, such as the national confidential alert line and non-executive board whistleblowing champions.

Work is under way to establish an independent national whistleblowing officer for NHS Scotland, which will complement our existing policies and provide an independent and external level of review on the handling of whistleblowing cases. This will further contribute to better patient safety and also encourage an open and honest reporting culture.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Year on year, the NHS staff survey has found that up to a quarter of staff do not think that it is safe to speak up or challenge the way things are done if they have concerns about quality, negligence or wrongdoing. If they do not feel that they will be taken seriously or that their issues matter, that will have a severe impact on their morale. We have seen in other public services, most notably in Police Scotland, how damaging that can be. If staff knew that the confidential alert line that the cabinet secretary described was a permanent fixture and not just one that is funded on a rolling, 12-month basis, would they be more willing to use it?

Shona Robison: I agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton that the staff survey is an important way for us to hear the views and concerns of staff on the front line, and it is very important that we act on those. I think that the current alert line provides a good service. Of course, it does not stand alone but complements a range of whistleblowing mechanisms that have been developed through partnership work. I outlined some of that in my earlier answer.

We want to take further action, which is why we are working on the plans for an independent national whistleblowing officer and developing legislation for that role, which will provide further reassurance to staff. The independent national whistleblowing officer will have an important role

and ensure that, in addition to the whistleblowing procedures that are already in place, the process is more robust.

On the funding, I am committed to ensuring that the alert line continues. We want to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of staff, which might mean that it will develop over time. However, I think that it provides an important function and I assure the member that I am certainly committed to its continuation.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for that assurance. The chief executive of NHS Scotland, Paul Gray, has said that staff wanting to raise issues have not done so because they fear the consequences or believe that it would be pointless as their concerns will not be acted on. We cannot afford for there to be even the perception of such a corrosive culture in our NHS. The staff need to feel reassured that they are part of a listening, transparent health service. One campaigner has called for a root and branch review of how the NHS reacts to justifiable criticism. Is that something that the Scottish Government has considered, given how much the Government appears to have already learned from the freedom to speak up review in England?

Shona Robison: Paul Gray was quite right to give what I thought was a frank interview. He said that we have a number of mechanisms in place, including the alert line, and very clear policies at a local level that have been worked up in partnership with the unions and which provide a range of ways in which staff can give their views. Obviously, that may sometimes involve issues with a line manager, so there are procedures in place that enable staff to report concerns outwith the line management structure.

However, if we thought that enough had been done, we would not be working to establish an independent national whistleblowing officer for Scotland. As I said, that role will complement existing policies and provide an independent and external level of review of the handling of whistleblowing cases, which will add an important dimension. However, if there is more that we can do to contribute to having a more honest and open reporting culture, we will look at what that is. It is very important that staff feel able to give their views and raise concerns, not least because that can be very important from a patient safety perspective.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that there is an independent and external review system in place for the handling of whistleblowing cases in Scotland?

Shona Robison: As I said earlier, work is under way to establish an independent national whistleblowing officer. That role will provide a complementary service to existing policies as well as provide, importantly, an independent and external review of the handling of whistleblowing cases. We have considered the range of views that were expressed in the consultation and we want to continue to work with our partners to ensure that staff are protected when raising concerns. As I said, we want to encourage an open and honest reporting culture.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): It is clear from Paul Gray's statement that NHS staff still feel unable to speak up about concerns. What is the Scottish Government's position on confidentiality clauses in staff contracts, which might be preventing employees from speaking up in public?

Shona Robison: We have done a lot of work on confidentiality clauses. We have made it clear to boards that they should be used only in very exceptional circumstances and, if we look at the change in the use of such clauses, we see that far fewer are now used. A lot of work was done when concerns were raised previously about the use of confidentiality clauses. I will continue to keep an eye on that and I am happy to keep Donald Cameron informed. If he wants an update with some more detail on that, I am certainly happy to write to him.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): First, I think that we should thank Paul Gray for his brave and honest intervention yesterday. I hope that, as a result, he gets understanding from the health secretary, rather than wrath.

The reality is that increased vacancies and cuts in our health service are only adding extra pressure to already overstretched NHS staff, one in 20 of whom are on sick leave at any one time. Surely that ratio would not be acceptable in our Parliament, and it should not be acceptable in our health service. NHS staff have a duty of care for patients, and I believe that we as parliamentarians have a duty of care for NHS staff. What additional steps will the cabinet secretary take post Paul Gray's intervention yesterday?

Shona Robison: Any fair person listening to the answers that I gave earlier—and Anas Sarwar, if he had been listening—would know that I agreed that Paul Gray was right to put his concerns on the record. Rather than chastising him or expressing wrath, I support what he said. Perhaps Anas Sarwar should listen more carefully to answers that are given.

Paul Gray, in his position of leadership, and I, in my position of leadership, have made it clear that we take seriously any staff member's views or

concerns and how they can articulate them. That is why, over the past few months and years, a range of opportunities has been put in place that enable staff to raise concerns, whether that is done through the alert line—they can do it anonymously—or through the structures that are in place in our health boards. All that has been done in partnership with the unions and we will continue to work in partnership with them.

However, if we thought that enough had been done, we would not be moving towards establishing an independent national whistleblowing officer. That has been taken forward after consultation about the best way to do it. If there are any further mechanisms that we can consider to develop and improve an open and transparent culture, we will consider them.

On what Anas Sarwar said about vacancies, I note that we have record levels of staff in our NHS—we have 11,000 additional staff. The fact that we have more posts sometimes means that we have higher levels of vacancies, because some of those posts are more challenging to fill.

In paying tribute to every single person who works within our NHS and care services, I say that, as far as I am concerned as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, I will do what I can to ensure that we develop an open and transparent culture, and Paul Gray will do the same in his position.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): What powers does the Scottish Government anticipate the independent national whistleblowing officer having? When will the officer be introduced?

Shona Robison: We will use the findings of the analysis to further inform and refine proposals to ensure that the independent national whistleblowing officer is equipped to carry out the role effectively. We are clear that the INO should be able to provide independent challenge and oversight and have the powers and functions that enable it to do so.

We will introduce legislation to bring the role and functions into effect. As I said, that will complement policies that are already in place to promote, support and encourage whistleblowing and further develop that important, open and honest reporting culture in NHS Scotland. During the passage of that legislation through Parliament, members on all sides will be able to input to it.

Rural Economy (European Union Referendum)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-01669, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on securing the interests of Scotland's rural economy following the European Union referendum.

14:14

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): Presiding Officer,

"I believe that the risks of leaving the European Union are just too great ... All the economic experts predict that the potential damage a Brexit would do to jobs, mortgages and the economy as a whole across Scotland is just too severe."

Those are not my words but the words of David Mundell, and I could not agree with him more.

In June, Mr Mundell and many Scottish Tories agreed with the Scottish Government and others in the Scottish Parliament that the best way to protect rural Scotland's interests was by protecting Scotland's place in Europe. However, those same Tories are now preparing to give away the significant economic and social benefits that EU membership provides for Scotland's rural economy. Those benefits are worth billions of pounds between 2014 and 2020.

That is not a price that rural Scotland should have to pay. The United Kingdom Government has removed the security from future EU funding and risked our economic prosperity in ways that I will set out. However, post 23 June, not one Scottish Tory politician has dared to point out to their London bosses the blindingly obvious risks to Scotland's rural and coastal communities that the failure to guarantee future funding presents. Worse, Scottish Tories all appear to have become born-again Brexiteers.

I appreciate the EU funding guarantee that the UK Government has provided to date. Giving farmers and crofters certainty about their direct support—their pillar 1 support—up to 2020 is a huge relief. The partial guarantee on Scottish rural development programme and European maritime and fisheries fund grants that are signed and sealed by the date of the chancellor's autumn statement also helps. We welcome those measures.

The additional guarantee that our Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution gave about passing on all that direct support in full is just as important. That is the sort of clarity and certainty that builds confidence.

Scotland now needs the rest of its entitlement. Around £360 million in SRDP and EMFF moneys is not yet guaranteed, and the loss of that will have real-life consequences for our rural economy.

I will spell out what the failure to provide that funding could mean. It could mean 40 fewer businesses receiving investment through the food processing, marketing and co-operation scheme; 20,000 fewer hectares supported for afforestation and woodland creation; potentially up to 40 million fewer trees planted through the forestry grant scheme; 88 fewer holdings supported through the new entrants schemes for farming; and farmers and crofters who are entitled to less favoured area support scheme payments receiving on average around £12,400 less overall between now and 2020.

As well as threatening vital funding for key rural development, Brexit has paralysed the UK ministers' willingness and ability to address everyday policy matters. First, they have failed to respond to Scotland's case for the devolution of £190 million of common agricultural policy convergence uplift money. Secondly, they have refused to progress the repatriation of £1.5 million of red meat levy moneys. Thirdly, they have refused to move on making similar changes to the sea fish levy. Fourthly, they have failed to play fair by Scotland's dairy farmers in allocating the recent EU emergency support package.

Moreover, excessive delay on other matters has become the norm. For example, a swap on monkfish quota took three months to conclude, although it should have taken only three days, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is still sitting on the fisheries concordat, which is a cornerstone of domestic fisheries policy. It is failing to put in place that vital agreement that will allow us to manage our fisheries more effectively.

Scottish fishermen are used to being treated unfairly by the UK Government—other members will elaborate on that—but I intend to work to get the best deal for our fishing and coastal communities. It is essential for Scotland to be involved fully not only in all UK negotiations regarding our future in Europe but in all decision making, including decisions on future fisheries management.

The best way to protect the interests of Scotland's rural economy is by maintaining membership of and access to the single market and its 500 million people. The threat of a hard Brexit is undermining confidence in all rural sectors. Forty per cent of the food and drink companies that participated in the Bank of Scotland's annual research said that leaving the EU was the biggest challenge that faced the sector, and almost a third of small and medium-

sized enterprises recently surveyed in the Highlands said that the outcome of the EU referendum had made investing in their business less likely or subject to delay.

The uncertainty, which has been made entirely in Westminster, risks the forestry sector's £1 billion annual economic contribution, because decisions to invest in planting and processing require long-term stability and confidence. In food production, the potential loss of the protection under EU regulations that is vital to continuing exports risks, for example, our world-leading seed potato sector, which is worth £100 million to Scotland.

The EU represents the largest food export market for Scottish fish and seafood—£438 million, or 62 per cent, of total food exports are to the EU. Europe is the biggest market for our world-famous salmon.

The Scotch Whisky Association has called on the UK Government to provide clarity on trade arrangements as soon as possible.

The risks to those resources are real, but they are not perhaps the most potent threat to rural Scotland's prosperity. That threat is to our most precious of all resources: our people. Each bottle of whisky sold, every tree planted, each fish landed, every acre ploughed and sown, every food product designed and invented and every breakthrough in animal welfare or plant health requires people.

The lack of clarity about Scotland's future in Europe means uncertainty for Scots and for UK citizens who live in rural Scotland. However, the biggest risk is to those whom we have welcomed from across the water into communities all around rural and coastal Scotland and on whom many businesses and industries depend. The right of people from other EU countries to continue to live and work in Scotland is not only a moral imperative that is born of our commitment to solidarity but an economic necessity for rural Scotland.

Without continued free movement of people, at risk will be many of the 15,000 seasonal workers in agriculture, the 30,000 permanent workers in the food and drink sector, a fair proportion of the 25,000 jobs in forestry, 8 per cent of people who are employed by our fishing fleet and many of the thousands who work in the food and tourism sectors—in hotels, bars and restaurants all around Scotland. Without those people, our rural economy simply would not work.

Seasonal employers are already worrying about prospects for next year. I heard last week that an agency has said that the number of Europeans who are signing on to its books has dropped.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The cabinet secretary said that David Mundell had asked what would happen to families whose livelihood relies on jobs that are linked to membership of the EU. Does the cabinet secretary know whether the UK Government can now answer that question?

Fergus Ewing: As is the case with many other areas, we are none the wiser. This is a debate, so I am happy to hear whether the Scottish Conservatives are in favour of the continued free movement of people and membership of and trade with the free market, but I fear—I suspect, although I hope that I am wrong—that the chances of getting simplicity, clarity and straightforward answers from our friends on the Conservative benches today are rather similar to those of Ed Balls being invited to join the Bolshoi ballet.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): There seems to be some confusion among Scottish National Party members. The question is not about membership—or not—of the single market; it is not a binary proposition. The question is about the level of access that we will get to the single market and the terms on which that access will be negotiated. That is a matter for negotiation.

Fergus Ewing: That was about as clear as mud, was it not? I do not know whether we are talking about a binary system or some other system, but I can tell the member this: we are in favour of free movement and we are in favour of continued membership of the common market free trade arrangements, but we do not have a clue what the UK Government's position is. Perhaps the debate will provide an opportunity for the Conservatives to dispel the confusion.

There is no doubt that we face clear and present dangers that we cannot ignore. I have spelled out the numbers, which are truly frightening. Unlike the UK Government, which is neglecting its day job, I am getting on with mine. The Scottish Government is not prepared to wait for decisions to be made about Scotland's future; we are getting on with making Scotland's future.

I am utterly focused on driving forward the rural economy and doing all that I can to inject confidence, consistency and certainty—as well as cash—and to send a strong message that rural Scotland is and will remain open for business. We are on track to meet our ambitious broadband targets, which will provide vital 21st century infrastructure to support the rural economy. In the past year, we have approved grants of more than £26 million for forestry development. [*Interruption.*] That appears to be a matter of some jocularity for Conservatives, but the people who receive those grants much appreciate them. We are investing £20 million through the SRDP in a new farm advisory service. We have invested £11 million in

businesses, services and infrastructure in fishing, fish processing and aquaculture.

Two weeks ago, I announced a national loan scheme, worth up to £300 million, for farmers and crofters, which will inject a huge stimulus into the rural economy this winter. The scheme received an unqualified welcome from just about everyone apart from the Conservatives.

Next year, we will launch a national rural infrastructure plan to maximise the impact of investment and resources in rural communities. We will work with our partners to develop the national food and drink hub. I am hosting a series of summits with key rural and coastal businesses around the country—including one on shellfish, with Mr Russell, and one on forestry in Moffat last Friday—to hear people's views on how best to grow the rural economy, with industry, academe and the Government working together.

Two things give me hope: first, the resilience, ingenuity, motivation and entrepreneurship of our people; and secondly, my belief that no Government—not even the UK Government—would be so reckless, so dilatory in its responsibilities and so ignorant of the threats that face the rural world that it would fail to acknowledge the importance of the free movement of people and of access to markets that are worth £438 million to our fishing sector and are invaluable to our farmers.

The UK Government must recognise, as we all do, that the best way to protect our rural interests is by protecting Scotland's place in Europe and maintaining membership of the single market and access to the free movement of labour. I have written to UK ministers several times, without receiving a substantive answer on any of the major points that I have raised, and I will continue to press them to do their jobs and engage constructively with us.

I hope that Scotland's Parliament can resolve to do all that we can to secure the jobs, businesses, investment and development that depend on the economic and social benefits that EU membership provides. We have had constructive discussions with the Greens on the terms of our motion. We have also had such discussions with Labour colleagues, and we will accept the Labour amendment.

We all want to do our best by people in rural Scotland. If we are to do that, we need to continue to have a positive relationship with our good friends in Europe, and we need the continued good will of all the EU citizens who give their lives, their efforts and their commitment to our country.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the best way to protect rural interests is by protecting Scotland's place in Europe, maintaining membership of the single market, and access to the free movement of labour; welcomes that the Scottish Ministers will pass on in full the EU funding guaranteed by the UK Government so far; notes that membership of the EU delivers significant economic and social benefits to Scotland's rural economy, worth billions between 2014 and 2020; resolves to do all it can to secure the jobs, incomes, businesses, investment and development dependent on these benefits, and, therefore, calls on the UK Government to guarantee all EU funding due to Scotland and to ensure that Scotland has a role in decision-making, as well as full involvement in all UK negotiations, including those on fisheries management.

14:29

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, with regard to my farming interests.

Fergus Ewing is still preaching doom and gloom and division between Scotland and the UK Government. Nobody is saying that it will be easy—it will be difficult to get a support system that is tailored to Scotland's needs—the question is: will the SNP put in the legwork? Will it sit down with the industry, with farmers across Scotland who can see the opportunity and with the UK Government? Instead of banging on about the constitution, the SNP should get on with the business of governing.

In holding this debate, the Scottish Government has taken a courageous decision, because its record on looking after our rural economy is abysmal. The whole Parliament is aware of the litany of failures for which the Scottish National Party Government has been responsible over the past decade when it comes to our rural economy. It has allowed those things to happen because, instead of focusing on running the country, it has been and still is obsessed by the idea of another independence referendum.

I suppose that we should not be surprised by that when, in the words of the First Minister, independence transcends everything else. She said:

“The case for full self-government ultimately transcends the issues of Brexit, of oil, of national wealth and balance sheets”.

That is a shocking statement. It would shock unemployed oil workers in the north-east, and it would shock all those who are waiting to hear what this Government will do to make the best of Brexit. It is a final admission that the SNP is interested not in running the country but only in rerunning the independence referendum. Scottish Government ministers are talking up the prospect of another divisive referendum when what they should be doing is speaking up for all those who

contribute to our rural economy. Hard-working farmers, crofters and fishermen deserve better.

Back in June, I voted remain, because I thought that it offered the best way forward for Scotland and the UK. However, unlike the SNP Government, I have accepted the democratic will of the people. A clear majority of people across the UK voted to leave the EU, and leave we must. I recognise that the EU referendum result presents many opportunities. If we embrace those opportunities enthusiastically, they could reinvigorate our rural economy. There is a path that we can take to strengthen our rural communities, from the highest hills down through our fertile lowlands to our coastal towns, for the long term.

