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Scottish Parliament

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. Our first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is the Rev Bob Mallinson, from Menzieshill in Lochee.

The Rev Bob Mallinson (Menzieshill Parish Church, Dundee): I begin this reflection by thanking the Presiding Officer for the opportunity to lead.

On Easter Sunday in 2001, I had an encounter that completely transformed and changed the course of my life. That encounter was with Jesus Christ. It was not a religious encounter but an encounter with the living God. Having battled with alcohol and drug addiction on and off for about 10 years, in what can only be described as a very bleak and dark period of my life, I found in Jesus Christ a sense of hope in life.

The reason I tell you this today is because I believe in the role of the church. When I refer to the church, I am not talking about organised institutional religion; I am talking about the community of those who find their lives embedded in the way, the truth and the life of Jesus Christ.

The role of the church is not to police our society or to govern through religious demands. The role of the church, I believe, is to make Jesus Christ known in our society and to facilitate people in Scotland encountering that same transformative love of God that I experienced myself, so that our society will experience hope and life in all its fullness.

Despite the decline in organised institutional religion, the church has an extremely important role to play in Scotland now and for the years to come. So many people are longing for answers, searching for hope and looking for meaning and purpose in life. Secularism and consumerism, with all their frills and feelgoods, will continue to leave people feeling empty as they simply look for the next quick fix or feelgood that passes as quickly as it came. That is a void that I believe only Christ can fill.

You see, the love and hope of God in Jesus Christ does not pass. It does not perish. It is not at peril from the latest trends or fashions in our society. The Bible tells us that, while many things will pass, faith, hope and love will remain. Those

things are to be found in Christ, the one who transforms, restores and makes all things new.

Thank you very much, and bless you.

Topical Question Time

14:03

Police Scotland (Estate Review)

1. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the reported Police Scotland estate review and how it will ensure the outcome has no adverse impact on service delivery. (S5T-00181)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson): The Police Scotland estate strategy, which was approved by the Scottish Police Authority on 24 June 2015, sets out a framework that has providing a service to local communities at its core and seeks to remodel the police estate to make it fit for the policing needs of the future. It includes a strong emphasis on sharing facilities with other public services, where possible.

The review of the police estate presents opportunities to increase collaboration with partners, share premises and join up services to communities. There are already examples of collaboration: in Cupar, the division leases and occupies a facility shared with Fife Council; in Fort William, a new shared police and ambulance station was opened in 2014; and in Aberdeen, a joint police and national health service medical practice was opened two years ago in the Ferryhill area.

The Scottish Police Authority has made it clear that local police commanders will play a leading role in deciding whether changes to the police estate are compatible with maintaining an effective local policing service. Engagement will be undertaken by local policing teams to ensure that future decisions are built on local consultation with communities and partners.

Rona Mackay: What is the timescale for the review? What discussions are taking place between Police Scotland, other agencies and local authorities on the potential for sharing sites?

Michael Matheson: The review of the estate identified a number of police stations that, in the police's view, do not match the police's current requirements, which are subject to some form of consultation with communities, partners and staff. Consultation will be carried out by local police teams, to ensure that decisions are based on local needs in communities. The nature of the consultation will be determined at local level and will depend on local circumstances and the change that is being considered. Anyone who has an interest in or view on the management of the police estate should engage fully with Police Scotland. We expect a range of local interests to

be taken into account before firm proposals are made on individual stations.

Rona Mackay: I suspect that I am not alone in being concerned about how the news of a review and potential changes to local policing were made public. What lessons will Police Scotland take forward in communicating the review's process, considerations and outcomes?

Michael Matheson: As the member might be aware, Police Scotland is continuing work on its estate review and the approach has been very much led at local level. Local commanders, through their local policing teams, will be responsible for taking forward engagement, but much of that work is still at an early stage. I encourage all members who have an interest in the matter to engage with local commanders and to express their views.

Of course, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority reflect on their approach to matters, but I emphasise to members that work is at a very early stage. They will have every opportunity to engage with local commanders when local consultation starts.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I should let members know that there is a lot of interest in this issue.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary appreciate that because of the way in which the proposals were revealed to the public—through a freedom of information request rather than by the police or the Government—communities are concerned that local policing will suffer? When was the Scottish Government informed of the review and potential closure of 58 sites? What discussions, if any, has the Government had with Police Scotland on the matter?

Michael Matheson: As I just said, the process is still at a very early stage. Police Scotland's review of its estate is on-going and local commanders have identified 58 sites as part of the process. Engagement in the local communities that are affected has still to take place, because the police are considering how to take it forward at local level. The process is not being driven by the Scottish Police Authority at the centre; it is being taken forward by local commanders, through their local teams.

Engagement will start when Police Scotland, at local level, has determined what approach it wants to take. For example, in some of the 58 cases, Police Scotland might be looking at relocating to a shared facility with the local authority, health board or another part of the public sector. Some of that work is still being taken forward at local command level, and once it has been completed, the police will be in a position to engage with local

communities on the options. Final sign-off on the matter will be for the Scottish Police Authority.

A full engagement process will be taken forward when the police at local divisional level have arrived at the best approach for their area.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I note the minister's answers. All three police stations in my constituency—in Rutherglen, Cambuslang and Blantyre—are being considered as part of the review. What consultation will take place with the community in Rutherglen to ensure that policing in my constituency is not adversely affected?

Michael Matheson: As I mentioned, the consultation will be determined by local commanders within policing divisions. I would encourage Clare Haughey to engage with her local commander on the matters once the process is being taken forward locally.

The work is being progressed by local commanders to ensure that decisions on the issue are driven by local policing needs and the views of the local community. Where the building in question provides a service to a local community, for example, I would expect local commanders to engage with MSPs and other elected members to offer them the opportunity to engage in the process.

The process will be determined by local commanders when they are at the stage of starting that engagement and once they have developed their proposals for the local community and each individual command area.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): As you know, Presiding Officer, I had hoped to have debated today my topical question on the attacks on emergency service personnel, which would have given people in the chamber the opportunity to express our concerns about that reprehensible behaviour and to support the staff. I hope that I have been skilful enough to get the issue added to the *Official Report*.

The cabinet secretary mentioned a number of stations where organisations are sharing facilities. He did not mention Tomintoul in Moray, where the police and the fire and ambulance services have all been operating from the same facility for some time. What analysis has been done of shared premises and how successful they are? Are the communities still engaged with the respective services? How can that work be taken forward as we look towards 58 potential closures, which the Scottish Conservatives are worried will diminish local accountability?

Michael Matheson: I join the member in condemning those who attacked members of our emergency services at the weekend while they were working to protect and support our

communities. I am sure that all members in the chamber would wish to make it very clear that such behaviour is completely unacceptable. We need to ensure that we take all the robust measures necessary against individuals who have been involved in such offences.

The member made reference to the facility in Tomintoul, which was opened in April 2004. I could list a whole number of areas where, over recent years, we have seen an increasing number of joint facilities being developed.

Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have undertaken work to evaluate how they work in partnership. Some of that work demonstrates the greater confidence that communities have in the delivery of joined-up services locally.

The matter is about not just public perception, but the police being much more effective in tackling issues in their area. For example, if the member went to Livingston, he would see the police, the council and a whole range of other public services operating jointly on a single site in a single facility. The exchange of information and joint working among those agencies increase significantly as a result, too.

In my constituency, a station has been earmarked for potential closure, which has resulted in officers starting to work much more closely with the local community hub. One benefit of the housing department antisocial behaviour team working alongside the police, in the same building, is that they are working much more collectively and effectively.

There is clear evidence of the benefits that can come from joint working. As part of its overall estate strategy, Police Scotland is looking at making sure that there is greater collaboration and joint working with other parts of the public sector, where that is the right thing to do.

The Presiding Officer: I let the minister know that there are five more questions on the issue and I am minded to take them all, if possible.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The police service is more than buildings; personal contact is very important, particularly for community relations. Will the cabinet secretary ask Police Scotland to do a full community impact assessment of the changes in personal contact that have taken place in recent years? We have had, for example: a perceived reduction in the level of foot patrols, when there is an obvious opportunity for contact; counter closures, including reduced hours at some counters; and questions about the effectiveness of the 101 telephone system.

Michael Matheson: Police Scotland is undertaking a range of work to get local communities' views on how the police are responding to matters. The your view counts survey is part of the process that the police are using presently to get feedback from the community on how policing is delivered at a local level. Therefore, the police have in place a process to capture communities' views.

In recent times, one of the criticisms that members have often made of Police Scotland is about increasing centralisation of the organisation. There is a view that decisions are made at the top and the centre of the organisation rather than within local communities. In the estate review, local commanders on the ground will determine the best approach to deal with these issues in their communities. Those commanders are responsible for engaging with members of the public day in, day out, responding to local needs and concerns. The consultation process will not be predetermined; it will allow local commanders to determine the best approach within their local communities in order to capture the local communities' views.

I hope that members who, in the past, have called for a much more localised approach to decision making on issues relating to policing will welcome that approach. Local commanders will be central to decisions on these matters and to determining the best approach to the delivery of services in their local divisional areas.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am not sure that the left hand knows what the right hand is doing in this instance. The minister cited a co-location with the council services in Cupar, but he omitted to mention that Cupar sheriff court was closed only a few months later although it was supposed to be being co-located with the police as well. What can the minister say to reassure us that there is genuine consultation and partnership across the public sector to ensure that farces like that do not happen again?

Michael Matheson: Willie Rennie is one of those members who consistently complained about decisions in policing not being made at a local level, yet the very issue in the estates review that I have outlined will be determined at a local level. If he is concerned and has issues, he should engage with his local commander, with whom I presume that he already engages on policing matters. If any police stations in the member's constituency are being considered for a change of use or for closure, the matter will be determined through engagement with the local commander, who will look at the best way of continuing to deliver policing in that local area.

The review is not about taking police officers out of the local community; it is about ensuring that we

have a police estate that reflects the modern demands on the police service. We have a police estate that has largely evolved over the past 100 years. We also need to recognise that the model of policing has changed, that the public's expectation of the police service has changed and that the way in which the public engage with the police service has changed. It is right that a modern police service reflects on the present state and arrangement of its estate provision. The decision on the approach that will be taken at a local level will be made at a local level, with oversight by the Scottish Police Authority through the process that was agreed by the Parliament.

Given the comments that Willie Rennie has made in the past, I would have hoped that he would welcome the fact that local commanders will be central to determining these matters.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): It has been reported that three police stations in my constituency are going to close. Is the cabinet secretary aware that Letham police station ceased to be operational seven years ago and that Muirhead police station ceased to be manned 18 months ago? As the local MSP, I have secured agreement from the local commander that, if the closures go ahead, the police service will deliver monthly community policing surgeries in those locations to allow people to raise any non-urgent matters face to face—which will be, in effect, an improved provision. Is the cabinet secretary also aware that, far from ceasing to have a presence in Carnoustie, Police Scotland is planning to move to a town centre facility that it will share with Angus Council in a move that will sit alongside an increase in the number of officers covering the town?

Michael Matheson: The member makes an important point. Some of the police buildings that have been identified at this early stage by Police Scotland are either underoccupied or, in some cases, not occupied and used only on limited occasions. Members will be keen to ensure that the police service continues to provide the best possible service to local communities, but it is important that they understand the changing nature of the way in which the public are engaging with the police service. Their expectations of the police service have changed and we need to make sure that the police estate reflects that.

I would have thought that members would welcome greater collaboration and co-operation across different aspects of our public service. The member referred to one way in which that is happening in his constituency. Benefits can come from such a collaborative approach, through the sharing of information and co-operation that can take place between different aspects of our public service, and it is right that Police Scotland should

be given the space and opportunity to consider whether its existing estate is fit for purpose. Where there are better opportunities for collaboration and joint working, Police Scotland should take them, so that it continues to provide the best possible service to local communities throughout the country.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am interested to hear what the cabinet secretary says about local engagement. Just two weeks ago at a community council meeting in Dundee, a Police Scotland inspector said that Police Scotland would not be “dictated to” on how to spend its resources. Does the cabinet secretary think that that is an appropriate way for Police Scotland to address the community?

Ryehill police station in the west end of Dundee is scheduled to be the subject of consultation in January and, although the consultation will include the possibility of closure, Ryehill was left off the list that was released this week. Does the cabinet secretary think that that is right? Is it not misleading for the community of the west end?

The cabinet secretary mentioned the possibility of sharing premises with local authorities. Given that it was confirmed to me that sharing is not possible in the Ryehill building, and that closure of Ryehill police station would mean west end police being based in other council wards, will the cabinet secretary please ask Police Scotland to drop the consultation on the station’s closure?

Michael Matheson: The member has raised a number of different concerns regarding the proposal in her region. The appropriate mechanism for those issues to be explored is discussion directly with the local divisional commander. The divisional commander will be responsible for deciding on the best approach. Where there is an option to have shared premises, that will be one of the options; where that is not an option, an explanation will have to be given of the different approach that will be taken in the area.

The key to the process is local area commanders taking a local approach that reflects local needs. Given the member’s keenness and desperation to be involved in the process, I would have thought that she would want to express her views to the local commander, who will have a significant say in what the determination will be. The consultation will allow others to express their views, after which an informed decision will be taken on what the future of the station should be.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): In response to Douglas Ross, the cabinet secretary mentioned the situation in Livingston and the benefit of joint working with other services in community facilities. I am a great champion of that approach, but the police station in the village of Fauldhouse in my

region closed in the most recent round of closures and now the police room in the local partnership centre, where all that joint working takes place, is to close, too. Does that not fly in the face of the cabinet secretary’s rhetoric? Should other members not be on alert, because the next round of closures is likely to affect the joint facilities where all the partnership working is supposed to be done, as is happening in Fauldhouse?