I do not think that anyone I have met in farming or fishing circles would claim that the EU is perfect, and I have certainly never thought that. The EU is bureaucratic and undemocratic and is bogged down by red tape and a currency that is proving to be disastrous for poorer Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Does the member think that a country in which more than half of its legislators are unelected, appointed for life and undismisable is democratic? I refer, of course, to the House of Lords in the UK.

Peter Chapman: That is the democracy that we have until we change it.

There has been much talk of uncertainty following Brexit, but there would also have been great uncertainty for farmers, fishermen and crofters if we had remained in the EU. We do not know—and we will not know for some time—what the next common agricultural policy system will look like, but we know that, year in and year out, CAP payments for farmers have been falling. Budgets are tight in the EU as well as here, and I am certain that less money will be available for European farmers in the future.

Brexit offers an opportunity for the Scottish Government to reshape the way in which it supports rural communities. It must be possible to design a better support system, which is targeted at Scottish farmers and our unique problems, rather than one that tries to accommodate 28 countries that cover the whole of Europe from the Arctic circle to the Mediterranean Sea.

Fergus Ewing: When David Cameron said that Brexit would “punish farmers”, was he wrong?

Peter Chapman: That remains to be seen. There is a negotiation to be had. If we get behind the process and the folk in the SNP get behind it, of course there is a great opportunity ahead. The Scottish Government must get behind it as well. It

must be possible to design a better system. As NFU Scotland has pointed out,

“there is a real prize to be had”

from developing a new subsidy system.

Of course, it is not just farmers who need the Scottish Government on their side. Fishermen across Scotland, particularly in my part of the north-east, voted—almost to a man—to leave. Not so long ago, they would have trusted the SNP to speak up for them. They would have heard the comments of Alex Salmond who, back in 2004, described the common fisheries policy as

“disastrous for Scotland’s fishing communities”,

and they would have felt that the SNP understood their concerns about “Brussels mismanagement”. They may even have cheered when Mike Russell was appointed to Nicola Sturgeon’s cabinet as the minister with responsibility for Brexit, as he co-authored a book called “Grasping the Thistle” in which he wrote that trade, not political integration, should be the basis of our relationship with Europe.

The fervour with which Nicola Sturgeon has attempted to deny the political and legal reality around the EU result, claiming that Scotland could stay in, shows a breathtaking contempt for fishing communities and a breathtaking lack of understanding of the real world. As former cabinet secretary Alex Neil has said:

“the EU has already made it clear that there will not be separate negotiations with Scotland until after the UK/EU Brexit deal is done”.

When will the Scottish Government face up to the reality of our situation? If the Scottish Government were listening, it would have heard the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation’s views on the historic result and would know that fishermen view it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It would know that fishermen value the chance to reinvigorate our coastal and island communities and that fishermen see huge potential in getting back control of our waters.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the member give way on that point?

Peter Chapman: No, I have taken enough interventions.

It would know the huge prize in being able to set the rules in some of the richest fishing grounds in the world. That said, we cannot allow our vital fishing industry to be used as a bargaining chip in Brexit negotiations.

I am glad to say that some members of the SNP see Brexit as an opportunity. Councillor John Cox, an SNP councillor, has recognised the opportunity that Brexit presents for north-east fishing and has spoken out. Colleagues around the chamber will

also have seen the welcome headline in *The Times* today in which a German business chief says that “Brexit will boost Britain”. When partners and allies on the other side of the channel see the opportunities that we have, why can the Scottish Government not? Why must it be determined to make a failure of Brexit? I hope that the Scottish Government gets behind Scottish fishing before it is too late.

The Scottish Government is attempting to distract from its record of incompetence by issuing furious press releases about the constitution. Why is that? It is because the Scottish Government does not have a plan to improve our rural communities. It is not listening to the industry leaders when it comes to Brexit; it is not listening to farmers, fishermen and everyone else who makes up rural communities about the lack of services; it is not listening to hard-working doctors in remote towns who are being let down by the Government’s inability to get more staff in place; and it is not listening to furious council tax payers in the north-east who will pay £47 million extra in council tax only to see tens of millions of pounds of that money disappear to the central belt. The SNP Government has turned its back on rural Scotland. It has taken rural communities for granted for nearly a decade, and it is simply not interested in people who do not live in the central belt.

The SNP wasted millions of pounds on an information technology system for CAP payments that still cannot deliver—a system that has starved farmers of money that is rightfully theirs and that is desperately needed. Nine months on, £40 million of last year’s money is still outstanding. At a time when Scottish farmers face record levels of debt, the SNP does not have a clue what to do.

Folk across Scotland—whether they are industry leaders, individual farmers or skippers—can see the potential of Brexit. They know that a better Government would seek to work positively and constructively with industry, key stakeholders and the UK Government to get the best deal possible for us all. A better Government would be big enough to listen. A better Government would be focused on creating a strong Scotland and not on organising another unwanted referendum.

Rural Scotland needs a better Government and the SNP has a great opportunity to deliver it. The question is: does it have the ability, talent and will to deliver it? My colleagues and I will fight for that new type of Government every day so that our rural economy can have the leadership it deserves and the future that we believe we can achieve.

I move amendment S5M-01669.2, to leave out from “agrees” to end and insert:

“believes that a continued close relationship with Europe is integral for Scotland’s rural interests; welcomes the UK Government’s guarantees on EU funding and the Scottish Ministers’ commitment to pass this on in full; notes the support that the EU has delivered for rural Scotland, but recognises new opportunities for Scotland’s farming and fishing interests; resolves to do all it can to secure jobs, incomes, businesses, investment and development in rural Scotland; urges the Scottish Government to work closely with the UK Government to secure the best possible future for Scotland’s rural economy, and notes with concern the difficulties that the Scottish Government has had in delivering CAP payments over the last year.”

14:40

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

We in the Scottish Labour Party support the Scottish Government’s aim of getting the best deal for Scotland from Brexit. Ideally, that means that the Government would respect both mandates delivered by the Scottish people—to remain part of the UK and to remain in the EU—and would forge strong alliances, in which it shares resources and knowledge.

The decision to leave the EU will damage the rural economy. Europe deals with peripherality by seeking to remove barriers and create fairer trading conditions. Governments in the UK and Scotland have not done that; nor, it appears, have they learned from Europe about the need to do so.

I cover the Highlands and Islands region, which has benefited hugely from European assistance. We have built roads and causeways and provided training and support for communities. We have benefited from CAP payments and rural development funding. The loss of those things will undoubtedly hit rural Scotland hardest.

As a response to austerity, resources have been centralised and jobs and investment have been pulled from rural areas and concentrated in urban areas. That does not augur well for Brexit, because it will undoubtedly lead to fewer resources, which will disproportionately impact on rural areas by causing greater centralisation. If rural Scotland is to be protected, we need to embrace policies that deal with peripherality. We need to recognise that it will always cost more in rural areas to do business and provide services. Transport challenges cause problems, as does the lack of economies of scale. Both Governments need to ensure that rural Scotland does not disproportionately bear the brunt of Brexit.

Our amendment talks about broadband. A huge amount of work is happening at a European level to ensure access to broadband, which is no longer a luxury but a necessity. We have already had European regional development funding for our broadband roll-out, but much more will come in future—again, targeted at the areas that have most to benefit but that suffer market failure. The

areas where the market fails are not just in rural Scotland but in urban areas of deprivation—parts of the country that seem always to be at the back of the queue.

Earlier today, I read a research paper from the Carnegie UK Trust, “Digital Participation And Social Justice In Scotland”, which quite starkly makes those exact points. Not only are applications for welfare payments now made online, but the Department for Work and Pensions looks for electronic job applications as proof of job seeking. For that, a person must be online, which makes it difficult for those without access to broadband to comply, which leads to benefit sanctions, and it also makes it more difficult for them to seek work in the first place. The same areas also lose out on access to health and public services. Access to broadband would allow those services to be delivered to people much closer to home.

We need to provide such services to all of our populations, but that will be difficult to do without the help of our European neighbours. We will all see the benefit of the EU in relation to roaming charges, as big mobile phone operators are obliged to charge a reasonable amount for roaming. With exit from the EU, we stand to lose that—we will need to fight to keep it.

I welcome the UK Government’s commitment to protect CAP direct payments until 2020 and the Scottish Government’s decision to pass that on in full to farmers and crofters, to whom it will give some comfort. However, we need to look further into the future. We know that working the land is not a year-on-year business that can easily adapt. Land use can sometimes take years to change. We need to use this breathing space to look at our policy for farming going forward, post 2020.

Many say that CAP payments will be unaffordable in the future. We need to see whether that is the case and, if it is, we need to start working with farmers and crofters now to help them to build secure and prosperous businesses for the future. When we look at the system that will succeed CAP payments, we must also re-evaluate the relationship between farming subsidies and ensuring that everyone in Scotland has access to cheap, nutritious food. Therefore, the Government’s legislation on food is required sooner rather than later. We already have families who are dependent on food banks, and if food becomes more expensive, it will have a knock-on impact on the nutrition and health of the nation. The issue concerns not just farmers and crofters but our wider society.

The Government has not given similar guarantees on rural payments that are made under the SRDP. I heard at the weekend that the LEADER—Liaison Entre Actions de

Développement de l’Économie Rurale—programme is closing to new applications. That was in the context of communities who were looking to build their own rural public transport solutions due to market failure. It is devastating to rural communities, who need to provide essential services and develop community responses to rurality. Given the amount of economic benefit that flows from LEADER, we need to try to find a way of replicating it, to guarantee funding and to ensure that rural communities do not lose out.

Fergus Ewing: Does the Labour Party believe, as we do, that the most helpful thing to end uncertainty over LEADER and other programmes under the SRDP would be for the UK Government to confirm that it will meet in full the EU’s planned investment under the SRDP?

Rhoda Grant: Yes, and we need that sooner rather than later, because funding streams are already closing off, two years ahead of any proposed Brexit, so we will lose the benefits that would have flowed over the next two years. It is important to give a degree of stability to those who depend on that funding. The position will get worse if we do not do that, and we will lose out on services to our rural communities.

We know that the fishing community was keen on Brexit and I hope that it will not be disappointed, but I fear that it will. We all appreciate that annual fisheries negotiations left a lot to be desired—exhaustion rather than good management seemed to lead to agreement. That said, the negotiations with Norway and the Faroes make the CFP negotiations look fantastic. We do not want to have that type of brinkmanship in negotiations with the whole of Europe.

We stand to lose access to both the European maritime and fisheries fund and EU scientific funding. Our fishing community has been at the forefront of developing new technology, providing more focused fisheries and minimising bycatch, and we do not want to lose those advantages because of Brexit, and neither do we want vast differences in regulation. We will have to negotiate with the rest of the EU from the outside. There will be many pitfalls, so our fishing industry cannot expect an end to red tape straight away. Indeed, it might not be able to expect that in the future.

We all know that we have much to lose from Brexit, which is why the majority of members in the chamber campaigned against it—something that brought about a different vote in Scotland. However, we are facing Brexit and it is incumbent on us all to get the best outcome for Scotland and, indeed, the UK. We want the Scottish Government to be part of the negotiations, but that means that it needs to work as part of the UK. It is not good enough for it to use the negotiations as a platform to promote its own ambitions for independence.

We need both our Governments to work together to protect the Scottish interest. Nothing less will be acceptable to Scotland and the UK.

I move amendment S5M-01669.1, to insert after “between 2014 and 2020”:

“and is poised to provide significant funding towards the further roll-out of high-speed broadband to Scotland”.

14:49

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): It is clear that the outcome of the Brexit debate will have profound consequences for rural Scotland. Anyone who has, like me, taken a close interest in the relationship between the EU and rural Scotland for many years must acknowledge that, as a result of the deep flaws in the CFP and CAP, it is understandable that many people believe that Brexit offers an opportunity to leave those policies behind, although I believe that it is not in the interest of all of Scotland to leave the EU.

I have not spoken to many farmers who voted to remain, and we all know that many people in the catching sector of the fishing industry voted to leave the EU. It is absolutely essential that we listen to the reasons for that and fully respect people’s informed views.

We know that the EU’s agricultural policy is flawed because farm incomes have declined despite billions of pounds of public investment being pumped into the sector. We know that the CFP sometimes fails miserably to respond quickly enough to industry concerns and the biology of our seas. However, there is no doubt in my mind that leaving the EU, compounded by the Tory Government’s apparent enthusiasm for a hard Brexit, is likely to bring turmoil for all of Scotland’s economy and in particular for our rural economy should that come to pass.

Rural Scotland will adapt to the post-Brexit world, but that will take years. In the meantime, our communities will pay a really heavy price because our economy will fall a long way before it begins to climb back. Jobs and incomes will be hit hard, and many businesses and families in rural and coastal Scotland and across the whole country will suffer. Brexit Tories keep telling us that it will be all right on the night. Our farmers are promised milk and honey, and our fishermen calm seas ahead once we get control of our waters back in our own hands in the UK and Scotland. However, as with most things in life, it is not quite as simple as that.

First, our primary producers need markets for their products—our magnificent seafood, our lamb and so on—but the focus of the Brexit debate so far in Scotland and in the UK has been on maintaining access to and membership of the single market. We absolutely must focus on the

implications for rural Scotland of departing the customs union. We need to hear more about that in this Parliament, and we should be more concerned about it. The Prime Minister may talk about ways of maintaining a deep trading relationship with the EU post-Brexit, but she has effectively ruled out maintaining our customs union with the EU by setting up the Department for International Trade under Liam Fox, which has the specific aim of finding new markets.

As I understand it, members of the customs union cannot go off and negotiate their own free trade agreements with the rest of the world, so it seems that the Tories are now spiralling towards a hard Brexit and preparing to walk away from the customs union. That spells costs and bureaucracy for our rural industries, as every nut and bolt—every langoustine or craft beer—that is exported to the EU will be subject to new trade negotiations.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I appreciate the importance of the points that Richard Lochhead makes. However, does he accept that it is possible—indeed, it is the status quo—for countries to be members of the single market without being members of the customs union? I cite Norway as an obvious example.

Richard Lochhead: A country is either in the customs union or out of it. If Scotland is taken out of the customs union against our will, that will have enormous consequences for Scotland’s exporters, in particular our food and drink exporters and our primary producers. We are debating the impact on rural Scotland, and those economies are very important to our rural communities.

I am concerned about the UK’s track record of broken promises to many of our rural sectors, in light of all the promises that are being made at present. Peter Chapman said that there is a danger that fishing will be used as a bargaining chip. The only minister who has been in the news recently saying that it is possible that fishing in the UK could be used in that way is the UK Conservative minister George Eustace.

Not only did the Conservatives betray our fishing communities when they took us into the CFP back in the 1970s; it now looks as if they are lining up to do so again, this time by trying to get us out of the CFP and out of Europe. The Scottish Tory party must ensure that the UK Tory party does not betray our fishing communities once again.

Peter Chapman: Will the member give way?

Richard Lochhead: Sorry—I want to move on.

We are promised that Brexit will enhance the powers of the Scottish Parliament, yet—as we heard from Fergus Ewing in his opening remarks—there are more powers over many of our

rural industries that could be devolved to the Scottish Parliament at present and the UK Government has taken the decision not to do that.

Let us look at the post-Brexit scenario and the supposed powers that would come back to Scotland. First, we hear a lot about the fisheries policy. At present, it is supposed to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament, but the fortunes of our fishing communities are decided through international negotiations. The UK Government conveniently deems international negotiations to be a reserved issue because it is foreign affairs, and that will continue post-Brexit. The fortunes of our fishing communities that are largely dependent on the outcome of the international negotiations will remain a reserved issue post-Brexit unless the UK Government devolves foreign affairs to the Scottish Government, which is unlikely.

Fergus Ewing highlighted the issue of funding and the fact that Brexit will mean that the responsibility for funding many rural industries will pass from Brussels and the European Union to the UK Treasury in London. The UK Treasury's policy is to reduce funding for our rural industries, particularly direct funding for agricultural communities. Therefore, Brexit means that the shield of EU membership that protected many of our rural communities when the UK was outvoted by other countries will be shattered. Our rural communities will be exposed to the decisions that are taken by the UK Treasury in London. That is a major threat to our rural industries.

Food and drink is growing at double the UK average, which rather refutes Mr Chapman's point that the Scottish Government does not protect rural communities. Issues such as protected geographical indication, which protects food names, is very important to Scottish food and drink products. What will happen to the protection that has been built up over many years if we are out of the customs union, out of the single market and out of Europe? That is a real concern for many of the food and drink producers in Scotland. There is about £700 million-worth of exports of salmon and our other major PGI products at the moment.

That is why it is essential for Scotland's rural communities to maintain our relationship with the EU and I wish our ministers all the best in ensuring that the wishes of rural Scotland and the whole of Scotland are respected going forward. We need to maintain our relationship with Europe to protect the interests of Scotland's rural communities.

14:56

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Mr Lochhead talked about further powers being transferred to the Scottish Parliament but we are

waiting with bated breath to see how the SNP will use its existing powers.

Our amendment to the Government motion stresses the importance of securing jobs, incomes, businesses, investment and development in rural Scotland. That is why we on this side of the chamber will continue to focus on the opportunities that are available to the rural economy going forward and we will not share in the SNP's gloom and doom.

As Peter Chapman made clear, challenges will arise from Brexit and we will have to address them but this Government's past and on-going rural economic policy has been far more damaging to the rural economy than any potential impact of Brexit. For example, when in 2008 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published a review of rural policy in Scotland, among its key findings were that the rural economy in Scotland suffered from centralisation and the lack of local participation in rural policy making and

"weak integration of rural, regional and sectoral" policies.

Unfortunately, rural economic policy in Scotland has not progressed a great deal in the eight years since that report. According to an Audit Scotland report that was published in July, this Government's economic and development policy

"is a broad, high-level strategy and does not set out in detail how underpinning policies and initiatives will be implemented."

With no coherent economic or development planning or implementation in place, it is no surprise that the rural economy has suffered during the past 10 years. Further examples of bad policy are set out in the Audit Scotland report, which notes that the Government has identified seven growth sectors in the Scottish economy, including two sectors that are vital for the rural economy: sustainable tourism and food and drink.

However, Audit Scotland goes on to say that those growth sectors

"have been prioritised for over nine years and the Scottish Government has not carried out an overall assessment of what has been achieved as a result of this support."

In other words, after almost a decade in power, the Government has not reviewed the result of an economic policy that it introduced 10 years ago. That is clear economic mismanagement and it means that the current and changing needs of rural Scotland are not being met.

Fergus Ewing: Let us take food and drink. Mr Lochhead has just said that the growth in the food and drink sector is twice that of the sector in England. I would say that that is a measure of success, and everybody in the sector says so.

As for sustainable tourism, I was minister for tourism for five years and the sector is doing extremely well. Everybody says that. Does Mr Lockhart not realise that?

Dean Lockhart: I suggest that that success is despite and not because of Government policy. [*Interruption.*]

Let me just conclude. Audit Scotland also highlighted the widespread confusion over the full range of public sector support and funding that is available to businesses in rural Scotland. Audit Scotland said that

“Public sector support is not well understood”

and it went on to state that the financial support that is available to the rural community is

“unnecessarily complex”.

That is a clear indication that business in rural Scotland is not getting the financial support that it needs. It is interesting that Mr Ewing mentions the food and drink sector; that is an area of opportunity that I will come on to.

I highlight those points because they demonstrate that urgent issues need to be addressed in rural Scotland. It is within this Government’s powers to address those issues, which are independent of Brexit.

I move on to the opportunities that are available, as they cover some of the sectors that Mr Ewing mentioned. The best way to secure jobs and develop businesses in rural Scotland is for the Government to take the actions that we have been highlighting to develop those sectors of the rural economy that can benefit from Brexit, not just to keep relying on subsidies coming from the EU. For example, Mr Ewing mentioned sustainable tourism and the food and drink sector. The largest export in the food and drink sector, as the member knows, is Scotch whisky. Today, we met representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association at the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee. They told us that there were significant opportunities to increase exports of Scotch whisky. One example was South America, where there is a massive increase in demand. However, there is only one office of Scottish Development International covering the whole of South America. I look forward to hearing, in the course of the debate, what actions the Government will take to exploit those opportunities.

Stewart Stevenson: I am interested in what the member says. Can he advise members how many UK embassies or consulates have had events for Scotch whisky for which they have not charged a commercial rate?

Dean Lockhart: That is a very specific question and I do not have that information to hand, as I am sure that the member would expect.

This Government must change its policies on the rural economy. First, the Government’s lack of detail in economic policy and the confusion over the financial support that is made available to the rural business community need to be clarified, as highlighted by Audit Scotland. The latest example of unclear policy was the Scottish Government’s announcement of the Scottish growth scheme two weeks ago—a policy that has caused confusion not only in the rural business community but across the business community in Scotland.

There is much that the SNP can do to support the economy in rural Scotland—first, it has to stop scaremongering over Brexit and then it must seize the opportunities that we and leading business organisations are highlighting.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that, after almost a decade in power, this is a Government that is lacking in vision and running out of ideas, and which has no new policies. It is a Government that is unable to deal with new challenges and it is unable to grasp the very real opportunities that lie ahead.

15:03

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in this important debate about how we can best secure the interests of Scotland’s rural economy following the EU referendum.

I represent South Scotland, where farming and food and drink—two of the sectors that are most likely to be impacted by Tory Brexit—play a vital role in providing employment and maintaining economic stability. Dumfries and Galloway has nearly a quarter of Scotland’s kye—more than any other region in Scotland—and 16 per cent of Scotland’s sheep, just behind Galloway’s neighbour, the Borders.

Dumfries and Galloway is one of Scotland’s top food-producing regions. The food and drink sector generates more than £500 million of turnover annually and employs more than 9,000 people. It has long been one of Dumfries and Galloway’s greatest strengths. The implications of Tory Brexit are therefore potentially huge.

Sixty-nine per cent of Scotland’s overseas food exports go to the EU. A third of Scotch whisky exports go to the EU and 68 per cent of Scottish seafood exports go to the EU. Scotland’s food and drink is worth £14 billion a year to the Scottish economy.

Leaving the European Union will increase costs to businesses and reduce access to markets. The 60 EU free trade agreements—

Rachael Hamilton (South Scotland) (Con): A summary of the recent Bank of Scotland survey is that, despite current uncertainties, Scotland's food and drink sector is remarkably more confident than it was 12 months ago, with 82 per cent of businesses predicting an increase or a change in their jobs forecast following the EU referendum. Does Emma Harper feel that the Scottish food and drink industry is uncertain about the EU referendum or positive about it?

Emma Harper: Brexit has not actually happened yet—everybody really needs to pay attention to that. The Bank of Scotland continues to look at information and it will have more next year. However, the issue depends on what happens in future.

It is likely that export health certificates for products, which cost around £300 per consignment, will be required for all trade with the EU in meat, fish and dairy products. The UK Government must commit to upholding the standards that the EU has set on animal health and welfare to allow us to continue to trade. Finding ways of mitigating those costs for Scotland must be a priority for Westminster.

I will expand a little on Richard Lochhead's comments on our protected food status. I have spoken to many in the sector since the referendum, including the Galloway Cattle Society, and another issue that has been raised consistently is that of products with protected food name status. Scotland has several geographical indication, or GI, products, which are absolutely vital to the success of our food and drink sector. They include Scottish farmed salmon, Scotch beef, Scotch lamb and of course Scotch whisky, which has been mentioned. Those have been registered as having GI in many countries across the world and the EU.

When I recently met the board of Quality Meat Scotland, the importance of maintaining food origin labelling was stressed to me. The provenance of Scottish produce lends itself to further economic development opportunities that we cannot allow to be diluted. The recent trend towards attempting to market uniquely Scottish products as originating from the UK rather than Scotland is puzzling and even alarming. Recently, we have seen rebranding of Scottish strawberries; our haggis—the “Great chieftain o’ the puddin-race”—rebranded as British haggis; and Scotch whisky rebranded as UK whisky. Let us be clear that the strength and success of our food and drink industry nationally, with a value of £14 billion a year, make for a potential target for Theresa May's Government.

It seems to be the Tories' job not only to talk down Scotland but to drive down the economy of Scotland.

Peter Chapman: Will the member take an intervention?

Emma Harper: No—I am in my last couple of minutes.

Since 2014, we have seen a sustained attack on Scotland's renewable energy sector, which is another sector that holds the potential for future economic benefit for the whole of Scotland. I strongly suspect that that has been done at least in part on the basis that, were Scotland to fully utilise our natural resources, that would boost our economy beyond the reach of Westminster and in turn place the future of the union at risk.

The same cannot be allowed to happen to our food and drink sector, which is on track to hit a turnover of £16.5 billion by 2017. It is essential that products with protected food name status such as Scotch beef, lamb and whisky continue to be recognised at home and abroad. Unfortunately, the future of geographical indications relies on a UK scheme being put in place and negotiation and agreement with the EU so that it is recognised. I do not want our agricultural sectors to be left at the mercy of the Tories at Westminster. The livelihoods of real people—my constituents—depend on that scheme.

Even by the standards of those on the Tory seats, it is patently ridiculous for them to demand that the SNP clean up the Tory Brexit mess when it was created by them and their Westminster colleagues. However, I know that the Scottish Government will do its utmost to mitigate the damaging effects of this muckle-sized midden that is the Tory Brexit. I say emphatically to the Tories that, in stark contrast to the shambolic state of affairs at Westminster, the Scottish Government has a plan. We need urgent clarification from the Tories of how the Prime Minister will deliver on her commitment to give Scotland a full and equal say in the forthcoming negotiations and not just treat Scotland as window dressing.

15:09

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): We agree with that part of the Government's motion that contends that rural interests are best served

“by protecting Scotland's place in Europe, maintaining membership of the single market and access to the free movement of labour”.

Those are important objectives. The difference between membership of the EU and membership of the single market is greater for the rural economy than it is for Scotland as a whole, and it is on that difference that I want to focus.

Membership of the single market outwith the European Union does not involve being part of the

common agricultural policy or the common fisheries policy and it does not guarantee tariff-free trade with EU member states in the produce of those sectors. This debate goes to the heart of some of the choices that we face and that pose real challenges to both our Governments.

Theresa May will not say whether she will seek to negotiate continued membership of the single market, no doubt because some members of her party are in favour of that and others are against. Nicola Sturgeon's response has been to insist that membership of the single market is essential to protecting Scotland's interests and, therefore, it is a red-line issue in discussions with the UK Government.

Membership of the single market means membership of the European Economic Area, which in turn requires a state to belong to either the EU or the European Free Trade Association. The EEA includes all the members of the EU and three of the four members of EFTA—Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

If membership of the single market after Brexit is the objective, we need to be clear about how that works for members of the European Economic Area that do not belong to the European Union. Members of the European and External Relations Committee visited Brussels in July to find that out for ourselves at first hand. We met the ambassadors to the European Union of two of those countries—Norway and Iceland—as well as the ambassador of Ireland, whose view of how it all works from a north-west European perspective was also valuable.

The European Economic Area requires its members to follow a raft of policies that are decided by the European Union. It is not just a common market for trade. Some 10,000 pieces of EU legislation apply in the European Economic Area and those workers' rights, consumer rights and environmental protections all have the same legal force in Norway and Iceland as they do in Britain and Ireland. EEA member countries make contributions to EU cohesion funds in line with those that they would make if they were in the European Union. Those countries pay for their membership of the single market, yet they are not subject to CAP or the CFP. They are also not parties to economic or monetary union, or to the European customs union. Further, they do not benefit directly from European structural funds and they are not represented in the European Parliament, on the European Commission or on the European Council.

Those exclusions are not incidental results of staying outwith the European Union. Concerns about farming and fishing are precisely why Norway and Iceland did not choose to join the European Union—as Britain, Ireland and Denmark

had done—but chose to join the single market with the European Union instead. For those countries, paying into the European Union while getting no payments back, being subject to EU law with no say in EU decision making, and facing tariff barriers to their exports of farm produce and fish is a price worth paying in exchange for membership of the single market in goods and services, freedom of movement for labour and capital, and the right to decide their own policies on agriculture and fisheries.

The bodies representing farming and fishing in Scotland have demanded that their sectoral interests should not be traded away as part of any future deal. They are right to raise their concerns. The Scottish Government has made it clear in recent weeks that its key priority is for Scotland to enjoy the benefits of membership of the single market. Those benefits do not extend to all parts of the rural economy because the European Union does not demand free trade in agricultural produce or in fish as a price of membership of the single market. Membership of the single market also does not provide access to the European structural funds, which are worth £11 million to Aberdeenshire alone in the current funding period and have delivered £25 million of funding for environment and energy projects in Aberdeen over the past five years.

There are a number of questions that I hope will be addressed by Scottish Government ministers at the end of this afternoon's debate—I suspect that Mr Russell will close the debate. Given that the single market does not encompass farming and fishing, how can European markets for food exports be secured?

If membership of the single market is Nicola Sturgeon's one red line in discussions with UK ministers, what guarantees are there for Scottish farmers and fishermen that their interests will not be traded away in pursuit of that objective? If the answer to that question is that protecting farming and fishing is a high priority, do Scottish Government ministers believe—like the Governments of Norway and Iceland—that those sectors are best protected outwith the single market as not being covered by any single market deal?

Finally, what access can there be in future to European structural funds, since access to those funds is not part of the deal that members of the single market outwith the European Union currently enjoy?

Those questions need to be addressed by ministers in both Governments, and I hope that Mr Russell will make a start on answering them at the close of the debate.

15:15

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Since the announcement on 24 June of the result of the referendum on the UK's EU membership, one thing has remained absolutely clear: Scotland wants to maintain her place within the European community. That should be no surprise to anyone in this chamber, as Scotland reaps significant financial benefits from the EU, as well as numerous important rights and liberties, which could now stand to be lost. However, I am pleased that the Scottish Government has committed itself to ensuring that our rural communities have their economic needs addressed and are empowered to generate their own economic growth and sustainability. The sustainability of Scotland's rural economy is vital for not only rural areas but Scotland's economy as a whole.

In supporting our rural communities, successive Scottish Governments have benefited from much-needed EU funding. As we know, the common agricultural policy is the largest item in the EU budget. Scottish farmers, including those in my constituency, receive around €480 million a year in direct subsidies, and Scotland was set to receive around €500 million by 2020 in rural development funds. In future, any cuts to farm subsidies and rural areas from the UK Government will have a knock-on effect on not just farmers, but ancillary rural economic activities that are dependent on farming.

My constituency has a big rural population, who have in the past secured significant advantage from various EU funding streams. Thousands of my constituents have benefited from countless projects thanks to those contributions from the EU. The EU-funded Scottish rural development programme, for instance, has played a key role for my constituents by enhancing the rural economy, supporting agricultural and forestry businesses and protecting the fantastic natural environment that we have to offer.

Let us take for example the LEADER programme, which Rhoda Grant was quite right to mention earlier, and what it has achieved in the Forth Valley and Lomond area that encompasses my constituency. The Stirling constituency was allocated £2.7 million by the Scottish Government using CAP pillar 2 funding, which levered in an additional £3.6 million, but the Treasury has been able to guarantee only pillar 1 funding until 2020 for farmers and crofters alike. Where does that leave us with funding for rural development under pillar 2?

EU citizens who have made Scotland their home have been left in limbo by the Tories, as have rural communities across Scotland that look likely to lose the access to these vital schemes that they have enjoyed for years. It concerns me,

and it should concern everyone in the chamber, to think what the negative impact will be of the loss of any such funding to the agricultural industry and the many community projects that are supported from those EU funds.

LEADER has not only generated jobs and economic activity in my constituency, but played an important role in providing local groups on the ground with real practical help and with funding for projects to help local communities. The Balmaha pontoon project, the refurbishment of Gargunnoch community hall and funding for the jazz on the lochs festival in Callander are just a few examples. We have fabulous landscapes of forests and woods in my constituency and through SRDP forestry funding, Stirling Council was awarded more than £340,000 during the last EU session for the woods in and around towns fund. The demise of LEADER would deprive local businesses and communities across Scotland of tools to play an active role in shaping their own future. LEADER encourages innovation in response to old and new rural problems, and becomes a sort of laboratory for building local capabilities and capacities.

I am also privileged to represent a large part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park as well as a number of other strategic landscape assets. Tourism and microbusinesses are the main economic drivers across the whole area, which attracts large numbers of visitors from across the world, particularly during the peak tourism season. A large part of my constituency's revenues are based on the thousands of tourists who visit the area each month and spend their money in the welcoming and picturesque rural villages. Funding from the EU has helped to ensure that those local villages receive financial support to enhance their offering to tourists and locals alike.

It is with deep regret that I have to consider the effects that the UK's exit from the EU could have on that type of project in Scotland. Frankly, we need the UK Government to commit to supporting pillar 2 funding in full, now, before any further damage is done to the rural economy. Projects are already beginning to run into the sand and people are no longer committing themselves to the future. That is the effect that Brexit is already having and to report it is not doom-mongering, as some Tories would say: it is a realistic account of what is happening on the ground. If we go and speak to people, we will find out that that is exactly what has happened.

I have every confidence that my colleagues Fergus Ewing and Mike Russell will fully represent Scotland's interests in the upcoming discussions. It is vital that we demonstrate to Westminster and our European colleagues how much we value the support that we gain from our EU membership.

Scotland's farmers and rural communities will be let down by the UK Government unless we do all that we can in Scotland to ensure that the interests of all our rural communities are fought for and fully represented in future Brexit negotiations.

I will leave members with one thought, because we have heard a lot from the Tories this afternoon about the SNP talking down Scotland—that is, in effect, what they have been saying. However, it was David Mundell who said on 23 June in the *Daily Mail*:

“All the economic experts predict that the potential damage a Brexit would do to jobs, mortgages and the economy as a whole across Scotland is just too severe.”

That came from the Secretary of State for Scotland, and there are loads of quotes from Tories, including from their leader here in Scotland, demonstrating how damaging Brexit could be. However, now the Tories are running away from the reality of the picture that they painted previously into some sort of fantasy land, where they now live as if all those comments did not exist and were never made.

Peter Chapman: Will the member take an intervention?

Bruce Crawford: The Presiding Officer is indicating to me that I am almost at the end of my time, so I will leave it at that. It is time that the Tories grew up and played the real game.

15:22

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): There is something very special about our Scottish countryside, not only in itself but because it forms the basis of a rural economy that generates billions of pounds every year. Our food and drink, whether whisky, salmon, Aberdeen Angus beef, Stornoway black pudding or haddock and chips, are celebrated and enjoyed the world over. Our sporting estates draw in millions of tourists a year, with tourism expenditure of billions of pounds, and they support vibrant and sustainable local economies.