Michael Matheson: No, it does not fly in the face of what I have said, because the same process has taken place in my constituency, where the use of stations is changing and where joint working is taking place in a joint facility. It is clear that real benefits can come from that. It is important that such matters are determined at a local level. The local commander can determine what is the best way to deliver policing in his local community and what facilities are necessary to achieve that.

I am sure that Neil Findlay would recognise that the way in which the public engage with the police and the model of policing have changed and evolved over the years, and they will continue to change and evolve in the years to come. I am sure that all members would recognise that it is important that Police Scotland has a modern police estate that is fit for purpose and which reflects the needs of local communities. The estates review is about ensuring that that is the case. The key part of the process is that those matters will be determined at a local level, with national oversight through the Scottish Police Authority.

Justifiable Assault

2. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what impact “justifiable assault” has on children. (S5T-00176)

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Mark McDonald): The Scottish Government does not support the physical punishment of children. We recognise that physical punishment can set children the wrong example and is not an effective way to teach children discipline. The Scottish Government does not consider that further legislative change is appropriate, as we do not wish to see parents unnecessarily or unreasonably criminalised. We continue to support positive parenting through, for example, funding for family support services.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Every member shares the Scottish Government’s laudable ambition for Scotland to be the best place in the world for children to grow up in, but does the minister not agree that, considering that we are one of just four remaining states in the Council of Europe not to repeal the outdated defence of justifiable assault

and not to extend equal protection to our children, we will be forever out of step with that obligation and with our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child if we do not do that? The Welsh Assembly Government is set to bring about such a change in its current legislative programme. Is it not time for this country to do likewise?

The Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary.

Mark McDonald: Thank you for the unexpected promotion, Presiding Officer.

I do not agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton on his analysis, but I agree with him on the objective of making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up in and on his desire to move to a situation in which children are not physically punished as a means of discipline. The question is how we give effect to that. We believe that the way to do that is through positive parenting support to enable parents to make positive choices about how they approach discipline with their children. We believe that that is a more effective method of approaching the matter to give effect to the result that both Alex Cole-Hamilton and I want to see.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The legal defence of justifiable assault used to apply to both servants and women, but that has rightly been struck from our statute books. There is growing consensus across all parties in the chamber that we need to honour our commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to catch up with our European neighbours and to work to extend equal protection to children. Should the Scottish Parliament get the opportunity to do that, either through a member's bill or through an amendment to primary legislation, will the Scottish Government allow its parliamentary members a free vote on that important issue?

Mark McDonald: We do not have legislation in front of us at present for consideration in that regard. I am aware of Mr Finnie's intention to bring forward such legislation, but it would not be appropriate for me to comment on it before it has been brought before Parliament. I have laid out the Government's position on the issue, which is that we do not support the physical punishment of children and do not regard it as an effective means of disciplining children. Crucially, we believe that the way to effect change on the issue is through providing positive support to parents to enable them to make positive choices about how they discipline their children. I believe that that approach will enable us to ensure that children are protected and, what is most crucial, enable parents to exercise positive choices and create the best environment for children to grow up in.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I very much agree with the minister that

smacking is not an effective method of disciplining children. What support does the Scottish Government give to parents and carers to encourage them to use positive methods of managing children's behaviour and generally to parent positively?

Mark McDonald: I am grateful to Jenny Gilruth for that question because, as I have said, we want to ensure that parents have the opportunity to make positive choices. That is why we have a national parenting strategy that is designed to empower and support parents and why we provide funding through the children, young people and families early intervention fund and the adult learning and empowering communities fund to a range of organisations. One such organisation is Mellow Parenting, which is funded to deliver programmes that are designed to support parents to connect with their children and help them increase their wellbeing, self-esteem and self-confidence.

We recognise that there is always more that we can consider doing to support parents, and we are continuing to look at how we provide support, information and advice to parents. However, we believe firmly that it is by empowering and supporting parents to make positive decisions about how they approach discipline with their children that we will ensure that children are given the best start in life.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Is there any evidence that the current law in this area is not working?

Mark McDonald: I have not seen evidence brought before me in relation to that. I am aware that there are regularly cases relating to issues to do with child cruelty. I have not been able to disaggregate areas in which the defence to which Alex Cole-Hamilton referred has been specifically used. I will look further to see whether there is work that can be done to see what the situation is in that regard. However, in respect of what Murdo Fraser asked about, I am not aware of any evidence to that effect. Crucially, my primary concern is to ensure that parents are given support to make positive choices and thereby negate the requirement for the kind of approach that Murdo Fraser referred to.

The Presiding Officer: I thank members and I apologise to Mr Finnie. I know that he has a member's bill on this issue, but I am afraid that I do not have time to allow him a question because there was so much interest in the police station issue earlier.

We will take a few moments to change seats before the ministerial statement.

Unconventional Oil and Gas

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a statement by Paul Wheelhouse on unconventional oil and gas. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions during it.

14:29

The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse): I would like to take this opportunity to update Parliament on the progress of our research into unconventional oil and gas in Scotland. The Scottish Government has adopted a clear and consistent approach to emerging technologies that could develop Scotland's onshore hydrocarbon resources. Our approach to unconventional oil and gas is one of caution while we gather and consider evidence on the new technologies that industry has proposed. That process has already resulted in the decision last month not to proceed with underground coal gasification in Scotland.

Against the backdrop of our cautious, evidenced approach, there are some, such as the United Kingdom Government, who wish to pursue a gung-ho approach to support the industry, and there are others who seek an immediate ban. They do not want to wait for research and evidence and have put forward their views without concern for the differing interests or the views of those who would be affected across Scotland. I have no doubt that both are sincere in their views and beliefs, but it is the job of Government to base our decisions on evidence, taking proper account of public opinions, and to seek a collective way forward. We are deeply sceptical of the UK Government's approach.

There is much heat on the issue, but our intention is to go through a process that sheds light. In doing so, we must also remember that shale resources in Scotland are located across the central belt in the midland valley—one of the most densely populated areas of Scotland. Communities in those areas would be directly affected by any unconventional oil and gas development, and they must be given genuine opportunities to explore and discuss the evidence and issues in depth and at length.

Our precautionary, consultative approach is the right one and it has been widely supported by communities, industry and other interested parties. To allow us to gather a comprehensive body of evidence and prepare for an inclusive debate and consultation, we put in place a moratorium on unconventional oil and gas in January 2015. That means that no such projects can take place. For

the avoidance of any doubt, I note that the moratorium covers hydraulic fracturing, which is also known as fracking, and coal-bed methane technologies.

Today, we have reached a major milestone in the process, and I can confirm that the research reports have now been published in full. The research was carried out by leading independent experts in their respective fields, and the findings will deepen our understanding of the issues. At this stage, the Scottish Government is not making any judgments on the findings. As we set out when we established the moratorium, the publication of the research will now be followed by a period where we and the public can scrutinise, question, challenge and discuss the findings before we begin a public consultation. We have provided the Parliament with hard copies of the executive summaries of the research, and I encourage all members to read the reports at their leisure.

I would now like to draw attention to some of the main aspects of the research that I believe demonstrate the value and significance of the work that we have published today. Central to the work is the economic impact research that KPMG carried out. It identified a number of potential industry development profiles in Scotland, which have informed the other studies. Those scenarios are based on estimates of potential oil and gas resources that have been informed by discussions with stakeholders, including those who represent industry and environmental interests.

That study has quantified the associated economic impacts on the Scottish economy of any prospective activity, using a range of measures including expenditure, gross value added, tax revenues and employment. A number of projections of economic benefit and employment have been put forward previously. This report presents an impartial assessment of the potential impact of an industry in Scotland. KPMG concludes that, under its central scenario, 20 well pads of 15 wells each could lead to cumulative direct expenditure of £2.2 billion in Scotland over the period through to 2062, which would create supply chain impacts and other induced economic impacts amounting to an additional £1.2 billion over the period, and be responsible for supporting up to 1,400 direct, indirect and induced jobs in Scotland at its peak. To put those economic impacts in context, the report states that, on an annual basis, that represents

"on average, 0.1% of Scottish GDP in our Central scenario".

The report also discusses a number of other potential economic considerations including the use of gas as a feedstock in the petrochemical industry, the impact on local house prices, road

use, agriculture, visual amenity, environmental costs and health costs. Given our commitments to carbon reduction and climate change, those impacts must be considered alongside any economic impact.

The Committee on Climate Change was asked to examine the impacts on territorial carbon emissions of unconventional oil and gas activities in Scotland and how those impacts might vary over time. The study sets out three tests that would need to be met for the development of unconventional oil and gas to be compatible with Scottish climate change targets. The tests are emissions being limited through tight regulation, Scottish unconventional oil and gas production displacing imports rather than increasing domestic consumption, and emissions from the production of unconventional oil and gas being offset through reductions in emissions elsewhere in the Scottish economy.

The study also provides a quantitative analysis of potential emissions under a number of regulatory and production scenarios. The committee estimates that, under a high production scenario, CO₂ equivalent emissions in 2035 could be between 1.1 and 2.6 megatonnes per year, depending on the strength of regulation. It is estimated that, under the central production scenario, emissions will be 0.6 megatonnes a year in 2035 if the minimum necessary regulation is adopted.

The overall conclusion of the health impact assessment that Health Protection Scotland conducted is:

“the evidence considered was ‘inadequate’ as a basis to determine whether development of shale oil and gas or coal bed methane would pose a risk to public health, if permitted in Scotland.”

If an industry were to proceed, the report discusses a precautionary approach that would be proportionate to the scale of the hazards and the potential health impacts. Health Protection Scotland notes that that

“could be based on a range of mitigation measures involving operational best practice, regulatory frameworks and community engagement.”

The study that examined transport impacts, which was carried out by Ricardo Energy and Environment, estimates that an individual well pad could require traffic movements to be sustained at around 190 a week for a period of approximately two years during the development phase. Ricardo notes that the main factor that affects traffic flows is the water transportation requirement. It concludes that, if that can be avoided—for example, by using pipelines or reusing waste water—the impacts can be significantly reduced.

Ricardo also observes that any increase in vehicle movements could result in an increase in noise, vehicle emissions, road damage or traffic accident risks. It notes:

“Provided the planning and EIA”—

that is, environmental impact assessment—

“system is properly implemented, any significant impacts would be avoided through the use of appropriate mitigation measures.”

However, the report also states:

“local communities would nevertheless experience an increase in traffic numbers, potentially for an extended period of a number of years.”

The decommissioning study that was carried out by AECOM and the seismicity study that was carried out by the British Geological Survey each reviewed international literature and practice to draw conclusions on potential hazards and what, if any, steps could be taken to mitigate those hazards, including regulatory actions. AECOM concludes:

“There is a low risk of post-decommissioning well failure”.

It also notes that there is potential for improvement in existing regulatory provisions.

The study that the British Geological Survey undertook concludes that hydraulic fracturing is generally accompanied by microseismicity and

“the probability of felt earthquakes caused by hydraulic fracturing for recovery of hydrocarbons is very small.”

The study also observes that improved understanding of the hazard from induced seismicity and the successful implementation of regulatory measures to mitigate the risk of induced seismicity are likely to require additional data from a number of sources, including improved monitoring capabilities.

As we committed to do as part of the moratorium, the Scottish Government has hosted a workshop with regulators. A record of that meeting is now available to view on the Scottish Government’s website.

To ensure that the full range of environmental issues is given due consideration, a full strategic environmental assessment will be prepared and considered before a final decision is taken.

I am confident that the reports that we have published today deepen our knowledge of the evidence and shed light on the issues and choices that the industry presents. I hope that members can tell from the summary of the research that no one study can give a conclusive view on the industry and whether it has a place in Scotland’s energy mix. Some will say that the research shows that the economic impact is low and that the risks are too great; others will say that the risks can be

managed and that the potential economic gain cannot be ignored.

The reports rightly do not make recommendations on whether unconventional oil and gas should be permitted. The science and evidence inform the debate, and it is now time for that debate to take place.

I can confirm today that our consultation on unconventional oil and gas will launch on schedule early in the new year. In view of the importance of discussing unconventional oil and gas in the context of both wider energy use and climate change matters, I can also confirm that the launch of the consultation will be co-ordinated with the publication of our climate change plan and the consultation on Scotland's draft energy strategy.

The consultation, which will cover hydraulic fracturing and coal-bed methane, will not simply be an opinion poll—that would not do justice to the broad and complex range of issues that people care about and which need to be debated. It will continue the process of presenting evidence and encouraging discourse, and it will allow the public and stakeholders to set out their views. Our consultation will give everyone who has an interest in the issue an opportunity to express their view. That is what the public and stakeholders expect, and that is what we are delivering.

Once the consultation closes and the results have been independently analysed and published, we will make our recommendation on the future of unconventional oil and gas, and allow Parliament to vote on it. After that, the Scottish Government will come to a considered judgment on the future of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland.

I know that everyone in the chamber recognises the different opinions that exist on the development or otherwise of unconventional oil and gas. The Government has maintained a consistently sceptical and precautionary approach throughout. In reaching a final decision as a Government and as a Parliament, it is imperative that, at every step, we take a careful, considered and evidence-based approach alongside an informed public debate. Given the significance of the issue, that is the right and proper way to proceed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement. I can allow only about 20 minutes for that. We are really tight for time, so please keep to fairly short questions and answers.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement.

As an Aberdeenshire MSP, I first congratulate Colin Clark and Iain Taylor on winning their

respective council by-elections in Inverurie and Banff last Thursday.

Members: Hear, hear.

Alexander Burnett: No wonder they won, after the raiding of our fossil fuel industry in the north-east to fund an economy that is missing out on fracking.

Dr Stuart Paton recently said that there are “a number of contradictions” in the Scottish Government's energy policy. Nowhere is that contradiction more evident than in this morning's “Scottish Energy News”, where we see the cabinet secretary posing with his minister and with a company that has just been awarded a quarter of a million pounds to improve onshore fracking technology. It is simply breathtaking that, just hours after that publication came out, the minister can come to the chamber and talk about

“a clear and consistent approach”

yet still give no timescale for a decision on fracking. Scotland, the industry and consumers need direction, so why has the minister once again failed to deliver and when will we get a decision?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before you get up, minister, I will say to Alexander Burnett that to use time for questions in that way is inappropriate.

Paul Wheelhouse: On timing, I am not sure whether Alexander Burnett was not listening or did not read my statement beforehand. I have set out that we will, in the new year, launch the public consultation. Fracking is an extremely important issue for Scotland to debate and to get right as a policy area.

Unlike the UK Government, we are not taking a gung-ho approach by supporting an industry when there are significant concerns among the public and stakeholders about the success, or otherwise, of that industry.

We feel that it is vital, particularly given the concentration of population in the midland valley—the main area where fracking would be likely to take place, if it were to go ahead—that we listen to the views of communities and of wider stakeholders, and take soundings on the strength of the evidence that we have presented today. We are not taking it for granted that the research will not be challenged by stakeholders in the industry. We think that it is important to listen, which the Conservative Party would perhaps do well to do—not just on energy policy, but on wider issues.

On support for the oil and gas industry, I hope that Mr Burnett studies closely the economic impact study by KPMG. I know that the Conservative Party has made great claims about shale gas and other technologies providing an alternative route to safety for the oil and gas

industry. I will leave it to Mr Burnett to judge whether the figures that are presented in the KPMG study match up to his expectations.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for prior sight of his statement and the range of reports. It is disappointing that the Scottish Government has not gone for a public consultation on an outright ban on onshore fracking today, especially as the minister stated on 6 October that underground coal gasification would not be part of Scotland's energy mix.

As the 22nd conference of the parties—COP22—opens in Marrakech, does the minister agree that the climate change science is irrefutable and was irrefutable before the reports were even commissioned? Does he agree that for our communities, our children and grandchildren and for jobs in clean energy, now and in the future, we should not lock into another fossil fuel? If he agrees, why does he not announce a public consultation on an outright ban on fracking, as I have done in my proposed ban fracking in Scotland bill?

Paul Wheelhouse: There were a number of issues in that question. On reviewing the evidence on underground coal gasification, it became clear that very significant health and safety issues exist about that industry. If we are taking an evidence-based approach, we have to take account of the work that has been done. We said in advance in our manifesto that we would and have stood on a platform saying we would consult, following publication of evidence. We are maintaining our commitment to doing exactly that. It is for others, including Claudia Beamish—who I am sure will be active in the Scottish Government consultation in the new year—to submit their views on the research.

Aspects of the research may be supported and aspects may be challenged. We think that it is right to put the research that we have commissioned out there and to invite the public to engage in the debate and, ultimately, to give Parliament a vote on the recommended approach that we will put to it.

We are trying to be inclusive and we are giving all the parties in Parliament the opportunity to give their verdicts on our recommendation, based on evidence and the consultation. We will then take it from there.

I assure Claudia Beamish that the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham, intends to attend the Marrakech COP22 to give the Scottish perspective. We take extremely seriously the impact on global climate emissions of our actions as a country. The Committee on Climate Change's work informs us of its estimate of the climate

change impacts of the industry. Again, without passing judgment on the figures, I invite others to comment on the research that we have published today on the climate change impact.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Is the minister aware of the recent University of Stirling report by Professor Andrew Watterson and Dr William Dinan on the public health implications of fracking, which notes that

“the evidence base for robust regulation and good industry practice is currently absent”,

and found

“multiple serious challenges surrounding location, scale, monitoring and data deficits facing regulators overseeing onshore UGE and fracking in the UK”?

Paul Wheelhouse: We are aware of the research that Joan McAlpine has referred to. Health Protection Scotland has, on our behalf, looked at the health impact information and carried out a review of primary research, and it has published its report today. I am aware that the University of Stirling study also involved a literature review that looked at secondary and primary data sources. I encourage all those who have a view, whether it challenges the information that has been presented by Health Protection Scotland or supplements it—as in the case of the work that Joan McAlpine referred to—to submit it when the consultation begins in January. There is an opportunity for all stakeholders, regardless of their view, to feed in so that we ensure that we have access to the fullest range of views and information on the subject.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The minister did not answer my colleague Alexander Burnett's question, so I will try again. We know that the consultation is to be published early in the new year. When will the consultation close and when will the Scottish Government reach a decision?

Paul Wheelhouse: I tried to answer Alexander Burnett's question by saying that I set out in the statement the launch of the consultation. We are looking to do that over about a four-month period initially, to take the findings and produce feedback. As I said, that will tie in with the climate change plan and the energy strategy, which will be developed in the course of next year. We hope to complete both documents in the second half of 2017, having formed a view on development or otherwise of onshore oil and gas.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The minister will be aware that many people point to the economic benefits of fracking as justification for it. I therefore draw to his attention table 1.2 in the assessment of economic impact, which sets out the impact over 40 years. It shows that, under the central scenario, spending in Scotland would

amount to £55 million per annum and that, in the low scenario, the figure would be £12.5 million per annum. Does the minister believe that those relatively low figures justify a risk to our environment and public health?

Paul Wheelhouse: As I said in my statement, I am trying to avoid giving a Government view on the figures, but I note for the record the figures that Jackie Baillie mentioned. I merely suggest to stakeholders, including colleagues across the chamber, that they should look at the balance of the factors that we have outlined today—the economic, climate change, health, decommissioning and transport impacts—to ensure that we take a rounded view on the impact across all those issues. That is what the Government has to do. If we were to focus on one or another, that would perhaps be a false position. We need to let the people tell us which one they think is more important and feed into our consultation during the course of the winter. I accept that the figures are in the report but—with apologies to Jackie Baillie—I will not pass judgment on them today.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The Parliament has a legislative duty to scrutinise the climate action plan that the minister's Government is producing. That has been delayed and will now be out in January, as the minister said, alongside the energy strategy. What will appear under the headline "Fracking" in those documents? Will there just be a giant question mark? What are people meant to think of that? Will the minister at least release the strategic environmental assessment ahead of the public consultation in January on unconventional gas? Will he also commit to including full liability on clean-up costs in any decision making?

Paul Wheelhouse: I certainly recognise the importance of the issue's linkage to our climate change plan, on which Roseanna Cunningham is leading for the Government, and the energy strategy, which I will take forward on behalf of the Government. Those documents will be published in January.

People can look at all the documents in the round—the consultation on unconventional oil and gas, the energy strategy and the climate change plan. As I outlined to Murdo Fraser, if we can do so in the course of the year, we will take on board those points for the finalised documents.

I am sure that there will be a healthy debate on the role for unconventional oil and gas under the consultation. I commit to the member that we are looking to take on board the findings of that consultation for the finalised energy strategy. I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform will take heed of the consultation, too.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and for the voluminous reports that he supplied. I have to admit that I have not read them all yet.

It is pretty clear that the Government is on a long journey to saying no to fracking. It is good news that it has not given the go-ahead to fracking today. To follow on from what Murdo Fraser asked, will we get a final conclusion and a decision by the Government on the issue by the end of 2017?

Paul Wheelhouse: As the minister with responsibility for the energy strategy, I intend to ensure—if it is at all possible—that we take on board the Parliament's view in what we propose to do in relation to unconventional oil and gas in our finalised energy strategy next year. The draft will be published in parallel with the climate change plan, and the debate that Parliament will have on unconventional oil and gas will have an impact on our consideration of both key documents.

However, I cannot predict how Parliament will vote. We will put a recommendation to Parliament and, for protocol reasons, I do not want to prejudge Parliament's view. I expect that we will have a lively debate followed by a vote on the position and that the Government will reflect on the Parliament's vote at that time.

Willie Rennie: By when?

Paul Wheelhouse: To answer Mr Rennie's sedentary question, I intend to do that by the end of 2017.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): Given the significant local interest, I am sure that the vast majority of my constituents in Falkirk East will welcome the publication of the research report and the minister's confirmation that the full public consultation is to go ahead at the turn of the year. What weighting will the Scottish Government give to the findings of the public health impact study when it reviews the submissions to the consultation prior to making its final decision?

Paul Wheelhouse: There will be a lot of public interest in the health impact alongside the other issues that I flagged up. I will make a similar point to Angus MacDonald, who has a strong interest in the issue from a constituency perspective, as I made in response to Jackie Baillie.

We need to put the information out there and to invite communities across Scotland to give us their view on which of the factors that we present to them are the most important. There are issues regarding the health impact, the economic impact, the decommissioning impact and so on. All the different studies are important in their own right and we do not intend to assign a particular value to them. Instead, we invite the communities of

Scotland and wider stakeholders to tell us what they think are the most important things for us to take into account when forming our recommendation to Parliament. I will listen carefully to views from Falkirk, too.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Given that climate change has no borders, does the minister agree that, by embracing the technology, Scotland could decrease global carbon emissions by reducing the requirement to import foreign fossil fuels?

Paul Wheelhouse: I do not want to sound like a broken record, but I invite Maurice Golden and anyone else who shares his view that that factor is important to make a submission to the consultation. We are not prejudging the importance of any one factor, including climate change, as all the studies are important. I hope that they will inform the debate, shed more light on the subject and enable all across Scottish society to come to a less heated, more enlightened and more considered view of the debate.

KPMG has highlighted the point that substances that can be extracted through fracking or coal-bed methane technology could be used as feedstock for Grangemouth or other petrochemical plants. We have to factor into that the scenario in which consumption increases, which would mean additional overall emissions. I leave it to members to review the evidence and give their view on the important messages to take from that.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To follow on from the previous question, does the minister agree that we are concerned about our climate change targets and that allowing fracking would in all probability make it more difficult for the Scottish Government to achieve its greenhouse gas emission targets?

Paul Wheelhouse: The study that has been produced by the Committee on Climate Change, which I referred to in my statement, gives estimates for some potential scenarios for impact across Scotland, according to the likely degree of regulation and the degree of extraction that is undertaken. Because Scotland's legislative targets for climate change have been established without sectoral targets, an increase in emissions in one part of the economy must be borne across the rest of the economy. We are not prejudging how that would be dealt with. If that happened, given the requirement to meet our existing climate change targets and our desire to increase our ambition on climate change in due course, we would have to find some way of mitigating those emissions. The Government would have to take that into account when it made a recommendation to Parliament.

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To recap, once the consultation closes, the results will

be independently analysed—by whom we know not—and the Government will make a recommendation to Parliament on fracking and allow Parliament to vote on it, although, once again, the Government might or might not pay any attention to that vote whatsoever. Will the minister tell us why we should believe that his Government will accept Parliament's verdict next time when it did not accept Parliament's verdict last time? Further, will he confirm that none of this will be concluded in time for next May, when people will go to the polls for the local elections?

Paul Wheelhouse: I say without seeking to find a division with the Labour Party on the issue that the last point shows the member's motivation. He is more interested in local government elections than in getting the decision right.

Richard Leonard: You are putting off the decision—

Paul Wheelhouse: I invite Mr Leonard to listen. We are trying to get the decision right for the people of Scotland and in the public interest. We will listen to Mr Leonard and others who make submissions to the consultation.

The reason why members of the Parliament can be confident that we will do exactly what we said—that we will bring the issue to the Parliament to vote on and then reflect on that vote—is that we have kept our promises every step of the way on the process so far. We gave a commitment that we would commission research in light of the gaps that were identified in the expert scientific panel's study and we have given a commitment to have a consultation with the public, which we are publishing details of today. I give a commitment to the member and the chamber that we will bring the issue back to Parliament for a vote and that we will listen to Parliament's view at that time.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Does the minister agree that the negative impacts of fracking would affect all parts of Scotland and not just the areas where shale reserves are located?

Paul Wheelhouse: As members have indicated, issues such as climate change and the wider economic impact—whether positive or negative—concern not only the midland valley, which straddles the central belt of Scotland, but the wider communities of Scotland.

The issue is important, whether from the point of view of a contribution to our energy mix or our economic development or from the point of view of climate change impacts. As I said in response to Mr Mason, any additional emissions would have to be borne by the whole economy, which is of course distributed across the whole country.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Well, here we are—we have finished in under 20 minutes. I am

quite stunned; people's brevity was amazing. I will allow a few moments for people to change seats before we move to the next item of business.

Health and Social Care (European Union Workforce)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-02355, in the name of Shona Robison, on Scotland values its European Union workforce and its contribution to health and social care.

14:59

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate this very important issue today. Every area of Scotland, and more than 60 per cent of voters, voted to remain in the EU. The Scottish Government's priority, therefore, is to protect Scotland's interests and to ensure that the wishes of the Scottish people are respected by the United Kingdom Government in a meaningful way.

We are firmly committed to ensuring that Scotland can remain in the single market, including retaining freedom of movement. Scotland values the citizens from other parts of the EU and the wider European Economic Area who come here to live and work and the contribution that they make to our economy and society. Today, I want to focus specifically on the citizens from other parts of the EEA who make such a vital contribution to our health and social care services. In doing so, I will focus on two of the five key interests that this Government wishes to protect: our economic interests; and our interests in social protection.

I pay tribute to all those who work in our health and social care services, regardless of nationality: your dedication and commitment is greatly appreciated and valued. I say to those European citizens from outside the UK: we want you here, we value your contribution and we will do everything we can to ensure that you can continue to live and work in Scotland without detriment.

Scotland has a long tradition of welcoming professionals from overseas to work in our health and social care services. Free movement of labour throughout the EEA has been hugely important in ensuring that we have the skilled workforce that we need to deliver services. As a member of the EU, free movement of labour has not required us to hold information on the numbers of non-UK EEA citizens working in NHS Scotland, other health services and the social care sector. We have estimated, however, that non-UK EU citizens account for approximately 3 per cent of the health and social care sector workforce in Scotland. In 2015, 3.8 per cent of the 3,113 students starting a pre-registration course in nursing and midwifery were from the EEA. That compares with 2.75 per

cent in 1998, so it is a growing part of the workforce.