However, despite that bright picture, the agricultural, fisheries and sporting sectors are facing crises that have absolutely nothing to do with the UK's democratic decision to leave the European Union or, indeed, as Emma Harper suggested it had, with the Tories. The farming industry has been failed by a Scottish Government that has botched the delivery of CAP payments so badly that the value of outstanding bank loans to Scottish agriculture has risen to £2.2 billion. Our fishing industry, which is already facing further regulation from Brussels on how it is allowed to fish, has been left in limbo by a Scottish Government that refuses to spend money on supporting an industry that is forced to pay for its

own policing. Is it really a surprise that perhaps 95 per cent of fishermen voted to leave the European Union?

Both those groups are fed up with empty promises and posturing from the SNP, and both staged unprecedented protests outside the Scottish Parliament, demanding to be heard and demanding help.

However, our rural economy is so much more. Our sporting estates bring over £470 million to the economy and employ more than 8,000 people. Following the EU referendum, Scottish Land & Estates published a paper, the first paragraph of which states:

“Exiting the EU potentially presents a unique opportunity to bring a new way of thinking about how to deliver the safety, standards and environmental outcomes, while removing unnecessary and costly burdens on businesses”

and “lead the world”. The paper goes on to say that the recent vote presents an opportunity to change specific EU regulations that work poorly for rural businesses, consumers and the countryside and are holding back growth in the rural economy and environmental improvements.

Stewart Stevenson: Can the member name three specific regulations that he would revoke?

Liam Kerr: I am surprised—stunned, in fact—that Stewart Stevenson dares to intervene on the rural economy. Last week, we had a debate about the increase in council tax, which will hit Aberdeenshire homes and families disproportionately. Some 41 per cent of families face an increase. No voice from the SNP was raised in protest, and certainly no voices of elected SNP MSPs from the north-east of Scotland. I say to Stewart Stevenson that that is a disgrace.

Even if we leave out the considerable economic arguments, Scotland's estates should be backed to the hilt and supported purely on conservation and land management grounds, but this Government does not want to do that. Instead of providing assurance and positivity, it proposes land reform legislation that underlines the obsession with who owns what, rather than how the land can best be managed. It uses ambiguous terms that remain ill-defined and open to misinterpretation—of course, we have seen that before in SNP legislation.

The scrapping of rates relief on our sporting estates could have a devastating impact on those businesses, making many unprofitable and forcing gamekeepers, their families and many other local trades out of work. These businesses make a key contribution to rural tourism, local employment and the environment, yet they are being attacked by reason of ideological prejudice. However, that debate is for another day.

Bruce Crawford: Does the member realise that, by not paying rates, shooting estates are in effect ensuring that local shopkeepers subsidise their activity? Is that not bad for the Scottish economy in the long term?

Liam Kerr: If Mr Crawford had been listening, he would have heard me say that that debate is for another day. I will happily have it with him, but we are talking about coming out of the EU.

My point is that this Government, yet again, is refusing to look at the positives and the opportunities to be taken from the UK's vote, as our rural sectors and indeed Alex Neil would like it to do. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Scottish Association of Fish Producers Organisations told us only yesterday that this is

"an unexpected but welcome opportunity to deliver a significant boost to investment and employment in our rural economy."

It is quite clear that the biggest impediment to securing the interests of Scotland's rural economy is not the UK's democratic decision to withdraw from the EU but this Government. Obsessed with land ownership and independence, it delivers merely incompetence. Why does it not put all that aside, get back to the day job that it was elected to do—sorting out the CAP crisis and supporting our fishing industry—and end once and for all its petty obsession with punishing our sporting estates.

Accordingly, I commend the Conservative amendment to the Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): One of the great mysteries of the chamber is that, when a debate is running out of time, everyone goes over their allotted time, but when there is time in hand, everyone comes in—even with interventions—under their allotted time.

The remaining speakers should note that a bit of leeway is available. I call John Finnie, to be followed by Stewart Stevenson. Maybe I should not have said what I just said until after Stewart Stevenson's speech. [*Laughter.*]

15:28

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The Scottish Green Party will support the Scottish Government's motion at decision time. I never thought that I would commence a speech by agreeing with David Mundell, but the cabinet secretary quoted David Mundell saying that

"the risks ... are ... too great",

and Mr Crawford outlined what Mr Mundell said about the severity of the implications. Those implications are not simply economic; social benefits will also be affected. My Highlands and Islands colleague Rhoda Grant talked about the

infrastructure benefits that have come to the Highlands as a result of membership of the EU, which are apparent to everyone.

The big question is what our countryside should look like. The Scottish Green Party's view is that our rural and coastal communities should be vibrant places where lots of small communities own, respect and benefit from natural resources. There should be adequate housing, local schooling and access to a range of public services. For that reason, we will support the Labour amendment, which reminds us of the importance of broadband.

On our rural economy, 98 per cent of Scotland's landmass is rural, and 18 per cent of its population, 16 per cent of its employment, 30 per cent of its enterprises and 40 per cent of its small and medium-sized enterprises are rural. Rural communities are vibrant but fragile places. Their hallmarks are multiple job holding; underemployment; seasonal employment, which is often linked to housing availability; and sectors that depend on migrant labour, as more than one member has outlined. Therefore, we cannot deal with the uncertainty that Brexit has visited on us.

The motion mentions

"membership of the single market".

It is about not access but membership. That is important.

The motion also mentions freedom of movement. The Scottish Green Party certainly takes the view that the Prime Minister should spell out her intention to safeguard the free movement of people, however likely that is, and she should allow for a separate membership deal for Scotland if that is necessary. That would better reflect how we voted.

The economic benefit to the UK of EU migrants is well documented. I will give a figure from research from 2014. During the period from 2001 to 2011, the economic benefit from them was £22 billion. More recently, an HM Revenue and Customs report said that EU migrants made a positive contribution to the UK public finances in 2013-14 of more than £2.5 billion, which is a significant figure. That positive contribution is keenly felt in rural areas, with their agriculture, hospitality businesses and social care services, which are important for a growing and ageing population.

There is an opportunity to review our policies regardless of what happens with the EU. We clearly want to stay in it, but people have acknowledged that it is not without its flaws. I will give another example. The virulently anti-EU newspaper owner Mr Paul Dacre, who is a resident of the Highlands and Islands, landed

more than £250,000 in EU subsidies for his sporting estate in Wester Ross and another €13,000 in direct farm payments.

The previous Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment opposed payments to sporting estates. I understand that he made representations to the EU but that the proposals were said to be too loosely defined. I hope that the Scottish Government continues to hold that position and that it will pursue the matter.

I am grateful to the various organisations that have provided briefings. The Scottish Wildlife Trust talks about four significant issues that will need to be addressed to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland's natural environment. It talks about the future of environmental legislation. We know that the EU has been responsible for a considerable volume of quality legislation that has made the world a better place. It talks about funding to support sustainable land management, which is an important issue. Obviously, I welcome the land fund. It also talks about how Scotland achieves healthy seas. That is about sustainable fisheries management and local fisheries management. It is about acknowledging that fish do not recognise international boundaries and that international co-operation will be required. The trust's final point is about ensuring that Scotland remains a centre of excellence for science and knowledge exchange.

There has been cross-party consensus—it is perhaps rare—on post-study work visas, which the situation will have an impact on. It is unfortunate for Scotland that the UK Government did not pick up on that.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of our rural communities, and natural capital is a key priority of its economic strategy. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity talked about the potential loss of 40 million trees, which arises with a well-known dip coming in our timber production.

The Greens see a different emphasis. We like smaller units of agriculture rather than the large agricultural businesses. Only £350 million supports the agri-environment schemes. That is paid through the SRDP in pillar 2 payments.

It is not just us who think that there are flaws; the recent Audit Scotland report on the current CAP programme confirms that view. That is understandable, given the failures of the current scheme. Obvious benefits are associated with the direct payments to support food production, but Scots throw away 600,000 tonnes of food and drink every year, which costs £1 billion. Agriculture and related land use contribute to 20 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland. In the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

meeting last week, we heard that steps are being taken on that. Intensive farming makes a significant contribution to pollution.

We draw a contrast with the relatively small amount of money that is spent under agri-environment schemes through pillar 2, which incentivises land managers to deliver public benefits by improving, promoting and providing public access, creating new habitats, removing non-native species, expanding native species, planting native woodland, supporting conservation grazing and restoring peatlands.

One of the briefings that I read was from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which said that

“establishing new frameworks for all of the areas currently covered by EU legislation”

was “a major task” and questioned the resilience of Government staff to do that. We very much rely on the staff in the various Government directorates and, if we leave the EU, that will be a huge challenge.

It is vital for the Scottish Government to be fully involved in negotiations. Unless other parties wish to say otherwise, I understand that the Scottish Government is charged with representing and protecting Scotland's interests in the negotiations. The Scottish Green Party certainly wishes to see that continue and appreciates the Government's efforts thus far.

It is clear that the impacts of Brexit are far reaching and that there will be challenges for Scotland's natural capital. It is vital that we have vibrant and viable coastal and rural communities. It is important that we determine how best taxpayers' money is spent to maximise the benefits and achieve sustainable land management. We want that to take place within the EU; we want that within the single market. We want freedom of movement, which is a red-line issue for us. If we fail to get that, we will chart our own destiny.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Stewart Stevenson, to be followed by Mike Rumbles. I ask that your contribution be within reason, Mr Stevenson.

15:36

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for your confidence in the value of my contribution.

The Tories might be well advised not to try to fight previous battles. Mr Chapman referred to independence four times in the first two minutes of his speech and seven times in all. We have had an additional reference from Dean Lockhart. In last week's debate on the economy, the Tories made 15 references to independence. I will focus on the

subject of today's debate, because that is what matters to people in rural Scotland.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation is absolutely correct when it talks about the opportunities that derive from Brexit. Throughout my political life, I have campaigned against the common fisheries policy—there is no change from this member of Parliament. However, we must be careful to ensure that Westminster is not allowed to sell out the interests of our fish-catching sector again, as it did when it took us into the common fisheries policy. A Tory Government did that and we cannot allow a Tory Government to do such a thing again.

I also agree with NFU Scotland, which seeks

“common ground on the major ‘red lines’ of future trade agreements, agricultural support and labour”

in its industry. I hope that we can make progress in the debate and agree that it is important that our agricultural industries continue to have access to labour. Even Scottish strawberries might be under threat if we cannot get people to come and pick them.

On fishing, which is the issue that is of most concern to my constituents, control over our fishing grounds is a must-win issue for fishing communities in Scotland and beyond. The chief executive of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, which is roughly the English equivalent of our SFF, said—correctly—in last week's *Fishing News* that the

“issues will be ... access (our boats in other nation's waters, foreign boats in ours)”.

In the murky waters of international negotiations, it seems that anything goes. The internal negotiations in the UK, which generally involve decisions simply being handed down from UK ministers, illustrate that.

In the past year, we have seen a delay over the summer monkfish swap, which the cabinet secretary referred to; preference given to English white-fish trawlers on whiting and Arctic cod; top slicing of North Sea whiting from Scotland handed to the English inshore fleet; and an allocation of an excessive amount of mackerel—again, to the English inshore fleet.

When a UK position is determined, there must be agreement from all the jurisdictions that the issue affects and not simply a position that reflects the needs of one. Scottish ministers are well used to representing the UK and agreed UK positions on the international stage. A quick look at my ministerial diaries identified at least five occasions on which I represented the UK on a UK position. Of course, negotiations proceed in part along paths that are determined by the party that is on the opposite side of the table. That means that

one needs a minister who is at the top of his or her game to lead on the negotiations.

As it happens, in Scotland we have some of the best negotiation trainers in the world. I wrote about their methods in today's *Banffshire Journal*. If members want to read my comments, they can do so at negotiate.stewartstevenson.scot—

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I cannot wait.

Stewart Stevenson: The comments are excellent, Mr Rumbles, and are well worth a read.

If we are to give our industry confidence, we need the minister who leads on fisheries negotiations for the UK to have a bigger stake in the outcome than any UK minister is likely to have—we need a Scottish minister. That is likely to be good for UK fishermen outwith Scotland, because such a minister is much less likely to sell out fishing industries for some undisclosed trade-off, as happened 40 years ago.

Let us look at the position of the Tory UK Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell. He is a rich source of quotations. In *The Press and Journal*, he said:

“the idea we would go back to a position where we were entirely in control of our own fishing is not one that is realistic.”

Before talks have even started, Scotland's fishermen are again being sold out by the Tories, just as they were during the CFP negotiations.

We must also consider the position of communities that depend on processing the bounty of our seas, from the artisanal smokehouses and processors in small west coast and island communities to the large industrial processors in my constituency and elsewhere. For them, access to labour and access to market are vital. The EU is the largest fish market in the world and it takes, in particular, premium products, which have the highest margins and therefore contribute differentially to higher profits, compared with other markets. Outside the single market, even when there is access to it, countries find it particularly difficult to export to the EU without cost and time penalties and without discrimination against particular fish species and food products.

Furthermore, without the many foreign nationals who work in fish processing, production must inevitably drop. We simply cannot staff the factories in the Banffshire and Buchan Coast constituency, in Fraserburgh and in Peterhead without nationals from elsewhere.

The UK Government is as opaque as ever about its plans. There are emerging indications of what is called hard Brexit, to which other members referred. Such an approach would hit fishing

communities particularly hard and undermine the advantages that would be derived from leaving the common fisheries policy.

In the debate, the Tories are trying to cover their failures by referring to other matters. What has got us to the situation that we are in is the blank sheet of paper that is the plan for Brexit, which is still blank. The Tories' approach contrasts with what happened in 2014, when a 650-page document was produced that contained plans that could be analysed, dissected and attacked.

In the 1800s, the Austrian empire's foreign minister, Count Metternich, said:

"Events which cannot be prevented must be directed."

Brexit cannot now be prevented. It is time for a wee bit of direction from the UK Government. If the UK Government will not do it, we will tell it what to do.

15:44

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I very much welcome the opportunity that the debate gives us to highlight the challenges that our rural economy faces in the post-EU world.

Each time Fergus Ewing has attended a meeting of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, I have raised with him the long-term interests of the Scottish rural economy. Each time, he has veered off into blaming the UK Government for its lack of planning or avoided my questions altogether.

At the cabinet secretary's most recent appearance at the committee, when I asked him whether he had set up a team of civil servants to look at funding for the rural economy post 2020, he seemed outraged that I had the temerity even to ask such a question and he could not get out of the room quickly enough. Unfortunately, as we heard in his opening speech, he is more interested in criticising the UK Government for its lack of openness and planning than he is in getting to grips with the planning that he needs to do for the future of Scotland's rural economy post 2020.

I will outline why I strongly believe that the Scottish Government is failing in its duty. When the UK joined the Common Market, we inherited a common agricultural policy that was designed to fit German, French and Italian farmers. We did not join a system that was designed for British, let alone Scottish, agriculture. We joined a very unsatisfactory system in which whole sectors of our industry were left without farm support and those that had it were mired in bureaucracy. We all know about that bureaucracy, but members might not be aware that farm subsidies are allocated in a very strange way.

I will outline what I believe many people find strange about the current distribution of farm subsidies in Scotland. In 2015, while the average farm subsidy was £31,000, the average farm income was £23,000. Before the subsidy, the average farm is losing £8,000 a year, and more than 38 per cent of our farms made a loss or had an income of less than £10,000 even with the subsidy. We can see how reliant some of our farms are on EU subsidies and how many of our farms are at risk without them.

However, those dreadful figures mask other figures that show that 5 per cent—one in 20—of the farms that receive the average subsidy of £31,000 have farm incomes that are in excess of £100,000. There is huge variation. We subsidise everyone who is in the sectors that receive such funding. Once we leave the EU—and we are leaving it—those farm subsidies will become entirely the Scottish ministers' responsibility, because agriculture is entirely devolved. I find it astonishing that Fergus Ewing, the responsible Scottish minister, has not already sparked on that.

Fergus Ewing: Mr Rumbles has completely failed to mention that, although agriculture is devolved, the subsidy and payment mechanism for agriculture is reserved, because it comes from the CAP. I have pointed out that pillar 2 funding has not been guaranteed by the UK Government.

Mike Rumbles *rose*—

Fergus Ewing: That has been mentioned by many members, although not by the Conservatives. Do the Liberals agree that the pillar 2 payments must be guaranteed by the UK Government before anybody can engage in proper budget planning, because we do not know what our budget will be?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Rumbles, you accepted the intervention and I allowed Mr Ewing to make it. When someone is intervening, you should sit in your seat and you should not stand up until you respond.

Mike Rumbles: That intervention is typical of the minister's behaviour throughout the process. He knows—as everyone else should know—that, while we are in the EU, such matters are reserved, but they will not be reserved once we disappear from the EU. Agriculture is entirely devolved, and the minister who is in charge of Scottish agriculture is failing in his duty to plan. He is not even prepared to come up with options for what the situation might look like in the future. [*Interruption.*] Just be quiet, Mr Stevenson.

Fergus Ewing's failure to do such planning looks like the height of irresponsibility. We have an almost blank piece of paper, so we have a chance to reform the farm support system in Scotland. The minister has a chance to design a new system

that is suited to Scotland's needs post 2020 instead of simply going on as before.

We have become used to a lack of planning by Scottish ministers. For example, we have seen the shambles of farm payments, whereby money that should have been paid to farm businesses some nine months ago remains unpaid. Fergus Ewing is so lacking in confidence about this year's farm payments that he is boasting about giving 80 per cent of what farmers are due in December one month early. However, that will still leave the average farm business, which is on an income of £23,000, some £6,000 out of pocket. Is that something to boast about? The minister shakes his head, but he needs to face the facts. We had an unprecedented shambles of a farm payment system last year and it seems that we will continue with that shambles this coming year. Unless Fergus Ewing puts his thinking cap on, we will continue to have one shambles after another.