The General Medical Council registered just over 1,100 EEA-qualified doctors in Scotland as of December 2014, from a total of approximately 20,000. Around 1,400 of the non-UK EU citizens licensed to practise by the General Medical Council are currently registered in Scotland—approximately 6.8 per cent of Scotland’s doctors. We are currently working with the Scottish Social Services Council and the Care Inspectorate, and with employer representative bodies, to identify possible approaches to improving our understanding of the numbers and the contribution of non-UK EU citizens to social services in Scotland. Estimates from the annual population survey show that, in 2015, around 3.5 per cent of the workforce in the social services sector as a whole were non-UK EU citizens. We know that non-UK EEA citizens make an important contribution to our health and social care services.

As a starting point, we need to remove the uncertainty for all non-UK EEA citizens who are already working in our health and social care services. It is unacceptable that the UK Government has refused to give any assurances to those workers, many of whom now see Scotland as their home. We will, therefore, continue to press the UK Government for confirmation that workers from other parts of the EEA will be allowed to remain here once the UK formally leaves the EU.

We know the huge challenge that our health and social care services will face in future as demand for services grows. To enable us to meet that challenge, we need to have the workforce available to deliver those services. Our commitment to produce a national healthcare workforce plan will strengthen workforce planning and help us to train and grow the workforce that we need. However, the ever-increasing demands on our health and social care services mean that we will need to retain our ability to recruit and retain staff from inside and outside the EEA.

The uncertainty surrounding the terms of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, in particular in relation to the free movement of labour, is already impacting on recruitment, with anecdotal evidence that it is making Scotland’s health and social care services less attractive to potential recruits. Unison Scotland recently shared these concerns:

“Unison Scotland is concerned that without free movement of labour, Scotland will face immense workforce planning challenges in the growing health and care sector. We are already unable to recruit and retain enough care workers to fill vacancies and the loss of EU nationals will exacerbate this, particularly in the private residential and home care sectors.”

We want to retain freedom of movement for Scotland, and we will continue to make it a priority in our discussions with the UK Government.

We need to ensure that we can attract and train our future workforce, and that means attracting students to take up training places. Scotland’s medical and dental schools are already concerned about the impact of the current uncertainty on their ability to attract the best students to their courses. We have an enviable worldwide reputation for the quality of the educational experience that we offer. However, the international recruitment market is highly competitive, and there is a real risk that we will lose many individuals if we cannot provide reassurance on tuition fees, free movement and future career opportunities.

We already have non-UK EEA citizens studying and training here. They make a real contribution to our services and they need to feel wanted and valued. I am pleased that we have been able to provide students who are already studying, people who are about to begin their studies and people who are applying to study here from 2017-18 with some reassurance that they will continue to enjoy free tuition for the duration of their studies at our medical and dental schools. Unfortunately, we cannot provide assurances about their future rights to remain here to train and work, and that could have an impact on their future career decisions.

The setting of medical student places is based on the workforce planning needs of NHS Scotland, but let me be clear that there is no cap on university places for Scotland-domiciled students—the Tory amendment is simply inaccurate. Although the Scottish Government sets the annual intake into medicine, the selection and recruitment of students admitted to study medicine is a matter for individual universities. As a result, the exact number of Scotland-domiciled students varies from year to year, but the evidence suggests—and we know this—that Scotland-domiciled students are more likely to stay and work in the national health service in Scotland. For that reason, we are taking measures to increase the number of Scotland-domiciled students. From this year, we have increased undergraduate medical school places by 50, with those places focused on the widening access criteria. The Scottish graduate entry medical programme will add a further 40 places from 2018, which will have a focus on general practice and rurality.

Cross-border mobility and freedom of movement are essential for our health and social care services. Alongside those, we need to have registration arrangements that ensure that our health and social care professionals are fit to practise, regardless of where they come from or where they are qualified. I have recently written to

Philip Dunne, the Minister of State for Health, urging him to look closely at every option for maintaining parity of professional qualifications as he goes into negotiations.

That brings me to social protection. The EU has done much to protect and improve workers' employment rights and to contribute to our vision of exemplary employer practices across health and social care. Examples of positive changes include the European working time directive, health and safety and equality and diversity legislation, and maternity and parental rights. Those things have helped us to deliver improved working conditions for staff, as well as to protect patient and public safety, and we see them as important protections to retain following withdrawal from the EU. We have given our commitment that we want those important social and economic protections to continue; we now need the UK Government to give us the assurance that they will not be removed or lessened following withdrawal.

I will touch on three other areas of my portfolio in which we have real concerns about the potential impact of EU withdrawal, and I turn first to medicine. Being part of the European Union provides us with an established and effective regulatory approval system, ensuring that UK patients benefit from medicines more quickly and that medicines that are researched and manufactured in the UK can be made available in the EU quickly. The UK Government must provide urgent clarity on how Britain's regulatory system and the relationship with its peers in the rest of the EU will function after Brexit.

Scotland has a long-established international reputation for excellence in health research. A vibrant research sector is vital to addressing our health challenges, to continual improvement of our health and care services and to the development of our economy. In the parliamentary debate on the implications of the European Union referendum for higher and further education on 4 October, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science highlighted the importance and benefits of EU membership to the Scottish research sector as a whole. I echo those sentiments, which apply equally to health-related research.

The research sector in Scotland has benefited greatly from EU membership. Many researchers in Scottish universities are from EU countries, and Scottish universities have secured substantial funding from the EU's horizon 2020 research funding programme.

The Scottish Government wants to ensure that Scotland can continue to play a full role in European research programmes and that researchers in Scotland will remain committed to

collaborating with our European partners and attracting the best international talent.

Finally, I turn to EU-wide healthcare arrangements. We recognise the considerable benefits of having access to safe healthcare throughout the EEA, whether on a short-term visit, as planned healthcare or for state pensioners living in other parts of the EEA. Therefore, we will make it clear to the UK Government that our citizens must retain their rights in that regard and that those must be treated as a priority in negotiations on withdrawal when they finally take place.

Returning to the central theme of today's debate, I repeat what I have already said today and on many occasions over recent months. It is a message to those who are working in our health and social care services: no matter where you come from, your work is valued and we want you to stay.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that Scotland's interests are best served by protecting its existing relationship in Europe, maintaining membership of the single market; recognises the valuable contribution that health and care staff from across the EU, and beyond, make to Scotland; notes that around 1 in 20 NHS doctors in Scotland come from other parts of the EU; resolves to continue promoting Scotland as a welcoming place for Europeans to work in the health and social care sector; is concerned that the outcome of the EU referendum will make it harder to recruit and retain EU citizens to work in health and care services in Scotland, and to study medicine, nursing and dentistry here; deplores the potential threat that Brexit poses to social and employment protection, which are vital to NHS staff; demands that the UK Government stops using NHS staff from the EU as "bargaining chips", and calls on the UK Government to ensure that Scotland is fully involved in decision-making, and in all negotiations between the UK Government and the EU to protect the interests of the health and social care workforce in Scotland.

15:11

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer. If I may begin with a general observation, although this is the first Brexit debate that I have participated in, as we all know, it is one of many; in fact, it is the 10th—we are now in double digits, with more to come. Mr Russell's strained voice last week shows how these endless debates have taken their toll even on his oratorical powers. Maybe they will finally silence him.

While none of us has any doubts about the constitutional importance of the events of 23 June, it is remarkable that, week after week, the Scottish Government insists that we debate motions relating to Brexit rather than on any legislation to improve the lives of people in Scotland. We were all elected in May inter alia to legislate but, half a

year on, I have debated not one bill in this legislature.

That aside, I would like to begin by putting on record my recognition of the valuable contribution that staff from across the EU make to the NHS and social care in Scotland. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by Brexit, we must continue to promote Scotland as a welcoming place for Europeans to work.

The UK Government has committed to retain all EU employment protections post-Brexit by incorporating current EU law into UK law, and I note that the Royal College of Nursing's briefing for this debate states that it is "encouraged" by that commitment.

However, let us not forget either that our own domestic employment law already protects workers who are employed in this country, regardless of their nationality: the law on unfair dismissal, the statutory instruments on transfer of undertakings, the array of trade union laws and, significantly, the Equality Act 2010 and the anti-discrimination legislation that it consolidates are all applied as domestic law, week in and week out, by employment tribunals across the land. I can assure the chamber, from firsthand experience as an advocate, that the rights of all workers are already enforced in our tribunals, applying our law.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Donald Cameron: Indeed.

John Mason: Does the member accept that some good laws and directives, such as the working time directive, have come from Europe, and that many of us are quite concerned that if we are left to the mercies of our Conservative Government in London, working protection might not be so great?

Donald Cameron: I simply repeat the pledge that the UK Government has already made to retain all EU employment protections post-Brexit.

Let us keep things in perspective. It is important to understand the numbers involved: of all NHS doctors in Scotland, 5 per cent are EEA nationals. The current estimate is that in the whole health and social workforce, EU nationals make up 3 per cent of total employees. Drilling down to the health service alone, according to the annual population survey for 2015, 3 per cent of NHS workers are EU nationals, but exactly the same amount—3 per cent—are non-EU nationals. The number of EU nationals working specifically in social care, as the cabinet secretary said, is harder to estimate and much of the data is historic, but it is at least notable that in 2008 we were relying more on non-EU nationals in the care sector than on EU nationals. Context is key, so although we welcome

the contribution of EU nationals, we should also put on record our appreciation of all staff, wherever they are from.

In preparing this speech, I gave thought to who in the SNP might best appreciate the consequences of Brexit for the NHS social care workforce and the EU nationals who work within it—a wise, seasoned political veteran, who might have overseen the whole health and social care structure while in Government for a number of years; a former health secretary, perhaps. Step forward Alex Neil MSP—except that, last week, we learned that he voted to leave the EU. He must have done so with some kind of understanding of the implications for EU nationals within the workforce. We also learned that he was not alone; at least six other SNP MSPs did the same, apparently.

To SNP members, therefore, I say that, before their usual moralising about Brexit begins, before they trot out the hackneyed line that this exercise in democracy was a reckless gamble, before they line up to call those passionate remain voters among us "born-again Brexiteers", they should have a care and look around them. How many of their colleagues sitting in the chamber today are secret Brexiteers? The SNP's supposed united front against Brexit has been well and truly shattered. Alex Neil and his loyal comrades are not just born-again Brexiteers; they were true believers on 23 June, along with approximately one third of SNP voters.

More important, the SNP must not use Brexit as cover for the existing health and social care workforce crisis. As I have said before, the severe staffing problems that we know exist did not suddenly come into existence on 23 June—the recent Audit Scotland report lays that bare. Scotland is 890 general practitioners short of the number that will be needed by 2021. Many staff are close to retirement and those who are left are overworked and under pressure. In social care, there are huge issues with morale and an ageing workforce. The health and social care workforce is in crisis because of nearly a decade of SNP mismanagement, so let us not hear the SNP blame Brexit for its problems or use it as a reason to not take responsibility.

There are positives. Scotland already allows doctors from anywhere in the world to come and work here in shortage specialties, and our exit from the EU will not change that.

I will briefly take the debate wider than just the workforce. Brexit provides opportunities in health. In September, the Health and Sport Committee heard powerful evidence from Annie Gunner Logan, representing the voluntary care sector. When asked about Brexit, she replied:

"When we started talking about Brexit with our membership, the issue that came up first was not the EU national workforce but whether our membership could follow different procurement rules, because people really want to be able to do that."—[*Official Report, Health and Sport Committee*, 13 September 2016; c 21.]

One opportunity thus might be a reformed and easier procurement process.

Let us also retain a sense of proportion about other health-related issues. The cabinet secretary talked about the European health insurance card. Switzerland, which is outside the EU and the EEA, uses that card; it is not linked to EU membership. The UK also has similar reciprocal healthcare arrangements with other non-EU countries, such as Australia and New Zealand.

The true picture of Brexit is mixed, rather like in Mr Russell's recent photograph of West Loch Tarbert, showing the sun's rays illuminating a heavy Highland shower. That is the image that we should bear in mind—neither doom-laden storm clouds nor endless sunshine but darkness and light, risk and reward, challenge and opportunity. Just as it is incumbent on us not to overplay the advantages of Brexit, so it is incumbent on the SNP not to overplay the disadvantages. We are where we are and, to quote Alex Salmond, we must

"Play the ball as it lies".

The RCN today calls on the Scottish Government to work together with the UK Government. Likewise, I call on the Scottish Government to engage positively with the UK Government to ensure that the interests of the health and social workforce in Scotland are protected as we exit the EU.

I move amendment S5M-02355.2, to leave out from "protecting" to end and insert:

"maintaining a close relationship with Europe; recognises the valuable contribution that health and social care staff from across the EU, and beyond, make to Scotland; notes that around 1 in 20 NHS doctors in Scotland come from other parts of the EU; resolves to continue promoting Scotland as a welcoming place for EU nationals to work in the health and social care sector; is concerned that, as a result of the 'capped' arrangement for Scottish university places for domiciled Scots, there are limited places available for these students to study medicine which, in turn, puts additional pressure on medical recruitment; recognises that the UK Government has committed to retain all EU employment protections post-Brexit and has stated the intention to protect the status of all EU nationals currently in the UK, and calls on the Scottish Government to positively engage with the UK Government to ensure that the interests of the health and social care workforce in Scotland are protected in exit negotiations with the EU."

15:18

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): It is no secret that the health secretary and I have had some disagreements on the management and delivery

of our valued NHS, but on Brexit and the potential consequences for our health and social care sector, we are in broad agreement. We can all agree that big constitutional decisions have consequences, so I gently say to ministers that many of the arguments that we will all make today would apply in much starker terms in a debate on independence, but that is not for today.

I will focus on the areas where we have agreement and encourage constructive dialogue in the areas in which that can happen.