It is galling that the minister continues to criticise others—many things need to be criticised, but not constantly—when it is important that the Scottish Government looks to its own responsibilities before casting aspersions on others. He believes that it is anybody's fault but his own, yet he fails to do the simplest of planning exercises for what he wants the future of farm subsidies to be post 2020. We have heard absolutely nothing in the debate about what future he wants for Scottish agriculture. We are only four years away from 2020. Is he seriously saying that he will simply carry on with a totally unsuitable system? Will he, even at this late stage, actually do some planning? For goodness' sake, minister, get a grip.

15:51

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Rhoda Grant talked about broadband and the support that is being offered to that infrastructure by Brussels. She also rightly pointed out that social justice is key in the provision of better broadband. Indeed, the roaming charges reductions that we have seen as a result of EU policy have been very welcome in that regard. Mobile connectivity is essential to the economic prosperity of rural Scotland, and I am pleased that the Labour amendment highlights connectivity. I look forward to supporting it at decision time.

The cabinet secretary mentioned that he is still waiting for answers from a number of UK Government ministers. I am waiting for a specific answer on connectivity. Earlier this month, I wrote to Matt Hancock, the Minister of State for Digital and Culture, asking whether the UK Government will be able to match the EU's commitment, given that, in his recent state of the union address, Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, committed the EU to "fully deploy"

the next generation of mobile technology, 5G, across the EU by 2025. He also said that, by 2020, the EU will have equipped every village and city with free wireless internet around the main centres of public life. That is a hugely ambitious promise and an excellent example of the EU stepping in where, in the past, the UK Government has singularly failed rural Scotland—and, indeed, other rural parts of the UK.

Telecommunications is an issue that is entirely reserved to Westminster. Earlier auctions of 3G and 4G licences by the UK Government may have raised billions of pounds for the Treasury through the awarding of those licences, but the operators were asked only to meet a certain level of per-head coverage. In Scotland's case, the figure was set at 95 per cent for 4G, and when 3G licences were awarded for Scotland there was no guarantee at all. In both cases, the figure was based on per-head coverage, which is not an effective marker in rural areas; we need geographical guarantees to ensure that there is coverage outwith urban areas. The fact that the UK Government has not demanded those geographical guarantees has led to rural Scotland being the worst-served part of the UK for mobile connectivity.

Mr Juncker's guarantee would have filled the giant not-spot that has been created by successive Westminster Governments, which is why I have asked Matt Hancock to fund the 5G service that we will now not get from the EU—if Brexit goes ahead; I still do not regard that as a fait accompli. If the Scottish Tories really cared about rural Scotland, they would demand answers from Mr Hancock, too.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Joan McAlpine will be pleased to learn that I will meet Mr Hancock next Sunday and will be happy to pass on to him any questions that she has.

Joan McAlpine: I welcome that—I will send the member the letter to which I still await a reply.

Peter Chapman focused on farming. I would like to quote something about the region that I represent, South Scotland.

"For many of my constituents in the Borders with farm businesses, the EU also offers a critical level of support, through the common agricultural policy. In fact, nearly 40 per cent of the European budget is dedicated to the agricultural sector. In addition, EU membership offers tariff-free market access for Scottish produce, which had an export value of £5.1 billion in 2014—a fact that every business across the country should be ... aware of."—*[Official Report, 26 May 2016; c 50.]*

That was said by John Lamont, the Conservative MSP for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire. It is an example of what the Tories said before the referendum and demonstrates how they changed their tune after it.

I would like assurances on how the common agricultural policy payment replacement will be distributed across the UK if Brexit goes ahead. We have been told that payments for farming will continue to be funded, but we do not know how they will make their way to Scotland. Evidence that the European and External Relations Committee received from the Fraser of Allander institute pointed out that Scotland's share of CAP payment is 18 per cent, which is obviously well above Scotland's share of the UK population. How will a Tory Treasury guarantee that funding? The Fraser of Allander institute gave us a gentle warning that, at the moment, the only way to transfer funds from the Treasury to Scotland is via the Barnett formula, which gives us a little more than our 9 per cent population share; it is certainly nowhere near the 18 per cent that we get from the CAP.

When the Tories sum up the debate, will they guarantee that Scotland will get its current share—18 per cent—of CAP after Brexit? My concern is that their record is not good when it comes to standing up for Scotland against the UK Treasury. Observers of these matters know that the Treasury has been trying to cut Scotland's funding by doing away with Barnett; it has wanted to do away with Barnett for years.

During the fiscal framework negotiations, the Treasury tried to put a £7 billion price tag on the new powers that this Parliament was promised. I am very pleased that the Labour Party eventually got behind the Scottish Government to stand firm in defence of Scotland's interests during that debate. We held out, the UK Government blinked first and we got a guarantee that we would not lose that £7 billion. However, the Scottish Tories were no help whatsoever and refused to stick up for Scotland.

At one point, David Mundell said that the £7 billion was us making a mountain out of a molehill. Does anyone really believe that the Scottish Tories will stick up for us when it comes to ensuring that we get a continuing share of those CAP payments? I very much doubt that they will. In fact, one of the leaders of the Brexit campaign—who, I am sad to say, is a Scottish-born Tory—Michael Gove, hinted at that during the referendum campaign when he talked about a fair union funding settlement post-Brexit. We have all known for many years that when Tories talk about fair funding for Scotland, they do not mean more money.

15:59

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Britain is leaving the European Union as the result of the decision that was made on 23 June. It was not the outcome that I hoped or voted for but, as a democrat—and unlike some of the

members in the middle of the chamber—I respect the democratic will of the people.

Since the referendum, much has been made of the fact that the majority in Scotland voted to remain, as the majority did in London and Northern Ireland. However, what seems to have been forgotten is that more than 1 million Scots voted to leave. A large proportion of that vote came from Scotland's rural communities, such as those in my constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, which feel that they are not being listened to in Edinburgh—never mind in Brussels. That is why the real threat to our rural economy is not Brexit but the SNP Government.

Joan McAlpine: Will the member give way?

Finlay Carson: I am still in my opening minute.

The SNP Government stifles any ambition to deliver real and meaningful action in our rural communities and seems hell-bent on pressing ahead with a centralising agenda that will decimate valued local services.

Only two weeks ago, the cabinet secretary came to the chamber and tried to promote the CAP payment crisis as a good-news story. Everyone knows that the CAP fiasco is set to continue. Let us not forget that its consequences have resulted in cashflow problems for the whole of the rural economy, at a time when farmers are already suffering from low commodity prices—for example, they received less money for their grain in 2015 than they did 30 years ago. The additional uncertainty was a hammer blow for a vital Scottish industry, and the Government has still not managed to get a grip on the situation.

Just last week, a member of the Dumfries processing team told one of my staff that a local farmer would receive their payment by the end of the week, only to be contradicted by another senior officer in Edinburgh, who said that there was no chance of that happening as

“things were in too big of a mess”.

You could not make it up.

The repercussions go much further than the effect on farmers. Local businesses, from our local tradesmen right through to our grocery stores, are dependent on farms. The SNP cannot run away from the fact that its mishandling has starved our rural economy of £400 million-worth of investment. The blame for the crisis lies squarely at the feet of the Scottish Government, and it will be held responsible for its incompetence.

Over the past few months, I have met some of Scotland's fishing representatives and, from Peterhead to Kirkcudbright, they could not be more optimistic and excited about the future. In its recent briefing paper, “Scottish Fisheries Post-

Brexit: A Sea of Opportunities”, the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation talks about the unique opportunity to establish a more effective and reactive fisheries management system; create fairer and more appropriate shares of catching opportunities for Scottish fishermen; direct grant funding in ways that are more suited to Scotland than the EU currently allows; and use Britain’s new role in the world, post-Brexit, to explore new markets for seafood in rapidly expanding economies outside the EU.

The opportunities are endless, but the ideas and opportunities will be wasted if the SNP Government continues to maintain such an intransigent position on Brexit. Far from being feared in our fishing sector, Brexit is being welcomed and embraced. Sadly, the same cannot be said about the actions and policies of the SNP Government.

In my constituency, I have been contacted by a number of local fishermen and businesses that have been affected by the Government’s ill-thought-out policies on restricted salmon fishing. As one gentleman put it, the restrictions sound a “death knell” for all west coast rivers and have already had an adverse effect on our rural economy, with angling clubs, tackle shops, hotels and holiday lets that cater specifically for fishermen all reporting a disastrous year.

As it did with many other policies that directly affect rural Scotland, the Government completely disregarded both the scientific research and the views of people working on the ground when it came up with its legislation. As the Government prepares to introduce a wild fisheries bill to this Parliament, I hope that the cabinet secretary will adopt a more reasoned and engaging approach by harnessing the knowledge of our local people to come up with a local river-based management structure rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all policy, which this centralising Government does far too often.

One way of giving a much-needed boost to the rural economy would be to designate new national parks. That claim is supported in a report by the Scottish Campaign for National Parks, which argues that

“areas such as Dumfries and Galloway, the Borders, the remoter Hebridean islands and the far north and west of Scotland could all benefit from a growth in their visitor numbers and a larger tourism economy”.

Despite there being more than 3,500 national parks across the globe, Scotland has only two. It would cost an estimated £7 million to establish a national park, but the subsequent economic benefits would be expected to significantly outweigh that.

During the recent election, the Scottish Conservatives recognised the role and importance of rural Scotland to the Scottish economy. That is why we committed to having a south of Scotland enterprise. The body would have a social as well as an economic remit—that is the key difference between Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise—and would focus on delivering tangible outcomes for communities in the south of Scotland. I encourage the Scottish Government to look at the proposal seriously and demonstrate to the people of my constituency and across the south of Scotland that it realises that what is good practice in Govan is not necessarily the best approach in Gatehouse of Fleet.

Scotland’s rural communities deserve better. Rather than coming to the chamber today and disguising its failures through the prism of Brexit, the Government would have benefited from bringing forward real proposals on how it plans to deliver for rural Scotland. The reality is that Scotland’s rural communities have suffered most under the SNP Government, which fails to realise that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work.

Only today I received correspondence from a new group that was set up to be a united voice for the riding of the marches and other festivals and galas in Dumfries and Galloway. The situation has been brought about partly by unreasonable policing requirements—all based on central belt good practice—being imposed on rural events. One of our festivals, the Wickerman festival, did not go ahead this year, due in no small part to new policing requirements, which deprived our area of hundreds of thousands of pounds of income.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Will you wind up, please?

Finlay Carson: Why does the Scottish Government not listen to rural communities? We have huge potential in rural Scotland, and a great opportunity has arisen to re-energise our rural areas. The Government needs to grasp the thistle—in the words of Michael Russell—and deliver for my constituents and the rest of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call James Kelly to be followed by Gail Ross. We are getting close to not having any extra time. I might give James Kelly half a minute extra.

16:06

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): I am not sure that I will need it, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excellent.

James Kelly: I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. It has been interesting for me, as someone who does not represent a rural region

or constituency, to listen to the contributions from members on all sides of the chamber. The debate has brought home not only the contribution that rural Scotland makes to the economy and to the lives of people in those rural communities, but the disastrous impact of the Brexit vote in rural Scotland.

Listening to some of the Tory speeches, it struck me that there is a lack of self-awareness. In some of the weekend press coverage of how the Brexit campaign was conducted in the Tory party, I got a real sense that people were more interested in manoeuvring for their own political reasons than in considering the impact of Brexit. Let us not forget that David Cameron brought forward the referendum to try to quell critics within his own ranks. It has been an absolute disaster not only for the country, but for David Cameron's political career.

Dean Lockhart: I remind James Kelly that the Labour Party in Westminster supported the holding of the referendum.

James Kelly: Yes, and we campaigned very strongly for a remain vote. A mere glance at the weekend press coverage shows that all that we can see is people briefing and manoeuvring against one another. It is quite clear that Dean Lockhart's party was split and had taken its eye off the ball with regard to what the impact would be.

The impact of the vote on the rural economy and the wider Scottish economy, and on people's lives, is clear from members' speeches. The Labour amendment refers to support for the digital economy and broadband. The growth in access to the internet and superfast broadband has really changed people's lifestyles as well as business and industry in the past 10 years. We know from Rhoda Grant and Joan McAlpine about the potential draining of EU funding for broadband access—we know how important that issue is for rural areas.

Only this week, a report from the Carnegie Trust highlighted the need to prioritise broadband access. If it is not given priority, the result could be social exclusion for some individuals and communities. Given the layout of rural Scotland, it is clear that a lot of isolated communities have difficulty accessing broadband and the internet. That not only limits individuals' access to information and enjoyment of lifestyles but undermines the growth of businesses in those areas. Greater priority must be given to ensuring that that funding is secured.

Similar arguments have been made about agriculture. Bruce Crawford talked about the €500 million in farm payments. If we start to lose sums of that magnitude, that will have an impact on the

66,500 people who work in the agricultural economy.

On the contribution that EU nationals make to the rural economy, it is reckoned that between 5,000 and 15,000 do seasonal work, many on fruit farms. Continuing uncertainty about the future for EU nationals is no use to those individuals and could undermine the overall economy.

The three examples that I have highlighted—the digital economy, agriculture and the important role of EU nationals—show the potential for a real undermining of the rural economy. They also show the effect on the overall economy, and especially on the food and drink sector, as some members have said.

We need some certainty, particularly from the UK Government. We have had a summer of uncertainty. People deserve answers and a proper plan for the future. We need to have a proper debate.

Today's debate has been a good one, but the SNP Government would be well advised to concentrate on the issues as opposed to pursuing the dream of some of their supporters of an independence referendum. In recent weeks, it has been interesting to see the likes of Kenny MacAskill and Alex Neil concentrating more on the issues and cautioning against a charge towards an independence referendum; other SNP members would be well advised to do likewise.

This has been an important debate. It has emphasised the importance of the rural economy and the contribution that the EU makes to that. However, we need greater clarity and to give the issue more priority.

16:12

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I bring members' attention to my register of interests, in which I list being a board member of North Highland College. I will go on to speak about that now.

I have been a board member since 2014 and we have had many discussions about where funding comes from and how it is spent. North Highland College is a partner in the University of the Highlands and Islands. What we know—this is not scaremongering; it is research—is that Brexit will affect the UHI more acutely than any other university in the Scottish sector. EU funding represents 35 per cent of the UHI's external income. In the past 20 years, more than £200 million has been gained from EU funding, so Brexit will mean a cut of 35 per cent to the UHI's external funding stream.

Loss of European structural funds will mean a proposed £19 million cut in additional student

places funding, student support and curriculum development to meet business and public sector skill requirements. Cross-border EU finance collaboration such as horizon 2020, in which the UHI has played a leading role, will no longer be open to the UHI. That will impact on ideas and co-operation and it will wrench the UHI from a key international body in which it was playing a leading role.

Horizon 2020 is developing ideas about offshore development and carbon reduction, which are crucial to the economy of the north of Scotland. EU engagement has been at the heart of the development of the UHI for the past 20 years and support from the EU has been fundamental in developing an integrated system.

Significant investment has been made in teaching and research facilities, the information and communications technology that underpins them and course development and delivery. We could say that the UHI would not be as strong or as diverse if it were not for the unstinting support that it has received from the EU over the years.

The award-winning environmental research institute at North Highland College has told me that it will lose two PhD studentships next year that had already been allocated as part of the European funding package. Some other EU organisations are wary of including the UHI on any EU grant applications as its status in the near future is unclear, to say the least.

At the moment, the financial impact is not being felt and on-going projects are still being funded, but this is very much the calm before the storm. The next round of funding—or the lack of it—could have massive implications for this academic institution. Potentially, it could lead to a significant shortfall in funding and the UHI would struggle to maintain its current staffing levels.

However, it is not only the UHI in the Highlands that relies on EU funding. Successive EU structural fund programmes have allowed for almost €1 billion of investment in the Highlands and Islands since 1990. The EU has been the principal driver in regional policy that has seen special attention being paid to regions with lagging gross domestic product compared with the EU average and/or particular economic and social challenges.

Inward migration from the EU has helped staff many crucial jobs in the tourism and food and drink industries in the Highlands and Islands, as we have heard from colleagues in the chamber, as well as increasing the population in the area, which is vital in the Highlands and Islands. There are estimated to be more than 10,000 EU nationals working, studying and contributing in the Highlands and Islands. That equates to around 2

per cent of the population of the area. What future for them post-Brexit? The UK Government will not say—and shame that we are even considering using those people as pawns in negotiations.

The EU single market is worth £11 billion per annum to Scotland and is the main destination for Highlands and Islands exports. Retaining easy access to the single market is fundamental to the export competitiveness of businesses.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise and regional partners are considering the future shape of regional policy. Although the responsibility for regional policy will not become clear until post-referendum negotiations progress, a continued focus on the specific development challenges and opportunities of regions such as the Highlands and Islands, backed up by appropriate resources, is necessary.

In conclusion, I find it unbelievable in these times of forced austerity that the answer from the UK Government is to take away even more with a hard Brexit. That is not the best of both worlds that we were promised in 2014. Actually, it is the worst of all worlds.

16:18

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): What we have here is an opportunity to scrutinise the health of our rural economy and part of that scrutiny should focus within our own borders and on our own potential actions.

Our farmers and fishermen are among the most stringently legislated food producers in the world. Our farmers are charged with the custodianship of the countryside and our fishermen land world-class produce in the most testing of circumstances. However, they are not competing in a world where the playing field is even. For example, although we do not import meat from certain countries because of how they develop their livestock, those countries still flood the global market with cheap produce, which drives down selling prices.

The Government imposed a blanket ban on genetically modified crops, slamming the door on research that could have benefited our farmers and farmers from around the world. We ensure that farmers pay a living wage that is far higher than many of their competitors; our fishermen adhere to a very strict quota system; and the processing capabilities in Scotland have not been developed in line with production. For example, we import dried milk from as far afield as New Zealand and our farmers have to send their milk outside our borders to get it processed.

All that would be acceptable if we then recognised the increased cost of food production

that those rules incur and ensured that the playing field was levelled for our farmers and fishermen. It would be acceptable if the Government that imposes those rules ensured that the increased costs were mitigated in the interests of fair competition. However, that is not the case here. I have used freedom of information requests to gain a picture of where our Government departments source their food, and the picture is one of inconsistency. There are great examples of best practice in regions where food is sourced locally and prepared on site, but there are also examples in which food is purchased through third parties, its source cannot readily be identified and it is prepared in a way that can affect nutritional quality.

Take hospitals, where we would expect the nutritional quality of food to be the first and most important question in the procurement process, as it speaks to patient recuperation and rehabilitation and therefore to the time spent in a hospital bed. Some hospitals source local produce and prepare food on site in their kitchens. Others receive food that has been cooked off site, sometimes a significant distance away, flash frozen, transported to the hospital and then rehydrated and reheated prior to being served. Moreover, the source of that food is often unknown to the purchaser.

The variance in daily cost per patient is a major concern, with some health boards quoting £7.50 a day per patient, while others quote as little as £2.50 a day. With such a significant difference, there is no way that quality of produce can be universal. There are reports of high levels of wastage and patients pushing unpalatable food around their plates and leaving it uneaten. Serving low-cost and low-quality food is, of course, a false economy. Patients need high-quality nutritious food at a time when their rehabilitation demands it, as that leads to reduced time spent in a hospital bed. That is exactly the kind of food that our rural economy consistently produces.

Our schools are another example. East Ayrshire Council sources all of its produce locally and can even say which farm in the area it gets its eggs from. I was even told yesterday that it could name the hen that had laid them, although I am not sure whether that was serious. I am sure that members would agree that that approach of feeding healthy local produce to our children is to be applauded, and I would have thought that it would be the norm. If East Ayrshire can do that effectively, why cannot all other areas?

Finally, only a third of the Scottish Prison Service's food suppliers are based in Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am letting you continue along this line, but it is sort of tenuously connected to the amendment.

Brian Whittle: Stick with me, DPO—I'll get there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am waiting with bated breath, and that breath is running out.

Brian Whittle: That highlights a governmental department procurement process that is flawed and in need of a major overhaul. Squeezing budgets to a point where food quality is compromised in critical health areas is surely unacceptable.

Fergus Ewing: Has Mr Whittle heard of Scotland Excel and is he aware of its work? Does he appreciate that a great many farming businesses, one of whom I met earlier, recognise that Excel and its procurement policy ensure that, to a great extent, food produce is bought in Scotland from Scottish producers and farmers? Is he aware of any of that?

Brian Whittle: As I said, I used freedom of information requests to all the health boards to find out exactly where they source their food. I am only quoting from them, and I ask the cabinet secretary to do the same.

The Government has an opportunity to support our rural economy and allow it to be a major solution in improving the health and wellbeing of our country. The answers lie in our hands, so we need to join up the dots.

I have heard time and again from the Government how its hands are tied by Westminster, how it is unable to act in the interests of Scotland because of Westminster and how, if only it had more powers, it could sort all our ills and woes. Every time it peddles that line, I hear, "Ineffective Government". We have had a decade of an SNP Government that has ineffective policies and ideas and is unable to break away from a narrow narrative that keeps minds closed to possibilities and opportunities. Well, it is getting old and it is time to change the record. The Government has it in its powers to be a much more solid supporter of the rural economy. It has the power to create a circular economy in which the highest-quality food produced by our farmers and fishermen makes it on to Scottish dinner tables and continues to be lauded across Europe and further afield. It is a big world out there, and it is time to think big.

Many of us did not vote for Brexit, but that is the will of the British people, so the SNP Government needs to stop its constant talk of doom and gloom and its constant pointing south with feigned indignation and take its place at the negotiating table. It needs to accept its responsibility to the Scottish people, be a strong voice for Scotland, get the best deal for our rural economy and ensure that our farmers and fishermen can make the very best of the opportunities that now present

themselves. My question to the SNP Government is simple: will it finally accept its responsibilities and get behind our rural economy?

16:25

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I have enjoyed listening to the contributions by colleagues across the chamber in today's debate. Some of the contributions have made me smile.

It is a pleasure to contribute to the debate, particularly as a member of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. The result of the EU referendum on 23 June made many things uncertain; in fact, there are only a few things that are certain. One thing is that Brexit means Brexit, although we do not quite know what Brexit means. Those on the Tory benches who voted leave—I am trying to find out who they were—have put their country in a position of total chaos, and non-action by the UK Government. Also certain is that the people of Scotland unequivocally made clear their desire to remain in the European Union, and I support the SNP Government in exploring every avenue to keep Scotland in the EU.

It is now incumbent upon everyone across the chamber to work to protect the economic future of Scotland and, in particular, our rural economy and communities that are particularly vulnerable to the uncertainty caused by the result of the EU referendum. SNP members and some others across the chamber are equally determined to do what it takes to ensure that that desire by the Scottish people to stay in the EU is recognised, respected and protected.

Our rural economy benefited from a share of some £4 billion in EU funding and a share of an estimated £12 billion in food and drink exports over the period from 2014 to 2020, as well as benefiting from the contribution made by the tens of thousands of EU nationals who choose to live and work in rural Scotland. Our membership of the European Union should not be understated or undervalued. Indeed, the EU is Scotland's biggest overseas food and drink export market, and it is essential that we continue to retain access to the single market of over 500 million people—not to do so would be disastrous. The European Union has delivered for Scotland by providing access to significant investment that supports thousands of jobs in rural economies and by providing European structural funds that support important economic, employment and social priorities and help to grow our economy. Let us not forget that.

While the UK Government and the Tories in Westminster have done nothing to address concerns or provide stability, the same cannot be said for the SNP Government. The SNP Scottish

Government is providing certainty and building growth in Scotland's rural economies in these uncertain times through measures such as connect local, the new £3 million advisory and support service for the food and drink sector, as well as the £250,000 good food nation challenge fund, the £50,000 support fund for the organic sector, and more than £3 million in grants for the food and drink sector through the food processing and marketing grant scheme.

Rachael Hamilton (South Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lyle: Yes. Oh, I notice that you have come back into the chamber.

Rachael Hamilton: I have been watching, Mr Lyle. NFU Scotland has called upon the Scottish Government to confirm—

Richard Lyle: I am sorry, but I cannot hear you.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please speak through the chair, Mr Lyle, if you do not mind.

Richard Lyle: My apologies.

Rachael Hamilton: NFU Scotland has called upon the Scottish Government to confirm the continuation of committed spend for the less favoured area support scheme, 70 per cent of which is funded by the Scottish Government. Does Mr Lyle believe that that creates uncertainty within the agricultural community?

Richard Lyle: No, I do not.

Those actions are in addition to our investment in infrastructure to support rural economic growth, our investment through the capital investment programme and, as highlighted in the chamber last week, our ambitious goals for broadband. The Scottish Government made a commitment to deliver 100 per cent superfast broadband across Scotland by 2021 and that ambition is on track, as the Scottish Government hit its target of 85 per cent coverage six months ahead of schedule.

The SNP will continue to provide stability and support in these uncertain times, which brings me to the final area in my remarks, which is the sorry state that the Scottish Tories are in with their new-found desire to be Brexiteers. It is clear that the Tories have performed a U-turn over Brexit. Before the referendum vote, they issued grave warnings about leaving the EU.

Brian Whittle: Will the member give way?

Richard Lyle: No. Now the latest from the Tories is that they are calling on the SNP to make Brexit work. It is clear that SNP members will continue to be committed to protecting Scotland's place in the EU, for our rural economy and for all our country, and that we will continue to play our

part as an outward-looking and active nation in the European community.

Since 1 January 1973, the EU has continually been the Tory party's Achilles' heel. In fact, over the decades, the EU has totally occupied the Tory grandees. Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher and John Major all had their problems with the EU. David Cameron finally threw in the towel—I agree with Mr Kelly on that, and it must be the first time ever—by promising a referendum to head off the United Kingdom Independence Party. I am sure that Mr Cameron now regrets what he did. He paid the ultimate price. It allowed the anti-EU Tories out of their box. They have cast us down the long road of Brexit. I for one will not forget what they have done to Scotland.

Liam Kerr: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his final minute.

Richard Lyle: I will never forget nor forgive, and neither will the Scottish people when the reality sinks in.

16:31

Rhoda Grant: There is a saying that there are none so fervent as the recently converted, which to my mind sums up the Tories' contribution to the debate, because it is a leap of faith to go from campaigning for remain to embracing Brexit. James Kelly made the point that we are in the current position because of party-political expediency rather than what is good for our country. However, we must all seek to mitigate its effects as much as we can.

Liam Kerr: Does Rhoda Grant agree that, rather than being converted Brexiteers, as has been suggested, we are just providing a voice for the 1 million who voted for us to come out of the EU?

Rhoda Grant: I do not understand how the Tories are speaking for those people today but did not agree with them several short months ago. It seems strange that they can move their position so dramatically in such a short time.

My colleague Lewis Macdonald made a good contribution in which he laid out the options that we face. He raised a number of questions about the fishing and farming sectors having access to markets in Europe without access to payments and about whether those industries would have access to markets without tariffs. We need to find answers to those questions as we look at our farming and fishing industries, which will depend on European trade.

We also need to look at the payments that we will be required to make to the EU if we are to

access the single market. That will tell us what balance we will have left as a country to distribute in payments to people such as our farmers. All those important questions need answers, but we are struggling to come to terms with them.

We need to set out priorities for what dividends, if any, will be available to us financially. Leave campaigners made the point that any dividend from leaving the EU would go to the national health service, but we know that health depends on much more than the NHS. It also depends on diet and on access to services, so to send all the money that would have gone to our farmers and rural communities directly to the NHS would place a greater burden on the NHS and create more problems than it would solve.

To that extent, I agree with Mike Rumbles, because we need to plan and to set our priorities, given the tight timescales that we face. That is difficult to do because, as we talk about the subject—a number of people have raised questions about organisations that benefit from European funding—we need to work out how we can unpick it all and then put it back together in a way that mitigates the impact on our rural communities.

Farming and fishing stand to lose access to European markets—for example, we know that the bulk of our shellfish and lamb markets are in Europe—so we need to see how we can protect the interests of those sectors and trading partnerships. The farming and fishing industries also depend on migrant workers—James Kelly said that 5,000 to 15,000 migrant workers are employed in those industries, including those who work as berry pickers, who are crucial for the farming industry. Some of those jobs are seasonal and people cannot be employed all year round, so we depend on people who travel across Europe to work on different harvests in different countries. We also know that eastern European workers are the backbone of our fish processing industry. We want to keep them where they are providing for our local economies.

John Finnie mentioned jobs in the health and care sectors that depend on European workers coming in, which we have not talked about before in this context. We have been talking recently about the general practitioner shortages, and many European GPs are coming to Scotland to provide care for our citizens. We need to provide certainty to our European migrants who have made their lives in this country and put down roots here that they can stay. We also have to provide Scottish people who work in Europe with the same certainty that they will not be disrupted by Brexit.

Depopulation is the number 1 threat to local economies in rural Scotland. We need to look at ways of repopulating our rural areas and keeping

young people there, but we cannot do that if we are turning away those who have come to live there.

We need to continue to collaborate with our European neighbours on certain issues; that has been very successful. Gail Ross mentioned North Highland College and UHI. They have benefited from funding from initiatives such as the northern periphery programme, which shared knowledge among countries with similar rural areas that face similar challenges. Our rural areas have a lot more in common with those European rural areas than they do with urban areas in our country—Finlay Carson made that point when he talked about a south of Scotland enterprise body that would deal with rural issues there.

I am really pleased that a number of members picked up on broadband, because it is crucial for the rural economy and the way in which we deliver services. We stand to lose funding from Europe from which we have benefited previously, but we also stand to lose the focus on a level playing field that Europe provides to us. We need to see how we can replicate that. We will lose the knowledge from the partnerships that we can form with other European countries that face similar geographical disadvantages and difficulties in getting connectivity out to the more rural areas. We need to see how we can still forge ahead and form those partnerships so that, if we miss out on the funding, we at least do not miss out on the knowledge that they can bring us.

A number of members mentioned PGI status, which Emma Harper went into some detail on. That status is difficult to obtain. I was involved in the campaign for PGI for Stornoway black pudding, which took years to obtain but has protected that product throughout Europe. We need to find ways of protecting products, especially foodstuffs, that have become iconic as Scottish. If we are out of Europe, that PGI protection will fall.

Presiding Officer, I can see that you are trying to catch my eye to speed me up slightly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have obviously been successful—thank you.

Rhoda Grant: I draw to a close by stating that the Scottish Labour Party will always pursue what is in Scotland's best interests. Because of Brexit, that is inextricably linked to what the best outcome for the rest of the UK is, which means that the Governments involved have to work collaboratively for the benefit of all. This is not where we wanted to be, but we must seek to protect the interests of our people.

16:38

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): We welcome this debate on the Scottish rural economy and Brexit. It is good to see that some parties are not afraid to have a debate on Brexit. However, believe it or not, not everyone who lives in rural Scotland is a farmer, a fisherman or a forester. Many are, of course, but our perception of rural Scotland is often clouded by the funds, grants, subsidies and quotas that tend to dominate the discussion—although that is right and much has been said about that today.

The cabinet secretary talks about his worries about future access to a single market in the EU while his party campaigns to leave Scotland's biggest trading union—the United Kingdom, with which trade is worth four times more. He talked about future LFASS payments but failed to mention the £10 million of LFASS payments that are outstanding from this year.

Richard Lochhead made the pertinent point that we have to listen to the reasons why so many sections of our rural economy voted to leave the EU. We have to look at the CAP system. As my colleague Peter Chapman said, there is the potential to design a scheme that rewards farmers rather than impoverishes them.

The Scottish Government has a cheek to come to the chamber and call a debate on the rural economy post-Brexit when it has failed our farmers so dismally pre-Brexit for the past nine years. Members should not just take my word for it. Let us look at the facts. We have a common agricultural policy IT system that, so far, has gone 160 per cent over budget. CAP payments have been months late and full payments are yet to be received. Almost half of Scottish farmers are failing to make enough money to pay themselves the minimum wage. Farm business income is at its lowest levels in six years. The Scottish Government took 18 months to fill the position of chief scientific adviser. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 undermines property rights.

There is no doubt that we are in uncharted waters. However, we should remember that we are debating something that has not happened yet. The negotiations have not started yet and we do not know which words will form the act that repeals, retains or reinvents the many thousands of laws, rules and regulations with which the EU governs.

Stewart Stevenson: Given the indication that the process will all operate via the royal prerogative, is the member announcing that the Westminster Parliament will have a debate and a say on what happens with Brexit?

Jamie Greene: The Westminster Government is doing the right thing by exploring all options, and

all options will be considered. That is why I said that laws may be repealed, retained or reinvented. That is the right thing to do in the situation.

We have no crystal ball today. The purpose of a debate such as this should be to lay ideas on the table. If the Scottish Government seriously wishes to have a positive debate about the future of rural Scotland, I applaud it. However, if its purpose is to engineer a scenario whereby it decides that independence is the only and the inevitable solution, I fear that it is completely missing the point of any upside that Brexit might present. The underlying tone of the Government's motion is not open to idea sharing and, given that 38 per cent of Scots voted to leave the EU, it is not representative of Scotland or accepting of the democratic will of the people of the UK.

Fergus Ewing: May I ask one simple question? Do the Scottish Tories believe that EU citizens who live and work in Scotland are welcome here, should continue to be welcome here and should be permitted to stay here?

Jamie Greene: I have not heard anyone say that people who are in Scotland are required to leave. No one has said that. Have members heard anyone say that? People who have come to make Scotland their home make a valuable contribution to Scotland, and I welcome that.

Emma Harper talked about Tory Brexit. We have heard that phrase used a lot in the past hour or so. She might be surprised to learn that, the last time I checked, there were not 17.4 million Tory voters in the UK. Indeed, polls suggest that about a third of SNP voters backed the leave campaign. Are they now Tories, too?

Instead of wagging a finger at Westminster, we—the Scottish Conservatives—have set up our advisory group to look at the risks and opportunities of Brexit in a frank and informed discussion. It counts among its membership the expertise of people such as Gavin Hewitt, the former chief executive of the Scotch Whisky Association, and Sir Iain McMillan, the former director of CBI Scotland.

Much has been said today about fisheries. Let us remind ourselves of the SFF's three key asks. They are that Brexit should provide the power to establish a more effective and reactive fisheries management system in our waters; that there should be fairer and more appropriate shares of catching opportunities for the industry in our waters; and that opportunities should be identified that include the freedom to explore new markets for seafood.

Mr Stevenson raised some valid points. Our two Governments need to have a complex discussion about the future of fishing in the UK to get a deal

that works for fishermen on both sides of the border.

The rural economy is about much more than agriculture. It is about connectivity in all its forms: roads, rail, ferries and internet access. Rhoda Grant made an important point about rural broadband. It is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

The rural economy is also about how we manage our land, environment, biodiversity, energy, uplands and flood prevention. Mike Rumbles is right. Where is the vision for that? Where is the planning on Brexit going on in the Scottish Government?