I put on record Labour's recognition of and thanks to our amazing health and social care workforce, regardless of where staff come from. I pay tribute to their dedication and compassion as they go about their day-to-day job of caring for others. I say, directly to each and every single one of them, "Thank you."

There are lots of uncertain areas, but I think that they fall into three broad categories, all of which were mentioned by the cabinet secretary. The first is staffing. An estimated 12,000 EU nationals work across the health and social care sector, and it is difficult to overstate the contribution that they make; indeed, their role in the workplace is even more important when we consider the extent of the recruitment and retention problems that face the sector.

It is important to note that even before the Brexit vote we were facing a workforce crisis in our NHS—that was laid bare by Audit Scotland. Although Brexit has not caused the workforce crisis, the reality is that it has the potential only to make it worse. There are 2,500 nursing and midwifery vacancies, one in four GP practices has a vacancy, and only a third of NHS staff think that there are enough of them to do their job properly. We know from the Audit Scotland report that that is having a direct impact on patient outcomes.

Therefore, any impact on the thousands of EU workers who are currently employed in the health and social care sector will undoubtedly make the current situation worse. I urge the cabinet secretary and the Brexit minister to continue to press the UK Government to give an absolute commitment to EU nationals who live and work here that their status and position are secure.

Given that the terms of our EU membership are still in place, it is also crucial that employers are given the confidence to continue to recruit staff from the EU and that potential workers can be confident that if they choose to live and work here they will continue to have the right to do so post-Brexit.

I would go further. Given the workforce difficulties that our health and social care sector faces and the importance of staff recruitment and retention, we should argue for special immigration

arrangements to be made for the sector, to protect and enhance the NHS workforce.

I also flag up an important piece of work that needs to be done in Scotland well in advance of Brexit, which the cabinet secretary touched on. It is easy to monitor and highlight the staffing crisis in the NHS, but it is much more difficult to assess the situation in the social care sector. In a largely privatised sector, with fragmented data, it is difficult to get an accurate picture of vacancy and turnover rates. I urge the cabinet secretary to commit the Scottish Government to some early work on the issue, so that we can get an accurate and robust picture.

The second category is regulation. In important areas such as the working time directive, procurement and competition law, regulation of medicines and medical devices and regulation to provide for common professional standards and medical education between EEA countries, the UK Government needs to clarify whether its intention is to repeal EU regulations and replace them with UK-drafted alternatives or to continue to abide by EU law.

It is worth pointing out that there might also be opportunities to address the limitations that European procurement law—such as state aid rules and the posted workers directive—has placed on the sector. We must also accept that the EU made a mess of trade deals such as the transatlantic trade and investment partnership and the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, which we should rightly reject. I am concerned that Liam Fox is the individual who is charged with negotiating new deals for the UK.

The third category is research. Collaboration across the EU has enabled the UK to further its scientific research agenda, through our ability to access European research talent and important sources of funding. Between 2007 and 2013, the UK contributed €5.4 billion to EU research and development; over the same period, we received €8.8 billion for research, development and innovation activities here in the UK. We know that many Scottish establishments, universities, companies and individuals play a leading role in research and development. The Scottish Government, alongside the UK Government should prioritise the issue in the forthcoming negotiations.

I am sure that a clear majority of members would rather that we were not in this position, but here we are. We must ensure that the Parliament and all its members are collectively doing all that we can to minimise the consequences of Brexit and to protect our health and social care sector. Scottish Labour is committed to playing its full part.

I move amendment S5M-02355.1, to insert, after “dentistry here”:

“, particularly as the health and social care workforce already face significant challenges, as highlighted in the recent Audit Scotland report, *NHS in Scotland 2016*, and considers that Brexit will only add to the pressures facing staff”.

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

15:25

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I welcome the debate, because it is important to highlight that Brexit will have an impact not only on public services in Scotland, but on our quality of life in economic, health and wellbeing terms.

As the consequences of Brexit—especially a hard Brexit—become clearer, we will all be reminded that our lives are going to be affected in ways that, I am sure, many people did not expect. The NHS’s ability to function properly is one example.

The NHS featured in the referendum campaign, but it was a shame that it did so for all the wrong reasons. At the heart of the leave campaign’s misleading assertions was the notorious poster promising UK voters a spending bonanza of an extra £350 million a week on the NHS. That was one of the leave campaign’s biggest promises—one of the many that were abandoned soon after the vote. I note today’s reports that the Crown Prosecution Service south of the border might investigate whether the leave campaign’s assertions about the NHS led to undue influence and violations of electoral law.

Thankfully, in Scotland we voted to remain in the EU, and here we are today, after the UK voted leave and in the cold light of day, debating what leaving the EU means for families and communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

There is no bigger example of something that affects all our lives than the NHS—a precious service on which we all depend from cradle to grave. I expect that the 38 per cent of Scots voters and the 52 per cent of UK voters who voted to leave the EU did not decide to do so on the basis of the impact on the NHS, which, of course, is a pity. Today’s debate is not about focusing on the benefits of Brexit for Scotland’s NHS, because none of us can think of any; rather, it is about focusing on the potential threat now posed to our NHS if Scotland is taken out of the EU against our will, particularly if we lose freedom of movement.

The impact of Brexit on our vital NHS will touch most people’s lives. I often comment that when my two sons were born—one in Aberdeen and one in Elgin—they and my wife were cared for by NHS staff from around the world, including from many

EU countries. It felt like the United Nations brought my sons into the world, because so many different nationalities were in the hospital theatres at the time.

I had cause to take one of my sons to Dr Gray's hospital in Elgin earlier this year after he was sent home from school having suffered a knock to the head during his physical education class. He was treated by a Lithuanian doctor and a Polish consultant. I was grateful to all the staff who were there to care for my son; I was grateful that those doctors made the decision to live and work in Scotland and in Moray.

Each and every day, thousands of families are very grateful and lucky that so many talented and hard-working doctors and nurses from the European Union have chosen to live and work in Scotland. They have chosen to pursue their careers in the Scottish NHS—in our hospitals and GP and dental surgeries, where they can apply their expertise to heal and to care for our population.

If Brexit means that there may well soon be obstacles in the way of EU nationals moving to our country or working here for a period, it is no wonder that so many people and organisations are speaking out about the dangers of Brexit and what it will mean for the NHS in the years ahead. The UK must heed the warning of the Royal College of Nursing, for example, which in *The Independent* this week said:

"The NHS would struggle to survive if there was a mass exodus of staff as a result of a hard Brexit deal".

That applies to Scotland as much as it does to the rest of the UK.

It is important to recognise that EU nationals want to work in the health service to develop their careers; it is also important that they feel welcome. There is no doubt in my mind that a hard Brexit will make it even more difficult to recruit medical professionals to work in more rural areas and in our smaller hospitals. It is already a challenge to attract staff to work in areas outwith our biggest cities and university hospitals without further reducing the pool of potential applicants.

I have been heavily involved in a number of issues at Dr Gray's hospital. It has vacancies that have been unfilled for some time, although some of them have been filled recently by EU nationals from Poland and elsewhere. Like many people, I am concerned about a hard Brexit if desperately needed applications from EU nationals dry up.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Richard Lochhead talks about the dangers of a hard Brexit. Can we infer from that that he is in favour of a soft Brexit, and was he therefore one of the six?

Richard Lochhead: I voted to remain in the EU for many reasons, including ensuring that there would be no impact on the NHS. The Conservative Party—particularly Theresa May, the UK Conservative Prime Minister—must accept that even the 38 per cent of Scots who voted to leave the EU did not expect a hard Brexit. They did not expect us to walk away from Europe; they did not expect us to inflict all the damage that the Conservatives seem happy to inflict on public services in this country.

We must send out a message to consultants, medical professionals and nurses throughout Europe that they are warmly welcome to apply for jobs in this country. I support the Scottish Government's decision today, with the Lord Advocate announcing that the Scottish Government will intervene in the UK Government's challenge in the courts regarding article 50 to ensure that the Scottish Parliament has a say over the triggering of article 50. We must protect Scotland's interests and, in the context of this very important debate, protect Scotland's national health service.

15:30

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): We should all acknowledge the dedication and valuable contribution of all who work in our health and social care services, regardless of where they come from, and we should thank them for that.

Although we have again heard a lot of rhetoric from the SNP today, the UK Government has made it clear that, while the UK remains in the European Union, EU nationals living in Scotland will continue to have the same rights as they have now. The Prime Minister has also made it very clear that the UK Government wants to protect the status of EU nationals living in the UK. The only circumstance in which that would not be possible would be if British citizens' rights in other EU member states were not protected in return. I am sorry to say that we have not heard any comment on that issue from SNP ministers today, nor have we heard how they are supporting the work of the UK Government to protect the rights of Scots living and working across the EU. The situation is clearly interlinked.

I will focus my comments on the specific issue raised in the Government's motion regarding the impact that the UK leaving the EU may have on those who are looking to study medicine, nursing and dentistry in Scotland.

It is a bit rich of SNP ministers to shed crocodile tears for the future of our NHS workforce and to express their concerns for those who are looking to study in Scotland, given the SNP Government's record. I refer specifically to its education policies,

which, as a direct result of higher education funding structures, mean that Scottish universities have too little flexibility when it comes to the provision of places for Scotland-domiciled students. The cabinet secretary has said that that is not the case. Perhaps she does not read the *Press and Journal*. The University of Aberdeen has been forced to admit that it is turning down students because of the SNP Government's policy. The chairman of Universities Scotland has called on the Scottish Government to increase the quota of Scots who are allowed to go to university in Scotland. The cabinet secretary might not want to call it a cap, but there seems to be a quota in the SNP's world.

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell): Will the member take an intervention?

Miles Briggs: Yes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Cabinet secretary—sorry, I mean minister; I promoted you.

Michael Russell: I thought you would eventually, Presiding Officer.

Will the member tell us whether any restriction on numbers applies to any medical courses in England and Wales? A yes or no answer will suffice. If there was no such restriction, his point would be fine; however, there is. What the Scottish Government does is what every Government does: it funds available places.

Miles Briggs: I thank the cabinet secretary for his intervention—sorry, I mean the minister; I, too, am promoting Mike Russell, and that is not something that I would want to do.

It is clear that the decisions that the minister made mean that universities across Scotland have to fund themselves by charging international students. He knows the consequences of the decisions that he made.

The fact that we are facing a crisis in the NHS workforce is because of—not despite—the mismanagement of the health service by the SNP Government. The political decisions that it has made have had consequences, both intended and unintended, for future NHS workforce planning, from the decision by the First Minister, when she was the health secretary, to cut the number of student nurse placements to the education policies that the Government has pursued, which have seen the number of Scotland-domiciled medical students decrease to a historic low of just 52 per cent.

I agree with my fellow Health and Sport Committee member Richard Lyle, who has continually questioned the reductions in the Scottish medical school opportunities that are

offered to young Scotland-domiciled students. A direct consequence of the capping of the number of places for Scots students at Scottish universities is that an increasingly limited number of places are available for Scottish students to study medicine, which, in turn, is adding to pressures around medical recruitment. It would be helpful if, when he closes the debate, the minister could say whether the Scottish Government will review the situation.

Like many Scots who voted for the United Kingdom to remain in the European Union, I was disappointed with the result of the referendum—

Shona Robison: Will the member take an intervention?

Miles Briggs: I am sorry—I do not have time.

However, as a democrat, I respect the result of the vote. Democracy is all about how we put our arguments to the people and the manner in which we live by their decisions. As we are finding out, many SNP MSPs privately voted to leave, and I hope that they now see the need to work together to make a success of the UK leaving the EU and to help to forge new relationships that work for Scotland and the UK.

From the discussions that I have had with those who work in our health service and their representative bodies, I know that they are clear in their belief that Brexit presents significant challenges, but neither they nor Conservative members will let the SNP use Brexit as an excuse for the existing challenges that our health service faces.

I have listened intently to each of Mike Russell's weekly contributions to the Brexit-themed debates. He recently accused my colleague Murdo Fraser of sounding like Pike from "Dad's Army", but Mr Russell is starting to sound increasingly like the Grinch.

I do not doubt that the UK faces very serious challenges. It is for that very reason that we must come together and work together as a United Kingdom. The question that people are increasingly asking themselves is this: when did the SNP give up on believing in the people of Scotland to face those challenges? Great countries come together to turn challenges into opportunities.

The Scottish Conservative amendment calls on the Scottish Government

"to positively engage with the UK Government to ensure that the interests of the health and social care workforce in Scotland are protected in exit negotiations with the EU."

We will work week in and week out to make sure that that is achieved.

15:36

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

The debate is arguably one of the most important debates that I have contributed to, yet I feel—in common with my Conservative colleagues—that it should not be necessary. It should not be necessary because we should be able to assume that those who treat us when we are sick are valued. We should also be able to assume that those who care for the disabled and the elderly are valued and that the contribution of our EU workforce to health and social care and to our society as a whole is valued, but the fact that we are debating the issue shows the challenge that we face in defending the new Scots who have come from other parts of the EU and made our country their home.

We are told that Brexit means Brexit, but what kind of Brexit will we have? As a pharmacist, I find myself wondering about the implications for drug development, research and access to new medicines. Will the reduced mobility of EU researchers into the UK reduce our capacity to do high-quality work? Will there be fewer opportunities to build high-level collaborations and to share knowledge? Will we still have access to EU-funded research facilities? What will happen to medicines regulation? Will our drugs still be licensed through the European Medicines Agency? Will the new clinical trials regulations that are set to be introduced in 2018 apply here? Will new drugs cost us more and come to us late because of our departure from the EU? Will the UK pharmaceutical and biotech industries still have access to European markets?

Six months on from the vote, we still have no clear idea of the answers to those questions. Six months on, the EU citizens who live here still have no clear idea about their future.

Of the doctors who work in the UK, 6.8 per cent gained their primary qualification in another country in the European Economic Area, 6.6 per cent of pharmacists did the same, and the figure for nurses is probably similar. When we look at social care workers, the numbers are much higher, particularly in care homes. Even more people come from outside the EU. According to some estimates, nearly half the people who work in our nursing homes are not from the UK.