Unlike the Scottish Government, we do not want Brexit to fail; instead, we have come to the debate with ideas on the rural economy. The Government's motion fails to take responsibility for its actions over the past nine years in government.

Unlike the Scottish Government, we have ideas on the rural economy. Let me share some of them. We want planning exemptions to be given to allow retiring farmers or new entrants to build a home on agricultural land; the Scottish land fund to be opened to long leases; an additional £5 million every year to be invested in the community broadband Scotland scheme; a safe expansion of aquaculture to be supported; and new national parks to be established.

Our amendment respects the UK's democratic result. It is time that the Scottish Government got on with making a success of that result for the whole of rural Scotland.

16:47

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell): I thank at least some members for their contributions.

As I made clear in the debate last week, the Government's explicit priority is to protect Scotland's relationship with and place in the European Union with all its economic and social benefits. The purpose of these debates is to get ideas and thinking about how we can take that issue forward. That is one of the reasons why I intend to contribute to them all.

I say to Jamie Greene that those ideas have to be about things that require Brexit to happen. Not one of the things that he listed requires Brexit to happen. That is rather revealing about the nature of the Tories' contributions. I will come back to the Tory myths later.

I cannot think of another portfolio that is more heavily entwined with the EU than this one—the rural economy and connectivity—whether we are talking about farming, forestry, fisheries or food.

EU membership delivers significant economic and social benefits to Scotland's rural and coastal communities. I know that because I represent one of the most rural of those communities.

Scotland's leaving the EU as a result of the referendum will put at risk rural jobs, investments, exports, businesses, projects and services. A succession of Tory spokespeople predicted that during the referendum campaign.

The rural economy is crucial to driving forward the economy as a whole, and the EU's role in rural communities is deep rooted and mutually beneficial. We have known that for the entire 40 years that we have been members of the EU. Most important, while supporting Fergus Ewing earlier, I was struck by the fact that we knew that at a crucial time in our rural history. In 1992, after years of effort, Madame Ecosse—Fergus Ewing's mother, Winnie Ewing—secured objective 1 status for the Highlands and Islands. In five years, between 1994 and 1999, £241 million went to the Highlands and Islands. The present-day value of that is almost £1 billion. She knew that that investment was crucial for the future of rural Scotland, just as MEPs after her knew that and as MSPs here know that.

It seems very strange that the Tories now take a very different and very destructive position. Objective 1 used facts to drive forward vision. This afternoon, the Tories have used myths to hide their lack of vision. [*Interruption.*] They may laugh, but I will give them four reasons why that is so. The first myth is that farming is in some sense in crisis—it is a disaster—because of this Government's actions. That is not true. Of course, there are always problems in farming and in the rural economy, but there has been steady progress in those areas since this Government came to power.

The second myth is that fishing would be guaranteed prosperity by Brexit. No. The people who regarded fishing as expendable throughout the whole process of EU negotiations were the Tories. Now the fishing community will see that it will again be regarded as expendable by the Tories.

The third myth is that the Tories speak for rural Scotland. I wonder whether they have looked at the opinion polls lately. The SNP is at 50 per cent; the Tories are at 21 per cent, which is a lower rating than Margaret Thatcher had in Scotland.

The final myth is that Brexit is full of promise. Where is the beef? Where is the evidence? Where are the facts? It is shocking that, instead of working with rural communities to consider and address the issues, they want to bluff and bluster in the Micawber-like hope that something will turn up, ignoring the damage that is being done now.

The right approach—the approach that was urged on me by the Tories when I took this post—was to make a practical, careful consideration of the facts. Here are some facts. The loss of non-guaranteed funds—CAP pillar 2 funds of £320 million, EMFF funds of £58 million and structural funds of £400 million—would amount to £778 million.

Dean Lockhart: Does Mr Russell not see the irony of the SNP expressing grave concern about leaving a union with Europe that supports Scotland to the tune of millions of pounds while campaigning to leave the union with the rest of the UK that supports Scotland to the tune of £15 billion?

Michael Russell: I disagree with the latter part of the member's premise, so there will be no meeting of minds on that. I am happy to give him a lesson on constitutional theory, should he want one. The reality is that EU support for Scotland is crucial and, indeed, those people who argued against independence claimed that the only way in which we could stay in the EU was by voting no.

Peter Chapman: The minister has just said that the EU is crucial to Scotland's wellbeing. Does he recognise that being part of the UK is also crucial to Scotland's wellbeing? We have a £1,600 bonus per person because we are part of the UK.

Michael Russell: I do not recognise that bonus. I am open and inclusive. I want to make sure that we deal and trade with the whole world; I want to deal and trade with the UK and Europe. I do not want to be cut off from Europe, which is exactly what the Tories are telling us to be.

The Tories could be part of the careful consideration of alternatives, looking at possible solutions and making sure that we understand what is taking place. However, for the third debate in a row, they have walked away from doing that. I hope that, before we get to next week's debate, they will begin to think about how they can contribute ideas to it, rather than simply being slavishly loyal to their masters in London who do not know where they are going or what is happening.

I want to comment on a couple of important matters that have been raised in the debate. Lewis Macdonald asked for specific responses. He made some interesting and vital points about EEA countries outside of CAP and CFP. It is not impossible to do that, of course, but the reality is that we need the four freedoms in order, for example, to staff a whole range of activities within our rural sector, so we are not in precisely the same position as those countries. However, it is worth having that debate. That is what these debates are about; bringing ideas to the table and discussing them is very important.

Equally, pillar 2 funding is vital for some of our rural development. If we cannot have that funding then we will lack an important component in what we are trying to do.

Lewis Macdonald: Given the minister's comments about the options that might lie before us, when he is talking to UK ministers about continued access to the single market, if not the model of European economic area, what is he putting on the table to discuss?

Michael Russell: There is no table, so I am not putting anything on it to discuss. The discussions—the negotiations—have not yet started. *[Interruption.]* The Tories are laughing at that. They could encourage their colleagues in London to start the discussions tomorrow. I am ready, but they do not appear to be.

The reality is that when we have that discussion there will, of course, be issues to put on the table. Those have to include the type of issues that the member raises.

There were other important speeches in the debate. I thought that Gail Ross's speech struck home—it certainly did so with me, because I represent the constituency in which the Scottish Association for Marine Science is based, and SAMS faces a cut of more than 30 per cent in its research income. The reality is that in rural and Highland Scotland jobs such as SAMS provides are vital, and for them to be cut is a real problem.

I would like to mention a number of other speeches, but I do not have time to do so. However, I will mention Dean Lockhart's speech, because Mr Lockhart kept talking about issues to do with food. He said that there has been no assessment of food policy and that food policy is a disaster. When he was challenged on that, he said that food policy is a real disaster, but he could not explain why.

Here are some facts on food policy. Turnover is up 24 per cent, at £14 billion—and that is since 2008, the year that Mr Lockhart mentioned. Exports are up 39 per cent and are valued at £5 billion. The sector is growing at twice the rate of growth of the UK sector. Retail sales of Scottish food and drink brands are up 38 per cent. There has been £4.8 million from the public sector to support the food and drink export plan, and funding of £47 million for 170 projects through our food processing grants scheme. Mr Lockhart could have looked all those things up—

Dean Lockhart: Will the minister give way?

Michael Russell: No. I have more. Mr Kelly raised interesting points on food and drink, which Mr Lockhart did not raise. The food sector is very concerned about the lack of certainty from the UK Government. It is estimated that 30 per cent of the

sector's workforce are EU nationals, and the sector is concerned about not just the current workforce but future immigration policy. Mr Lockhart could have looked that up, as well.

Mr Whittle could have looked up a few things about food, too. Since 2007, there has been a 41 per cent increase in Scottish produce being served across the public sector. More than 70 per cent of suppliers are Scottish. Since 2013, there has been a 200 per cent rise in the amount of Scottish beef that is served in schools, and there was a manifesto commitment from the SNP to do more—the manifesto is readily available.

Those are just some facts that could have contributed to this debate, but alas, although even Mike Rumbles offered some facts—I disagreed with them, but at least there was an effort to contribute some—and members on the Labour benches offered facts, there were no facts at all from the Tory benches.

I make a genuine appeal to the Tories as they consider the issue. If we are serious about the prospects for Scotland, as the Tory front bench wants us to be, and if we want to encourage Scottish businesses and industries to do well, the first thing that we must do is go out and look for the facts.

Brian Whittle: I want to let the minister know that I spent the whole summer on freedom of information requests across the education system and hospital trusts, and the facts that I put on the table are absolutely accurate. Just because the minister stands there and tells me that he has facts does not make them true.

Michael Russell: The Tories do not have the facts, but never mind. The reality is that they do not seem to like facts that go against their preconceived notions. They do not seem to like facts that show that Scottish Government policy is working well. Mr Whittle should not be so selective with his facts. He should spend less time on FOI and more time trying to find out the truth. *[Interruption.]*

I want every member of this Parliament to try to contribute to the case that we have to build in Scotland. We have a hard job to do to build that case, and in debate after debate in this chamber we are trying to open up and explore the issues that we will need to take into negotiations. We would benefit from the Tory party coming to the table to offer some facts and some thoughts; we will not benefit from bluff and bluster and the Micawber-like hope that something will turn up—

Dean Lockhart rose—

Michael Russell: Not even Mr Lockhart is going to turn up on this occasion.

That is not the basis for policy. It is the basis for defending the people who got us into this mess in the first place—the Tories' colleagues in London. The Tories made this mess, and the Tories should help us to clear it up. So far, they are not even trying.

Standing Orders Rule Changes (Mandatory Committee Remits)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-01645, in the name of Clare Adamson, on standing orders rule changes in relation to mandatory committee remits.

16:59

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee is proposing a set of rule changes that relate to mandatory committee remits.

On 13 June this year, the Presiding Officer wrote to the committee on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau about the establishment of committees. The Parliamentary Bureau expressed its wish to establish a committee structure with

“remits reflecting Cabinet Secretary portfolios”.

It stated that it was

“committed to the subject matter covered by the current remits of the mandatory committees, as set out in Standing Orders”,

but that it wished the remits of a number of them to be expanded. It proposed that the remit of the Finance Committee should be expanded to include constitutional matters; that the remit of the European and External Relations Committee should be expanded to include culture and tourism; that the remit of the Public Audit Committee should be expanded to include post-legislative scrutiny; and that the remit of the Equal Opportunities Committee should be expanded to include human rights. The remits of other mandatory committees would remain unchanged.

The SPPA Committee has proposed rule changes that will allow the Parliament, on a motion of the Parliamentary Bureau, to make those changes. In response to a request from the Equal Opportunities Committee, we also propose that its name be changed to “Equalities and Human Rights Committee”.

Finally, we propose an extension to the remit of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee in order to allow it to play a role in the implementation of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016 and to ensure that the Parliament’s statutory responsibilities under that act are met.

I am pleased to move,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee’s 3rd Report 2016 (Session 5), *Standing Order Rule Changes - Mandatory committee remits* (SP Paper 12), and agrees that the

changes to Standing Orders set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 28 September 2016.

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

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Peter Chapman is successful, the amendment in the name of Rhoda Grant will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-01669.2, in the name of Peter Chapman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-01669, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on securing the interests of Scotland's rural economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)

Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 31, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-01669.1, in the name of Rhoda Grant, which seeks to amend motion S5M-01669, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on securing the interests of Scotland's rural economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 35, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-01669, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on securing the interests of Scotland's rural economy, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 35, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the best way to protect rural interests is by protecting Scotland's place in Europe, maintaining membership of the single market, and access to the free movement of labour; welcomes that the Scottish Ministers will pass on in full the EU funding guaranteed by the UK Government so far; notes that membership of the EU delivers significant economic and social benefits to Scotland's rural economy, worth billions between 2014 and 2020 and is poised to provide significant funding towards the further roll-out of high-speed broadband to Scotland; resolves to do all it can to secure the jobs, incomes, businesses, investment and development dependent on these benefits, and, therefore, calls on the UK Government to guarantee all EU funding due to Scotland and to ensure that Scotland has a role in decision-making, as well as full involvement in all UK negotiations, including those on fisheries management.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-01645, in the name of Clare Adamson, on standing order rule changes, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 3rd Report 2016 (Session 5), *Standing Order Rule Changes - Mandatory committee remits* (SP Paper 12), and agrees that the changes to Standing Orders set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 28 September 2016.

Feminine Hygiene Products

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S5M-01493, in the name of Monica Lennon, on feminine hygiene products. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I call Monica Lennon to open the debate.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the burden of the cost of feminine hygiene products on women and girls in the Central Scotland region and throughout Scotland; further notes that the average woman uses around 12,000 feminine hygiene products in their lifetime; recognises that these products are a necessity to maintaining good health; considers that some women and girls may be unable to buy vital feminine hygiene products due to the cost; commends charities such as Scottish Women's Aid, The Trussell Trust and Barnardo's for the great work they are doing to provide feminine hygiene products free of charge to women and girls who struggle to pay for them, and recognises the work being done internationally on the issue of menstrual equity, for example in New York City, where feminine hygiene products are now free in schools, prisons and homeless shelters.

17:06

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead this discussion on access to feminine hygiene products in Scotland. I say "discussion" because I am encouraged by the potential for consensus that I sense is building around the issue, which is evidenced by the cross-party support for the motion. I hope that the debate will help to raise awareness of the financial and health inequalities that are linked to menstruation.

The poverty that austerity creates has a disproportionate impact on women, and period poverty is a secret but real occurrence of shame and embarrassment for women and girls. This distressing gendered inequality must be confronted, and I am optimistic that women and girls throughout Scotland will be able to look to their Scottish Parliament tonight and know that this generation of MSPs will rise to the challenge.

To remain healthy and safe during menstruation, women and girls need adequate access to tampons, sanitary towels and related products, but it is an uncomfortable truth that not every woman and girl in Scotland can afford to buy essential feminine hygiene products when they need them. My discussions with organisations such as Barnardo's Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and the Trussell Trust confirm that. Just today, a former food bank manager in Dundee told me the heartbreaking story of a young woman who declined the offer of sanitary products because she had not had a period in seven months due to

lack of food and malnourishment. Poverty is wreaking havoc with women's bodies.

I have been having private conversations with volunteers at food banks and with teachers in communities across Lanarkshire and Falkirk in the Central Scotland region that I represent. Their stories have convinced me that this is a national issue and one that a decent and fair-minded Scottish society cannot ignore. I have also been following with interest the growing menstrual equity movement across the globe. My feminist heart did a little dance when New York City Council voted 49 to 0 to approve a measure to give women and girls in schools, prisons and homeless shelters access to feminine hygiene products free of charge. After a successful pilot in Queens and the Bronx that brought free pads and tampons to students in 25 public high schools, the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, posted a Facebook video in which he said:

"Girls shouldn't have to miss class because of their period."

I hope that we can all endorse that message.

Why are we having this debate today? At the beginning of the summer, I asked the Scottish Government some questions. I asked what recent action it had taken to assess the affordability of feminine hygiene products and the cost of periods to women and girls. I also asked whether it considered feminine hygiene to be a health issue and what action it was taking to tackle the stigma around periods. Last month, in her reply, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Shona Robison, advised that no specific work had been done to examine the issue.

I found the reply in full rather disappointing on a number of counts: first, that no consideration was being given to the lived experience of women and girls in poverty in relation to menstruation; secondly, that the link between feminine hygiene, poverty and health was dismissed; and thirdly, that the Scottish Government did not think there was any particular stigma around periods in Scotland. The fourth, and perhaps most concerning, part of the reply was the suggestion that food banks were the solution for women and girls in need of sanitary products.

I pay tribute to Daniel Sanderson, political reporter at *The Herald*, not just for paying attention to parliamentary questions but for taking an interest and reporting the issue in a way that has allowed the debate to open up. In particular, I am grateful to the team at Engender and to Nicki Wray at Barnardo's Scotland for speaking out about the need for the Scottish Government to undertake further work, build an evidence base and take appropriate action.

I am grateful, too, to the Minister for Public Health and Sport, Aileen Campbell, for her recent reply in the chamber when she committed to listen to women's organisations and look into the issues that have been raised. Women and girls in Scotland need the Scottish Government to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the accessibility and affordability of feminine hygiene products. I hope that we can get a firm commitment on that.

I am grateful to members across the chamber, including Gail Ross, Gillian Martin and Elaine Smith, who have been particularly encouraging, and to Councillor Lesley McDonald in South Lanarkshire for assisting me with local fact-finding visits. In all our communities, women are helping women daily. I recognise the efforts made by groups, including women for independence, to collect donations of sanitary products.

Debates about what is now termed "menstrual equity" are not new. Back in 1986, Gloria Steinem wrote that, if men got periods, they

"would brag about how long and how much";

boys would talk about their menstruation as the beginning of their manhood, with "Gifts" and "religious ceremonies"; and

"Sanitary supplies would be federally funded and free."

Light-hearted period jokes aside, there is a matter of serious principle here. Menstrual care is healthcare. Women's rights are human rights.

I finish with three questions. First, what use is a free prescription for period pain relief if low pay and insecure zero-hour contracts are forcing menstruating women to stuff their pants with toilet paper? Secondly, what difference will the attainment challenge make to a girl sitting in class with the embarrassment of a saturated sanitary towel between her legs? Finally, should we really say "Try a foodbank" to a mother and her daughters fleeing domestic violence, when there is no guarantee whatsoever that the donation pile will include the tampons and towels that they urgently need?

It has been a privilege to open the debate and I look forward to the Scottish Government—and indeed the entire Scottish Parliament—proving that we are ready and willing to tackle this gendered inequality, so that terms such as "on the rag" are banished to the history books.