Anecdotally, I hear that in the Highlands and Islands—the area that Donald Cameron and I represent—we are particularly dependent on European medical staff. The health boards have had recruitment drives in Spain and Holland to attract highly qualified individuals to work in places where it has been hard to recruit home-grown doctors. All the consultants in one Highland hospital are European, only one consultant in the

Western Isles out of a total of 14 is a Scot and one in four of the doctors in Shetland is European.

I talk about anecdotes and I use the word “estimate” because we have little data. Until very recently, it did not matter where someone was born or did their training—if they were registered in the UK, they could work in the NHS. We did not count the foreigners who worked in each health board. I want us to remain that kind of country. I feel ashamed of what we have become and of the xenophobic rhetoric that I hear. I cannot believe that we now have to stand up to defend people who make such an obviously valuable contribution to our society, but that is the grim reality of the Brexit world.

Unlike my colleagues, I cannot detach myself personally from the argument, as I worked in the NHS until this year and have a great many friends from other EU countries who work in the NHS. This is a really important point in the debate for me, because those people are not strangers but our friends and colleagues and sometimes our families, and they are vital members of our communities.

One of my childhood friends is now a midwife. She travelled the world but came back to the Highlands to work first in a hospital and now as a community midwife and to raise her family here with her Dutch husband. I spoke to her when I was preparing for the debate. She reminded me that it is not just about the health professionals but about the healthcare assistants, the auxiliaries, the students, the ward clerkesses and the porters, many of whom are EU nationals and all of whom help our NHS to run efficiently. She told me about the Polish mums who she looks after, nearly all of whom work in care homes. It is not just the vital work that they do that we value; we also value the contribution that they are making to Highland village life.

The fact that those women and, in fact, my friend and her family are being used by Theresa May as a bargaining chip in the Brexit negotiations is not just wrong: it is offensive. I know that it seems incredible, but my Scotland-born friend is feeling uncertain about whether her family are welcome here; that is how it is. Theresa May must put an end to that uncertainty and provide EU citizens with assurances that they will be allowed to live and work in the UK following Brexit. The UK Government's failure to give assurances is clearly damaging to the NHS and to the communities that we live in, and the UK Government must end that uncertainty.

15:42

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

Sadly, the greatest lie of the referendum campaign

was about investment in the NHS—it was the promise that leaving the EU would lead to investment of £350 million a week in the NHS. Most of us knew that that was fantasy the moment that it was spoken but, unfortunately, some believed it to be true.

Sadly, the term “post-truth politics” is now recognised as a modern-day concept. It means that people believe little of what politicians say, which demeans all of us. How can we empower people to make informed decisions but allow them to be fed misinformation? It is incumbent on all of us to inform people of the facts and convince them of our arguments on the basis of those facts and by explaining why we reached our opinion on that basis.

No politician has a crystal ball and politicians cannot know how things will change in the coming years, but they can be honest about how changing challenges change approaches. These weekly EU debates in the chamber show us that we are so intertwined with the EU that breaking the links will be difficult. There are also other problems to be faced that no one foresaw.

The remain campaign should have done more to make people aware of the challenges. During the campaign, Nicola Sturgeon called for a positive campaign. She told us to stop talking about the risks of leaving and talk about the benefits of staying. These chamber debates are now highlighting the risks of leaving the EU, but it is too late.

We hope that EU nationals who work here and UK nationals who work abroad will be allowed to continue to live where they are. EU nationals make a huge contribution to our country, which we value, and we want them to stay. In addition, we cannot make judgments about migrants who might come and work here in the future. Do we really want to lose their expertise as well?

Our health and social care services need those skills. NHS Highland has difficulty in recruiting consultants and general practitioners, and recently it advertised such posts in Holland. Inverness has daily flights to Schiphol, so it is easily accessible for Dutch nationals to work here and be accessible to their family and friends back at home. The last that I heard was that the approach was showing signs of success.

Our amendment adds to the debate by pointing out the challenges that already exist in health and social care service provision, as highlighted by Audit Scotland. Those services will face further problems if EU nationals cannot continue to work here.

Obviously, we hope that EU nationals will be able to remain and continue to make their homes here. However, we also need to be able to recruit

workers from the EU and beyond, and we need UK citizens who live in the EU to be able to continue to make their homes there and have the same security as we wish to give EU nationals here.

We want EU legislation that protects workers' rights to be enshrined in UK law, such as the working time directive, which has only just begun to protect junior doctors from being exploited in the NHS. When the directive became law, there was a degree of consternation as to how our NHS would fare without junior doctors working unbelievably long hours. Now, we all recognise that that system was wrong for both patients and doctors. The NHS workforce also benefits from other social chapter rights such as equal pay and paternity leave. We take those things for granted, but they will have to be enshrined in our laws.

We benefit from other aspects of working together and collaboration that go beyond workforce issues. We share knowledge of diseases and how to tackle them through the European Medicines Agency, which is to become a single point of entry for drug trials throughout the EU in 2018. The King's Fund has pointed out that patients in the UK stand to lose out on new drug trials because of Brexit, which will delay access to new and innovative treatments. We will also lose out on the sharing of data and information at a European level and on the possibility of bargaining with large pharmaceutical companies on a collective basis in the EU.

Other members have talked about the European health insurance card. Our citizens will be affected by the loss of that, too. At present, they have the security of the card and can travel in Europe safe in the knowledge that they will get reciprocal healthcare wherever they are. The loss of that card will impact on many Scots when travelling abroad and especially on older people, who maybe cannot afford to take out travel insurance. That might prevent them from going abroad on holidays.

Given that the additional funding for the NHS that the leave campaign promised was at best a pipe dream, it is hard to see how our health service can benefit from Brexit at all. Brexit throws up challenges at a time when the NHS is least able to cope with them. It is important that both our Governments recognise that and do their best to support the NHS through these turbulent times, both with legislation and by attracting the best people to work here.

15:48

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Every picture tells a story, and a photograph that was published shortly after the EU referendum

vote tells the story of the vital contributions that EU staff make to saving lives in our NHS. The photo, which appeared on social media, was taken by a surgical team at a hospital—it is a kind of giant selfie. Each member of the team is holding up a placard, and the placards say, for example, “Irish radiographer”, “German consultant anaesthetist”, “Spanish scrub nurse”, “Greek urology registrar” and “British Pakistani consultant urologist”.

For many people, that photograph, which was widely shared, encapsulates the contribution of EU staff in human terms. It was taken in a London hospital but, as other contributions to the debate have shown, those people in their blue scrubs could be from any hospital in Scotland or across the UK.

Mr Cameron implied in his opening speech that Brexit offers opportunities to non-EU doctors from overseas, but it seems to me that the rhetoric from other Conservative politicians has been not just about wanting to get rid of EU medical staff but about pulling up the drawbridge on overseas staff as a whole.

During the Conservative Party conference, Theresa May gave an interview in which she said that the NHS would be made self-sufficient in doctors. When she was asked about reassurances for foreign-born NHS staff, she replied:

“There will be staff here from overseas in that interim period until the further number of British doctors are able to be trained”.

How insulting is that to the people who work so hard in our NHS? Our First Minister put it well—when she saw that interview, she tweeted:

“The arrogance of this from”

the UK Government

“is breathtaking ... like they’re somehow doing these doctors a favour by ‘allowing’ them to save lives here.”

That sentiment from the First Minister was echoed by Sarah Wollaston, who is a Tory member of Parliament, a GP and the chair of the UK Parliament Health Committee. She was shocked, too, and she said that Theresa May should

“unequivocally welcome our valued overseas health & care staff. We all benefit from their skills”.

In the European referendum, Scotland voted unequivocally to stay in the EU. That indicated support for European membership that was largely predicated on the desire to live in an inclusive society that is based on respect and rights for all workers, regardless of where they were born. Like the vast majority of people in this country, I recognise and value the immense contribution of EU nationals throughout Scottish society and not least the role of highly skilled European workers in the health and social care sector. There is widespread recognition of the valuable role that

EU nationals play in Scotland’s social care sector specifically.

In the more rural areas of Scotland, such as my Dumfries and Galloway region in the south of Scotland, the challenges that we face in the recruitment and retention of health and social care staff to serve a highly dispersed and ageing population are, according to the Auditor General for Scotland, no different from the challenges that are faced across the UK. EU workers are not only welcome to be part of that provision in my part of Scotland but are in fact badly needed.

In its submission to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, which I convene, the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland highlighted findings from a survey of its members. A significant majority of those who were surveyed—69 per cent of them—thought that Brexit would have a negative impact on health and social care in Scotland. Many respondents highlighted their concerns about the potential loss to the workforce. One response noted:

“It is hard enough now to find sufficient qualified staff and without EU migrants we will be struggling more.”

The British Medical Association has pointed out that the policy of freedom of movement and the recognition of qualifications across EU states allow health and social care professionals to work in the UK and vice versa. The mutual exchange of skills and staffing would allow us to secure future standards of living by growing our population and addressing the skills gap to support an ageing demographic.

The Royal College of Nursing outlined in its submission to the committee that Brexit could jeopardise the free movement of nursing staff from the EU. The European professional qualifications directive sets out the legislative framework for the recognition of certain health professional qualifications. Without that, Scotland might be unable to accept the qualifications of overseas workers who want to work in our NHS and elsewhere.

It is worth emphasising that, despite Scotland’s overwhelming support for continued membership of the EU, the Conservatives’ Brexit gamble has already damaged our devolved infrastructure by undermining staff who work in the caring professions. The reactionary rhetoric and deep political and economic uncertainty from Westminster will inevitably impede our efforts to recruit and retain EU citizens to work in Scotland’s care sector.

That is why I urge the UK Government to guarantee residency rights and to desist from Theresa May’s frankly repugnant policy of using EU nationals as Brexit bargaining chips or, as Liam Fox described them, cards to play with. Our

European workers, who have made lives and paid taxes here, are not chips or cards. They deserve at least the courtesy of a reassurance that they will be able to continue to live and work in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK and, in the case of NHS workers, to continue to save lives.

15:54

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): It was my privilege for most of the past nine years—with one small interruption—to speak on health matters in Parliament. I hope that I have contributed to a change both in the substance and the tone of the Conservative approach to health.

I became slightly concerned about the almost routine rhetoric of thanking health staff in the chamber because it came to me that many of them are far too busy to sit and listen to our thanks. What they want is action by Parliament to address the very many problems that exist in the health service. However, today I have no hesitation in thanking everyone who contributes to our national health service, from wherever they come and whatever role they perform. It should be the objective and policy of Parliament that they remain able to do so for as long as they wish to do so.

In those nine years, I was able to stand against three cabinet secretaries for health. I am sure that the current front bench and Bute House will agree that the most outstanding of the three was Alex Neil—a man of real intellectual rigour and capacity. I know that he would be dismissed by his colleague on the front bench now as a born-again Brexiteer. I understand that Mr Neil and six others—the seven samurai of the SNP—are now cutting through the seven veils of Scotland's own Evita, Nicola Sturgeon. Perhaps they are better described as Alex Neil and six ninjas, because some of them have the courage of anonymity in respect of how they voted. Of course, we know that they could be any Tom, Dick or Harry—or, as we say in these parts, any Tom, Dick or Gil. However, I do not believe everything that I read in the newspapers, so I will leave it for them to say.

The minute that Mr Neil left office, the first staff satisfaction survey after he ceased to be health secretary showed staff satisfaction and morale plummeting across almost all the indices against which they were being recorded, so I thank him for the service that he gave.

I agree with Donald Cameron and Miles Briggs that workforce planning is a fundamental to the overall sustainability of our NHS. I also agree with Maree Todd—who made an excellent speech—that the place and importance of the international workforce in our NHS are fundamental.

It is interesting to hear members mention “bargaining chips”. I look to the independence referendum, when Nicola Sturgeon was asked what would happen in the event that Scotland did not have automatic membership of the European Union. She said that if Scotland was to be outside the EU, the

“160,000 EU nationals from other states living in Scotland ... would lose the right to stay here.”

What did that mean? What did it mean at that point? Was she threatening—as is implicit in that statement—that they would have to leave? I think not, but it is important that others recognise that the lazy rhetoric on this issue is deeply unfortunate.

Of course, a significant number of European nationals work in Great Britain. There are 3.3 million of them—173,000 are in Scotland, many of whom work in the health service. However, I am also concerned about the 1.2 million British citizens, including 120,000 Scots, who live across the rest of Europe. There are 309,000 in Spain, 255,000 in Ireland, 185,000 in France and 103,000 in Germany. None of the Governments of those countries has given a unilateral declaration that Scots who are working in health services across the rest of Europe will have a unilateral right to stay. We need a universal commitment from all the states of the European Union and the United Kingdom that wherever someone is currently working or living, they will be welcome to stay and welcome to continue to work.

John Mason: Does Jackson Carlaw accept that one of the reasons for the uncertainty on both sides is the unnecessary delay in starting negotiations and the UK Government setting out its position?

Jackson Carlaw: It is important that that is one of the first issues that will be addressed when the negotiations begin. I understand that David Davis has made that commitment. I agree that the matter has to be resolved—and resolved as quickly as possible.

Why do we need so many people in our health service? I will not rehearse the statistics that were evidenced by Miles Briggs a short while ago and with which I agree. We have only to look at the demographics of Scotland for the next 25 years. It is estimated that the number of people aged 65 and over will double in the next 25 years, while the percentage of people of working age is expected to remain as it is today.

If the infrastructure of our public health services—all our public services—is to be sustainable and to succeed in the future, whether we are in the European Union or out of it we will have to attract into Scotland foreign nationals from across the world, as well as the EU, to assist us in

that task. Any strategy or agreement that fails to do that would fundamentally undermine our ability to function as a country.

Mike Russell has written a letter to Joan McAlpine saying that he will attend a joint ministerial committee this week and he hopes that matters of substance will be discussed. When the Secretary of State for Scotland gave evidence to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, he indicated that market access will be one of the issues on the table. Unlike UK Cabinet ministers historically, Liam Fox and David Davis have both agreed to come to the Scottish Parliament to give evidence to the committee, so Parliament will be able to question them.

It is absolutely important to conclude, just as Shona Robison did at the end of her speech, with this clear sentiment: we, too, thank everybody from across Europe who works in our health service and contributes to public services. We want you to stay and we are determined that you will.

16:00

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I rise to offer the support of Liberal Democrats for the emerging cross-party consensus in most of the chamber that the EU workforce, whether in our health service, social care sector or any other profession, is welcome and, indeed, absolutely vital. Throughout the health and social care sector, they give us life-saving care, they make decisions with us about our continuing treatment, they tuck us in at night, they dispense our drugs and they stand by our bedsides at our most vulnerable times. Already, the Brexit vote—that multifaceted act of political vandalism—has resulted in interest in coming to work here among people in other EU countries fall off a cliff edge. Many people view being spoken about as a “bargaining chip”—that horrendous term—as a disincentive to a career and a life in Scotland.

That uncertainty and reluctance to come here could not come at a worse time. In many ways, we are facing a perfect storm in our health and social care workforces. By the end of the decade, we will have 850 fewer GPs than we require. Vacancies for social care nurses are at 28 per cent—almost a third of posts. There are issues with paediatricians, midwives, nurses, physiotherapists and child psychologists. The list goes on. Any of my opposite numbers in the other political parties will attest to the steady stream of representations that we receive from various arms of the health and social care sectors to tell us that the workforce is in crisis. However, at the Health and Sport Committee a few weeks ago, I twice asked the

cabinet secretary whether there is a crisis and twice she denied that there is. According to the excoriating report from Audit Scotland, “NHS in Scotland 2016”, it is clear that the Government is wholly unprepared for the staffing crisis that is before it.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am sorry that I am a wee bit hoarse. Can the member clarify where in the Audit Scotland report the word “crisis” appears? I have looked for it and I cannot find it?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: That is exactly what happened in the Health and Sport Committee. That is SNP doublethink. The eyes of an entire profession are looking to the SNP Government for solutions to the demonstrable decline in the workforce across every health service sector, and people are finding the Government wanting. It is time to stop arguing about terminology and to take action.

Workforce planning was cited in the Audit Scotland report, which bemoans the fact that in this country we do workforce planning over five years, although it takes seven years to train a GP. Five years ago, that workforce planning cycle led to decisions being taken by the then health secretary and now First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, to roll up training places and to cut midwifery training places by more than half. As a result, we are facing a workforce planning crisis because of retirement.

Given that European citizens make up such an indispensable part of our workforce across the health sector—for example, they make up 6.8 per cent of GPs, as Maree Todd said in her excellent contribution—we should not only try to protect their status in this country but aggressively try to recruit others from their countries of origin.

There is a human cost to the workforce crisis, and European citizens can and must form part of the solution. Last week, I spoke at length about George Ballantyne, who is a constituent of mine. I hope very much that he will return home tomorrow after 150 nights in hospital following the point at which he was declared fit to go home. On the three previous occasions when he was told to prepare to go home, his social care package failed—through lack of staff and lack of availability of care—and he remained in hospital. The reality that is the 28 per cent rate of vacancies in the social care workforce has a material impact on our efforts to eradicate delayed discharge from society. I share the cabinet secretary’s desire to eradicate it. When Mr Ballantyne goes home, he will go to Ladywell medical practice in Corstorphine in my constituency, which is already on its knees through a shortage of doctors.

The evidence is that the European Union has provided us, time and again, with hard-working, compassionate and dynamic individuals, who are a credit to their countries of origin and to the professions that they serve. We should all be justifiably proud of the contribution that they make to our society and of the fact that they have chosen to settle in this country. As such, we must protect them and we must encourage more of them to come here.

16:06

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I am happy to speak in today's debate about how we value our fellow Europeans who work in the health and social care sector. Some issues that we can consider this afternoon are specific to that sector, but there are other points that we can make on the broader issue of EU employees in Scotland.

There are a number of reasons why it is beneficial for workers to be able to move freely across borders. The most obvious reason is that a country such as Scotland is short of workers for the long term because of, for example, an ageing population, and it needs to bring in people to supplement its workforce. That point has already been made in the debate.

Secondly, needs vary in different countries at different times; for example, the German population is expected to fall while the UK population is expected to rise. Health and other workers might be needed in one country at one point in time and needed in another country at a later or earlier time.

Thirdly, we can benefit from different experiences and practices from other countries. We hear of the benefit of workers coming from other countries to work in a range of sectors in Scotland or the UK. One of the groups that I have spoken to most recently is the Federation of Master Builders. Its experience has not been merely that a Polish worker can fill a job, but that bringing a number of Polish workers into a business can change the whole ethos of the business through new ways of doing things and a better work ethic. Schools also talk about their experience of young people and families from other cultures coming in with a hunger for learning.

There is every reason to think that the health sector is the same. We have great Scottish staff and a lot about our NHS is great, but we must not be narrow nationalists, as some of the British are. We can learn to do things better and, in restricting workers coming from elsewhere, we are in danger of losing out on their expertise.

Fourthly, linked to that is that many health professionals want to gain experience for the

benefit of their own careers by working in different countries. I have one friend who works as a GP and also specialises. He has had spells working in Australia, Scotland and England and is looking at working in Sweden for some specific experience there. That is not so unusual these days. We live in a world in which young people, especially, think in an international way and look to work in a variety of settings for career and general life experience.

Those are some of the reasons why it is a good thing for people to be allowed to have flexibility in working across borders. Other questions that we face today include how many non-UK EU citizens work in health and social care in Scotland right now. How dependent are we on them? Can we continue okay if all or some of them leave? The answer seems to be that we do not know. I think that it is worse to know that we have a problem but not to know the extent of it than it is to know the details of the challenge that we face.

In their briefings for today's debate, Unison and the RCN say that estimates of staff numbers from EU countries are not reliable. I find that uncertainty about the figures to be very concerning. How can we really know the impact and the challenge that lie ahead if we do not clearly know how many EU folk we have?

There is more to the matter than numbers, however. This morning, the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee heard that the message that the UK is sending out is important, too, whether it is to students, academic staff, construction workers or health and social care workers. That is the point that the RCN makes in its briefing when it says that

"EU staff may choose to leave the UK due to the uncertainty created before new rules are put in place."

The briefing continues:

"It is important EEA health and social care workers continue to feel valued as we enter this period of uncertainty."

Are we saying, "Yes, you are very welcome here and we really want you to work here, send your kids to school here and be part of society," or are we saying, "Technically, you're entitled to stay here or to come here and work, and our economy and public services really need you, but actually we're inviting you grudgingly, because we don't really want you to be here and we certainly will not be doing anything to make you feel welcome." There is a big difference between those attitudes, and that feeds into the problem with the Conservative amendment today. It says that the UK Government

"has stated the intention to protect the status of all EU nationals currently in the UK".

Those words look reassuring but, behind them is still the sense that those EU nationals are not wanted.

Others have mentioned the good moves on the part of the EU, including the European working time directive. The hours that junior doctors have had to work, which Rhoda Grant referred to, have been absolutely scandalous. I very much fear for the direction of employment law in the UK without our European friends and colleagues keeping an eye on us.

We can debate the numbers and technicalities for a long time, and I am sure that we will do so in the coming months. However, today, I hope that we can send a message to all those who work in our NHS and beyond that we hugely value their work, whatever their nationality, and that we very much hope that they will stay.

16:12

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Like a couple of members of other parties, I regret that we do not, as the gloom gathers outside, have the colour of Alex Neil to add to the debate. As a former health secretary, he could have brought to the debate a wealth of experience. Further, given his recent announcement that he was belatedly a Brexit supporter, he could have brought a different perspective.

I do not have a tremendous issue with what Alex Neil said about Brexit, although I do not agree with it. He at least reflects the reality of the fact that 36 per cent of the SNP's voters voted to exit the EU. The reality across political parties is that although all our members belong to one political party, there tend to be disagreements. It would be good if we are entering a new period of SNP glasnost, as we see things beginning to open up. That could only help the debate.

It is right that members have welcomed the positive contribution of NHS staff—and of EU staff in the NHS. After all, there are 181,000 EU nationals in Scotland and, as the motion notes, one in 20 NHS doctors is from an EU country. There is a real element of sharing. People come here and make a contribution to the Scottish economy, not just in the health service but elsewhere, but they also benefit from the fantastic staff that we have in the health service and other services. That is something to be celebrated.

However, it is also important that, as last week's Audit Scotland report noted, the national health service in Scotland is stretched. That the NHS has failed to achieve seven of eight of its key performance indicators shows that there are serious issues to be faced. The growth in the number of outpatients on waiting lists from

234,000 to 275,000 also indicates that there are issues.

We must question what benefit cuts, at NHS board level, of nearly £500 million will give to the service. One example is Lightburn hospital, which provides a service—a dedicated Parkinson's service in particular—to many pensioners in the area. If the hospital closes, that will be detrimental to the overall service.

There is another aspect to the debate. People are right to compliment the NHS. In an excellent speech, Richard Lochhead celebrated the way in which the NHS has been beneficial to his family, and the contribution of EU nationals to that. The Government sometimes downplays the impact of Brexit on its areas of responsibility. There are some real issues coming down the line in relation to health aspects of the Scottish budget. Yesterday's report from BDO LLP indicates that inflation will continue to rise, which could undermine growth in the Scottish economy. We are getting more powers and an opportunity to raise more through taxes, but lower growth could lead to real pressures if tax revenues go down. The NHS budget makes up 40 per cent of the overall budget, and 55 per cent of that is wages, so there is the potential for prices to rise faster than people's wages.

People are right to celebrate the NHS and the contribution of EU nationals, but we must also look at the issues coming down the line in the Scottish budget and the impact that they will have on the NHS. If the service continues to be stretched, as the Audit Scotland report noted, and the older demographic continues to grow, there will be real challenges.

People are right, in debates on the EU, to voice their concerns about Brexit and the UK Government's approach, but we need a more comprehensive debate on the response of the Government and Parliament to the issues that confront us directly. I hope that members bear that in mind for future discussions.

16:17

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Like many in the chamber, I woke on 24 June to discover that the UK as a whole had voted to leave the European Union and that Scotland had overwhelmingly voted to remain as part of the EU. The lack of a coherent plan by those who had led us a merry dance towards an economic cliff edge quickly became apparent to all. The major players on both sides of the debate quickly exited the stage and questions about what happens next were met with "Brexit means Brexit" and little other explanation.

Perhaps the cruellest thing to happen since the vote has been the upsurge in racial attacks on our European brothers and sisters who have made this country their home—thankfully, much less so in Scotland than in the rest of the UK, but one attack is one too many. To compound that, EU citizens have become bargaining chips in a game of brinkmanship yet to be played out between the Westminster Government and the EU. They are left with no certainty about their future here and about whether they will be welcome to continue to build their lives here. That is just plain wrong.

We face challenges in recruiting and retaining staff in our health and social care sector. At last week's Health and Sport Committee, we heard evidence from a number of sources about recruitment and retention in the health and social care sector across Scotland. Unison Scotland alone estimates that it has 6,000 members who are EU nationals, many of whom work in home care or care-at-home settings. Those workers care for some of the most vulnerable in our society, ensuring that our older adults can remain at home; giving respite to carers so that they can have some quality of life while still looking after a loved one; and helping families with disabled children so that those kids and their siblings can have parents who are not exhausted and drained by the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Those are areas in which we need to grow our workforce, not contract the pool of workers from which we can draw. The current uncertainty around the status of EU nationals does not help with growing the workforce to the levels that we require. We heard evidence from professional bodies, trade unions and health and social care providers. When we asked them about the effect that Brexit could have on their sectors, we heard warning after warning and profound concerns about the effect that it could have on our health and social care workforce.

There are concerns from others that Brexit is already impacting on recruitment and retention in the health and social care workforce. There have been reports of EU citizens looking to move back home or to other EU countries for work. Highly trained health and social care professionals are in great demand worldwide and there is no shortage of opportunities for them. There are also reports of a major national organisation closing its recruitment office in continental Europe following the sharp downturn in people trying to access healthcare employment in the UK.

In my constituency of Rutherglen, I was recently approached by a constituent who holds a senior management post in a local care home. My constituent expressed grave concerns about the impact that the vote to leave the EU has had on a significant section of his workforce. Nationals from

several EU countries are employed in various caring and support roles at that local nursing home. They are worried that they may not be allowed to stay in this country, a place that they have called home for many years, but the impact of any change in their circumstances runs much deeper than that.

Many of my constituent's colleagues are long embedded in their local communities, with children attending nurseries and schools, involved in clubs and local activities, learning and passing exams and working towards contributing to our workforce and society in the future. Through no fault of their own, those people are now faced with a level of uncertainty that is unfair and, quite frankly, cruel. Many are contemplating the prospect of having to leave Scotland and possibly uproot their families. Given that the Health and Sport Committee was told only last week that the health and social care sector will have to recruit up to 60,000 care workers to meet increasing demand in the future, we can ill afford to lose a significant number of the dedicated workforce who are already in place.

I do not wish to sound as though this is a one-way street, where we are interested only in our own selfish needs to have our hospitals and care homes staffed. Yes, it is imperative that we address the challenges that the sector faces in attracting staff to meet health and social care requirements in the future. However, that will involve ensuring that jobs in the sector are valued and attractive roles for everyone; that there are adequate training and development opportunities for staff; that staff are paid at least the Scottish living wage; that we strive to eradicate exploitative zero-hours and nominal-hours contracts from the sector; and that we have fair and equitable terms and conditions, including sick pay, travel time and annual leave.