17:13

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

What kind of societal issue is access to period products? It is not just a single issue. It is, of course, a poverty issue. Households with low incomes will prioritise how they spend what little money they have. Top of that priority list will be

food, then rent, then heat and power. Women managing a household for which getting food on the table is a struggle every week simply will not have the money to spend on period products. Targeted provision for women on low incomes could be an option. At the extreme end of poverty, we have women on the streets without homes who, every month, must find a way to cope with the demeaning and distressing situation of bleeding for five days with no access to their own bathroom, much less towels and tampons.

It is also an attainment issue. Due to lack of access to period products, young women from low-income families are often forced to miss school. If we do the arithmetic, a young woman with no access to period products may stay at home until her period is over, which could be around five days a month. Added up, that could lead to a young woman with no access to tampons or pads missing a quarter of her schooling. Targeted school provision could also be an option. Monica Lennon mentioned the situation in New York, which made my heart sing, too.

It is also a women's health issue. When access to period products is limited, women may not change their tampons or pads as often as is safe. Toxic shock and sepsis are more likely to happen to women on low incomes, who do not have the luxury of changing tampons every couple of hours, as is recommended.

It can also be a control and abuse issue. Often women who are subjected to domestic abuse or coercive control by their partner are denied access to anything that is simply for their own use. I was shocked to discover that often-unspoken issue when I met the Cyrenians in Aberdeen, who provide support for people from a range of challenging circumstances. Their domestic abuse support officer told me that many women do not have access to period products because their partner stands between them and such access through a range of abusive behaviours, such as prohibiting their purchase or use, rationing their availability to control their partner's movement, giving access to a range of hygiene products only in exchange for sex, or simply keeping a woman from accessing her own money so that purchasing the products is impossible. Not all women who cannot buy tampons come from low-income homes.

An ideal solution would be to have open and universal access, but we must be realistic about what our national health service can afford to do in a situation where we have limited fiscal control and a set budget with significant demands on it. In an ideal world, we would have a mechanism such as a card that is available to all women to use at their discretion to access period products should

they need them, similar to the C card, which gives access to free condoms.

At the SNP national council in May, we passed a motion to look into the possibility of such a mechanism. I believe that there is merit in piloting such a scheme to investigate how it could work, what the take-up would be and what the associated costs would be. Could we see a reduction in admissions to hospital, more girls in deprived areas accessing their right to education and women having more control over their health and their lives? Some creative thinking around the issue could unlock the answers.

17:17

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): As the equalities spokesperson for the Scottish Conservatives, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the topic.

We are all familiar with the debate surrounding the much-opposed tampon tax this year and last, and I was pleased to see the United Kingdom Government acting decisively to rid sanitary products of their 5 per cent VAT rate. In March, UK Government leaders spurred on the debate that led to all 28 European Union leaders agreeing that individual states should have the option of removing tax from sanitary products.

Although some have accused the Government of going silent on the issue, I would like to reiterate that only this summer, minister David Gauke said during a Treasury Committee meeting in July that the Government anticipated the zero rate being in place by 1 April next year, even if it was not yet formally legislated for. In the meantime, the £15 million revenue that is raised by the tax is still being transferred to women's charities.

We are all in agreement that sanitary products are a necessity. As a starting point, I would like to back the motion to make feminine hygiene products more accessible to the women and families who struggle to afford them, particularly when we consider that contraception is already provided free of charge.

When women and girls lack access to affordable and hygienic products they can resort to using old rags, cloths or other unhygienic materials, as Monica Lennon said. In some cases, lack of access can result in girls missing school and women avoiding their workplaces. In other cases, women resort to using the same item for a prolonged period of time, which increases their chances of developing the potentially fatal toxic shock syndrome.

I was pleased to see the efforts of constituents in my region to highlight the issue, particularly for homeless women. Last year, a group of students

from the University of Glasgow launched their own campaign group, called the homeless period, which advocates better access to sanitary products for homeless women. At Christmas time, the Glasgow university red alert society collected hundreds of essential toiletries, including such products, to donate to a homeless charity.

Nationally, I thank Scottish Women's Aid, the Trussell Trust and Barnardo's Scotland for their efforts—which Monica Lennon highlighted—in raising awareness of the issue. I support the sentiment of Monica Lennon's motion in seeking to make feminine hygiene products accessible to those who cannot afford them.

17:20

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I congratulate Monica Lennon on bringing the debate to the chamber. The issue is important for all women, and especially those who have medical conditions or are in financial hardship. That was brought home to me a couple of weeks ago when Kezia Dugdale was collecting for Edinburgh Women's Aid. She had a box in her office and she was encouraging us all to make contributions. What the organisation really needed for the women whom it was serving was toiletries and sanitary products. It was quite sad that we were collecting for those things and that they were not supplied as a very basic necessity for those women.

When people do not have the financial means to afford very basic supplies, that is a problem throughout Scotland. However, it is a bigger problem in rural Scotland because everything costs much more in the small shops that supply those areas. People who are in financial hardship cannot travel to the big towns to access cheaper products, and they sometimes pay twice as much in a rural shop as they would in a town. Bearing in mind the fact that women may use 12,000 of those products over a lifetime, that adds a huge burden on those who live in rural areas. They also have fewer opportunities to access organisations such as the Trussell Trust, whose work in supplying such products to women was highlighted by Monica Lennon. That work will provide a lifeline for some women, but those organisations do not operate as much in rural areas, so we need to look at other ways of addressing the issue.

As other members mentioned, lack of access to such products can be a health risk due to conditions such as toxic shock syndrome. It is important that we encourage people to change products as often as possible, because otherwise they can present a real health risk.

We cannot be prescriptive about the types of product that are used, because everybody has

different needs. Health conditions such as polycystic ovaries and fibroids can lead to a much greater need for various products, as they can make periods very long and heavy and often mean that women need to use a lot more products than would normally be used in a month.

The motion mentions the work that is being done in New York, and we all applaud the city's action in supplying free sanitary products in schools, prisons and homeless shelters. As other members have mentioned, contraceptive supplies are free on the NHS from general practitioners and other health providers, which indicates that we see contraception as an essential intervention. The same is true for incontinence supplies, which are provided by community nurses free of charge to those who need them. Surely we should look at sanitary products in exactly the same way—it is about dignity and the right to hygiene and health.

Perhaps we can look at some way of getting those products out to people, either through the health service or in other ways. People may complain that it is not a health issue, and someone may not access their community nurse or GP simply because they need those products. Perhaps we could look at whether people on benefits or those who have other needs could apply once for a voucher or a card to give them supplies; they could perhaps use it in shops. People such as health visitors and family nurses have access to young families and could introduce them to that kind of scheme.

My preparation for the debate brought to mind a report that I heard about last week, which focused on women taking time off work because of menstrual problems such as pre-menstrual tension and pain. The report highlighted the fact that women were embarrassed to tell their employer the real cause of their absence, because they were pretty sure that they would not get a fair hearing—employers would say that they should be pitching up and doing their work and that it was only an excuse. It really is an equality issue for women, as they should be able to take time off if they are not well and are in pain and discomfort. We need to ensure that access to very basic products is a human right, and a right to dignity, which should be met with understanding and care. We should do something about the issue to ensure that people have access to those products.

17:24

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing this important subject before Parliament and I pay tribute to members for their excellent speeches.

I welcome the chance to try to dispel the stigma that exists in society around periods and feminine

hygiene products. For many women, feminine hygiene products such as tampons, pads and panty liners are thrown in with the weekly shop and their price is not taken into consideration. However, as women, we have no choice. Those items are as essential as the food in our trolley and, although I applaud marathon runner Kiran Gandhi for bringing the issue into focus when she “free-bled” during the London Marathon, that was to make a statement and I do not think that it would be entirely appropriate in everyday life.

I agree with Monica Lennon's motion when it says that sanitary products should be freely available for women in shelters, schools and prisons. We should be looking at ways in which that can be done.

As Rhoda Grant said, only last week Kezia Dugdale did a great thing and collected toiletries for Edinburgh Women's Aid after it made a plea for supplies. However, I wonder how many packs of tampons and pads would have been donated if the plea did not specify toiletries and sanitary products. Often, the term “toiletries” conjures up pictures of toothpaste, shampoo and deodorants.

Because menstruation is rarely talked about, it can easily be forgotten about and only ever mentioned in jest when a woman seems to be on edge—“Yeah, it must be that time of the month”.

There is another issue. Annie Wells mentioned it and we need to talk about it. Women's feminine hygiene products are still taxed at 5 per cent by Westminster. The tax rate was dropped from 17.5 per cent only in 2001; it had been at the standard rate since 1973.

In *The Independent* last year, Natasha Preskey said:

“There's nothing luxurious about my periods, so why is the Government taxing tampons as if there is?”

It is essentially a tax on having a uterus. There has rightly been outrage that sanitary products have been subject to VAT, even at 5 per cent, as luxuries and so not a zero-rated essential like Jaffa cakes, flapjacks and nappies, among other things.

The SNP's 2015 general election manifesto said that we would support the abolition of VAT on sanitary products. No other manifesto contained that commitment and we have led opposition to the tampon tax at Westminster. In his autumn statement last year, Mr Osborne announced that the £15 million that is raised each year from the tampon tax would, in future, be used to support women's charities and services until the EU was persuaded to allow the UK to scrap the VAT on sanitary items. More than 300,000 people signed a petition to call for an end to the unfair charge.

Alison Thewliss, the MP for Glasgow Central, tabled an amendment to the Finance Bill, calling on the Westminster Government to introduce zero-rating on tampons and sanitary towels, and the SNP supported a Labour amendment that did the same. Although the amendment did not pass, changes in EU policy have been agreed and changes to the tampon tax should be reflected in the autumn statement. I welcome Annie Wells telling the chamber today that that is to be so.

The SNP has long called for the abolition of the unfair tampon tax and, after five years of inaction from the Tory Government, George Osborne set out when we can expect the VAT rules to be changed. Unlike the UK Government, whose austerity has hit women disproportionately, the Scottish Parliament is committed to the cause of gender equality.

I have said this before and I will say it again: sanitary products are not an optional luxury. They are an essential product for more than half the population. Women should not be made to pay over the odds for sanitary or feminine hygiene products that are a necessary part of life. I want us to be able to speak more freely about periods and menstruation, and not have to whisper, “It’s that time of the month” or make excuses to hide our sore tummies or make a joke about our mood swings. These things are real. It is not embarrassing, it should not be hidden; this is nature and none of us would be here without it.

17:29

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to contribute to the debate and, at the outset, I state that I also believe that feminine health products are not a luxury; they are very much a necessity. As such, I welcome the fact that, following discussions with the European Commission earlier this year, the UK Government will be able to reduce the existing 5 per cent VAT rate on those products to zero next year.

I congratulate all those involved in pushing for the removal of the so-called tampon tax. For centuries, we have lived in what was very much a man’s world. Men wrote the medical books, became doctors, and designed medical products and they often paid only cursory interest to the result of the regular cycle of women’s bodies. Women were left to improvise and use whatever material was readily at hand to make an attempt at maintaining hygiene and dignity.

The first mention of any feminine hygiene product occurred in an account of a 4th century AD Greek woman who was said to have hurled one of her used menstrual rags at an unwanted gentleman caller. The word “rags” was literal, as from earliest times old fabrics, animal skin, and

even moss were just some of the components that were used. Later, cotton pads became more common, but there was the issue of hygiene and often the inability to wash the pads caused many infections.

The later Victorian era saw the arrival of the first commercial products. Despite their increased effectiveness, few Victorian ladies were prepared to ask a shopkeeper, invariably a man, for the products, and of course cost was also a factor, even then.

It is ironic that out of the horrors of the first world war came products that would lead to major advances in the field of feminine hygiene. French nurses tending the wounded noticed the great ability of the Curad military bandages to absorb blood and started using them in place of their home-made menstrual rags.

The end of the war brought great changes for women; it brought the first rights to vote and women became more confident as the world entered the roaring twenties. Few women now felt any embarrassment at buying products that were essential to their health and wellbeing.

The interwar years brought the introduction of the product which the inventor, Dr Haas, named Tampax. Since then, that product and other tampons, towels and pads have been further developed and have become easier to use, better shaped and more absorbent. However, convenience has come at a price, not only to the environment—many of the components of the modern tampon or pad take just as long to degrade as disposable nappies—but to our purses.

I hope that this potted history of feminine hygiene products shows just how essential those products—in whatever form—have been throughout history. In the past—and sadly in many places even today—women have resorted to improvised and uncomfortable solutions, often risking their health and comfort as a result of the natural cycle of their bodies.

Victorian women were reluctant to purchase the early commercial products for fear of embarrassment. It is therefore good that the Scottish Parliament can discuss this matter openly, fully and without the slightest embarrassment. I congratulate Monica Lennon on lodging the motion.

17:32

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): A week or so ago, I responded to a question from Monica Lennon on the topic for the debate by saying:

"It is an unacceptable and uncomfortable truth that for some of the most vulnerable in our society, who are those most impacted by the United Kingdom Government's austerity programme, sanitary products can be unaffordable."—[*Official Report*, 15 September 2016; c 5.]

I remain of that opinion and I am grateful for the chance to join Monica Lennon in her members' business debate, as well as other members—including Gillian Martin, who has worked tirelessly on the issue—in considering what more can be done to tackle this gendered inequality. I am also grateful for the work of Engender, Barnardo's, the Trussell Trust and Scottish Women's Aid and their efforts to raise awareness of the issue.

The motion refers to recent legislative changes in New York city that have provided for feminine hygiene products to be supplied in schools, prisons and homeless shelters, particularly for women who may struggle to buy their own products. I know, too, that there has been discussion in Sydney in Australia about the free provision of menstrual products in public buildings such as libraries or in homeless shelters. I understand that the conversation in Sydney has been set in the context of facilities that are used most often by disadvantaged communities.

In all those examples, the unifying element is poverty. That is why the Scottish Government is doing what it can to mitigate the impact of austerity and it is why we are responding to the need to tackle poverty and inequality with action. That was the clear message from the public during our fairer Scotland conversation, which involved more than 7,000 people across the country. As a result, ministers will publish a fairer Scotland action plan later this year. We want to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and ensure that progress on it equates to nobody in Scotland struggling to afford daily essentials, which for women include sanitary products.

Monica Lennon's story about a woman who had not had a period for seven months because of a lack of food is one that we simply should not hear in 2016—it should be consigned to history, along with the Victorian anecdotes that we heard from Alison Harris.

As Gail Ross and others pointed out, sanitary products are not a luxury and they simply should never have been taxed. That is why the Scottish National Party highlighted and pledged action on VAT on sanitary products in our manifesto in 2015. As Gail Ross pointed out, we were the only party to do so. I am proud that the SNP has championed the case for removing the unfair and discriminatory VAT that is levied on sanitary products in the UK. I pay tribute to my friend and colleague Alison Thewliss for her work and efforts.

Women in Scotland will pay less for sanitary products once the zero rate of VAT takes effect. It

is important that the UK Government delivers on its promise to introduce the necessary legislation so that the zero rate of VAT can take effect. It is also important that shops and businesses pass on the reduction in tax to the women who buy the products.

When the change arrives, it will have been a long time coming and will finally right a huge wrong. However, reducing the rate of tax is not all that needs to happen. We need to understand the level of unmet need in Scotland and to have a clearer understanding of the problem that we are trying to solve. I am grateful to all members for their contributions, in which they explored the wider issues of period pain and the consequences of toxic shock syndrome and sepsis if sanitary products are not changed often enough.

Monica Lennon: In a Scottish Government reply of 9 August, we were told:

"Feminine hygiene is not a health issue."—[*Written Answers*, 9 August 2016; S5W-01459.]

Has the Government had time to reflect on that and has that view changed?

Aileen Campbell: As I said in my response to the member's question on the issue last week, I and a host of other ministers are interested in the issue, because it transcends narrow portfolio boundaries. That is not a weakness; it is a strength, because we should look at the issue in the round, whether that involves my colleague Jeane Freeman, with the social security brief, or others who have an interest in equalities issues.

An aspect of the debate in New York, which Monica Lennon and Gillian Martin mentioned, was that young girls sometimes feel embarrassed if they have to ask someone for sanitary products during the school day. I know that most schools in Scotland provide sanitary products in some way, either through dispensers in toilets or through staff. No girl who needs access to products while in school should feel embarrassed, stigmatised or unsure of how to access them. Having a period should not be a barrier to a girl fulfilling her educational potential, as Gillian Martin said.

The New York legislation also provides for sanitary products in prisons. I understand that, in the past, some women in prison in New York had to buy products with their own money. I reassure members that prisons in Scotland are already legally required to provide sanitary products for free to women who are in custody. I mention that because we are not going from a standing start; we have made progress on some of the issues.

However, we need to be cognisant of additional areas, as Monica Lennon, Gillian Martin and Annie Wells made clear. We need a greater understanding of the lack of access to sanitary

products for women who face and experience domestic abuse and for those who experience homelessness. Across the Government, we need to engage on those issues with the third sector and with those who have a deeper understanding of the problems that persist across the country.

Rhoda Grant made an excellent contribution about the costs for women in rural and remote areas. The products are more costly in smaller shops, and women also need to find the money to pay for transport to get to the shops in the first place.

I am grateful to Monica Lennon for raising the topic for discussion. I remain keen to explore what more can be done to tackle this gendered inequality, within the limitations of the current settlement. I am motivated by my role as Minister for Public Health and Sport and as a woman, united with the other female speakers this evening, to do what I can to improve the lives of girls and women in our country and ensure that, in 2016, they can live with dignity.

Meeting closed at 17:39.

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