Sadly, the Health and Sport Committee took evidence that indicates that in some cases workers' rights in the sector did not meet what we would regard as basic entitlements. Of course, many core rights and protections are guaranteed by EU legislation. A Brexit solution that drags us out of the single market threatens those protections and, coupled with the lack of assurances on the status of EU nationals in the sector, seriously undermines our ability to recruit to our requirements.

EU nationals in the health and social care sector make a valuable contribution to our society. They care for us and our families, they benefit our economy and they make our society rich and diverse. Our message to EU citizens is simple: Scotland is your home. You are welcome and your contribution to our economy, society and culture is valued. We also have a simple message for Theresa May and her Brexiteers: stop

undermining our public services by using our EU brothers and sisters as bargaining chips in your bungled Brexit games, and give them the assurances about their status that they deserve.

16:24

Rachael Hamilton (South Scotland) (Con):

Like my colleagues, I recognise and pay tribute to the fantastic work that those in the health and social work profession do and the valuable contribution that staff from Scotland, the EU and beyond make. We must continue to make the Scottish NHS a welcoming and attractive sector in which to work for both EU nationals and those born and bred here. To do that, we must acknowledge and act on the difficulties that the NHS currently faces, which I will set out.

There is huge excitement in East Lothian, because after 10 years of waiting East Lothian is finally starting to see the new £70 million community hospital take shape. However, that excitement has been curtailed by the wait itself and the absence of an accident and emergency department. That, combined with an ageing population and the Scottish Government asking for 10,000 houses to be built in East Lothian, makes it crystal clear that further services and more staff will be required to meet demand. A wait-and-see approach is not good enough.

East Lothian and Scotland are used to waiting for improvements to the NHS. For years we have identified a workforce shortage, low morale in general practice and an inability to cope with an ageing population and its long-term health implications. Those concerns have long been apparent, but we have yet to see any real solutions or effective implementation of measures to deal with them.

A new hospital is much needed, but we also require people to work there. Staff retention is a growing problem in South Scotland. An Audit Scotland report that was published last month found that a consequence of recruitment and retention problems, plus the pressure to meet waiting time targets, is the rising cost of temporary staff. That was felt nowhere more than in the Borders, where the largest increase—14 per cent, or £8 million in monetary terms—was found. The Scottish NHS spent £23.5 million on agency nursing and midwifery staff, which is an increase of 47 per cent compared with 2014-15. NHS Borders was one of five boards that saw spending double.

That level of increased spending is simply unsustainable, and evidence suggests that Borders general hospital is one of those hardest hit. The level of spending on temporary staff means that such staff are vastly more expensive

than permanent staff; that, too, was detailed by Audit Scotland. The cost of agency nursing staff is more than twice the cost of permanent staff. Action needs to be taken to regain control, because the current situation is simply out of control.

A constituent recently contacted me because they had found it impossible to make an appointment to see a GP. The struggles that face general practice have been debated in the chamber before—we have all recognised that GPs' workload is far too big to manage and that morale in the profession is low. In a survey commissioned by the BMA last year, 69 per cent of GPs said that workload had a negative impact on their commitment to a career in general practice and 92 per cent of GPs said that their heavy workload has negatively impacted on the care that patients receive. It is clear that what is in place is not working for either the patient or the GP. That was only reinforced by Scottish Conservative research that found that Scotland is 830 GPs short of the number needed. No wonder it is difficult to make an appointment—we do not have enough cover.

Those issues are present now, and action needs to be taken now. The number of Scottish students applying for medicine courses has dropped by 11 per cent. Again, that is a clear sign that current practice is not working. When we associate that figure with Audit Scotland reports that there is a chronic shortage of staff across the board and that many staff are soon to retire—

Maree Todd: How will the chronic shortage of staff that the member describes be improved by the Brexit situation?

Rachael Hamilton: I thought that you might ask me that, Maree—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you use full names, please?

Rachael Hamilton: Yes. I thought that you might ask me that. On the ways to increase staff, I think that in a way you are—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can you also make sure that you do not use “you” all the time? I am sorry—on you go.

Rachael Hamilton: Okay. Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I think that the member is using Brexit as an excuse for the workforce crisis. If the SNP could look to ways of working with businesses and universities to bring down current migration rates so that we keep the brightest and best of our medical staff, to upskill our own people, and perhaps to increase the current limit on student medical places, it might have a positive impact.

We hear much in the chamber about how best to effectively address Scotland's ageing population and the long-term health conditions associated with age. Action has been agreed in the Parliament, and we all support the integration of health and social care that will see a shift from hospital care to homely, community-based settings. However, there have been reports of difficulties in that regard, too. Independent auditors have found that NHS Borders has highlighted the governance arrangements in terms of roles and responsibilities as a risk. There are visible problems in the introduction of integrated health and social care that need to be resolved, and we need to ensure that they are addressed now before they escalate.

The evidence says that there is a severe problem with recruitment and retention in Scotland, and it says that the issue is present here and now—before Brexit. It was here before the vote on 23 June. Indeed, the problems have been debated in the chamber time and time again, and we have seen little action to alleviate them. Nowhere is the problem with recruitment and retention felt more than it is in the Scottish Borders. I have outlined the huge spend that was made to fix the staff shortages. These are serious issues that must be addressed now. It does a disservice to Scotland and the Scottish NHS to blame these problems on Brexit. It does an even greater disservice to have the audacity to pretend that the problems with recruitment and retention are due to Brexit.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Emma Harper, I say to Colin Smyth and Liam Kerr that they now have seven minutes each for their winding-up speeches because there is time in hand. I know that you will be excited by that.

16:30

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): "Haben sie Schmerzen?", "Ti senti male?", "Gdzie jest ból?" or even "Are ye sair?" in Scots are the basic "Where is the pain?" questions that I taught myself to ask in several languages during my career as a theatre and recovery room nurse. If we can imagine the confusion and disorientation of coming round from an anaesthetic, it makes sense to try to ask a patient such simple but vital questions in their own language. It is comforting for them and often, in that initial confusion, it is the best way of obtaining important information.

Those words and other relevant patient care phrases were taught to me by my friends and colleagues from across Europe and further afield, and they work. One of my patients, a Polish lorry driver, said that he hoped that I would be on duty when he was due to return to the operating theatre for another operation because I could speak a few

words to him in his own language. We have an international workforce in our NHS and we treat plenty of patients who are not originally from Scotland, even in rural Dumfries and Galloway.

Looking back, it was my experience of working as an economic migrant in the American health system that led me to be so concerned about being able to communicate effectively with people when they are at their most vulnerable. I spent 14 years working in California, including time at Cedars-Sinai medical centre as a transplant nurse. It would be difficult to find a more multicultural and cosmopolitan workforce. Multiculturalism leads to better and safe patient care. This Galloway lass learned a lot from medical professionals from all over the world. That experience was incredibly valuable to me; it led me to accept other cultures and people on the basis of their knowledge and skills rather than their country of origin. That went to such a point that I am dumfooned that we are having this debate.

I support the motion in the cabinet secretary's name whole-heartedly and without reservation. The assurances in the motion are fundamental and just should not be necessary. However deplorable I find the need for it, the fact is that the reassurance is necessary now and we absolutely need to say to our friends and colleagues in the NHS who have come from other countries that their contribution is valued, appreciated and welcome.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Will Brexit make any difference to the critical level of GPs that we have in South Scotland, particularly in Stranraer? Why has the Government not been able to address that problem up to now?

Emma Harper: When I met the chief executive officer of NHS Dumfries and Galloway, he assured me that the board was doing everything that it could to attract GPs to the area, and that multiple issues need to be dealt with. [*Interruption.*]

I can hear folk shouting across the chamber; I am coming to the point. Our radiology department could not function without the Czech Republic supplying radiologists to NHS Dumfries and Galloway. We need to value the contribution of our EU NHS workforce. Those people should feel at home here in Scotland.

We have seen the unedifying promises of lists of foreign workers and reductions in the NHS's reliance on foreign staff once we have trained more British doctors and nurses. I accept that there have been U-turns on both those promises, but the damage that was done by raising the prospect of such measures should not be underestimated.

In Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary, many EU nationals are working in many departments. While I was listening to the start of the debate, I listed, just off the top of my head, 13 countries that are represented in the operating room, where I worked. It did not matter in the slightest where our radiology department doctors came from until the Tories decided to put the issue front and centre. In an operating theatre, the patient on the table has no nationality. When we open the abdomen, the organs do not tell us which country they are from; they tell us only that the person is a human being.

The fact of there being multiple nationalities in the surgical team can facilitate innovation, creativity and the pooling of global knowledge, to make modern surgery safe, effective and successful every day.

Someone who has not been in an operating theatre is probably not aware that before every procedure staff take a time-out—a pause in which we double-check safety issues. The technique is promoted by American neurosurgeon Dr Atul Gawande, to enhance best practice. It is the moment when the whole team pauses to check absolutely everything, before the scalpel touches the skin, and it is one of the great strengths of our NHS that we embedded the time-out concept in our world-leading patient safety programme.

I particularly endorse the line in the motion that asks that the Parliament

“recognises the valuable contribution that health and care staff from across the EU, and beyond, make to Scotland”.

It is a great strength of Scottish society that we are prepared to accept and welcome people from throughout the EU. Let me offer a prescription, even though I was not a prescribing nurse. To the politicians in Westminster, to Prime Minister Theresa May and to the media, who whipped up a storm against foreign workers, I say that before they continue to bash foreign workers they might like to implement Dr Gawande’s time-out.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much.

Now, this is not a rebuke to Emma Harper, but, just for information for new members, let me say that before you use a language other than English, even if it is just a short phrase, you must seek the Presiding Officer’s consent. That is in rule 7.1 of standing orders, for members who want to know that. I did not expect everyone to know, but that is the point—it is for the Official Report.

16:37

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Presiding Officer, you will be pleased to know that I very much intend to speak in English, albeit with a bit of a Doonhamer accent.

For the record, I declare an interest in relation to the debate. When I was elected in May I was employed by Parkinson’s UK; that employment ceased at the end of May. I am also a local councillor on Dumfries and Galloway Council.

Our national health service remains our nation’s most treasured possession and is, without question, Labour’s greatest achievement. In government, we created our NHS, and in the Scottish Parliament and throughout the country, we will be unflinching in defending it. However, the credit for the enduring success of our nation’s most precious institution lies not with politicians but with the often heroic actions of its greatest asset: our health and social care staff. Those public servants care for our loved ones as if they were their own, and we should never stop thanking them for doing so.

It is appropriate that so many members have talked about the “dedication and commitment”—as the cabinet secretary put it—of health and social care staff, even though those staff might be a little too busy to listen to the debate, as Jackson Carlaw said.

In particular, the debate has provided members with an opportunity to put on record our thanks to the EU migrants—the doctors, the nurses, the midwives and the care workers—who work day in and day out to save lives and care for our families across Scotland and the UK. Joan McAlpine mentioned the photo that is circulating on social media, which shows staff from Britain, Ireland, Germany, Spain and Greece.

As Rhoda Grant said, during the EU referendum campaign we were all fed propaganda by the Brexiteers. The poster on their big red bus told us that the NHS would receive an extra £350 million a week if we left the EU, and we were told that our public services would be saved if we barricaded ourselves in against a flood of migrants. The truth is that there is no £350 million extra per week for the NHS and that if we go to hospital we are more likely to come across a migrant caring for us than a migrant lying in the next bed.

It is estimated that Scotland’s health and social care sector employs about 12,000 EU nationals. We all know that parts of the sector simply would not function without their contribution, yet today’s debate has shown that the fundamental question of what will happen to each and every one of the EU nationals who work in the UK remains unanswered. Will existing staff have to leave if they do not earn enough to meet an income threshold in order to renew a visa? What restrictions will there be on recruiting new staff? Our chronic staff shortages will become worse without immediate access to the pool of qualified staff from other European countries. As Maree Todd said, it is nearly six months since the UK

voted to leave the EU and we still do not know the answer to those questions.

What about patient care? The financial challenges facing the NHS are, as Audit Scotland described last week, “unprecedented”. In its report, “NHS in Scotland 2016”, Audit Scotland stated:

“NHS funding is not keeping pace with increasing demand and the needs of an ageing population.”

Health boards had to make savings of £291 million in 2015-16, and the savings to be made this year will rise to £492 million. As James Kelly said, there is no doubt that the economic shock of the vote to leave the EU risks plunging the health and social care sector into a financial crisis that is even deeper than the one that it currently faces. The economy is slowing and tax income is lower as a result, so public sector spending could well be squeezed even further. Indeed, just today, the Institute for Fiscal Studies warned that the UK’s public finances have deteriorated by £25 billion since the March budget.

Although those are the immediate concerns over Brexit, members have raised other issues in the health and social care sector that we need to start to plan for now. The cabinet secretary rightly highlighted EU standards in professional regulation and employment law, particularly the working time directive; she also rightly emphasised the need to maintain and retain the reciprocal healthcare system that allows UK citizens to be treated across the EU.

There are also the wider public health impacts of the loss of EU environmental and food regulation, not to mention the loss of research funding and opportunities for research collaboration. As Anas Sarwar said, we should be concerned about the approach that the UK Government might take to trade deals. If we think that the EU made a mess of TTIP and CETA, imagine what ministers such as Boris Johnston and Liam Fox could do.

What can we do here in Scotland to best protect our NHS and our social care sector? I have said that, even before Brexit, our NHS and our social care sector were facing staffing and financial challenges, and it would be remiss of the Parliament today not to at least acknowledge that, given that it is less than two weeks since the Audit Scotland report came out.

Last week, in her statement to Parliament in response to Audit Scotland’s report, the cabinet secretary said that Audit Scotland made several recommendations that the Government “accept in full”. The amended motion that was agreed to following the health debate later that day stated:

“That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Audit Scotland report”.—[*Official Report*, 2 November 2016; c 99.]

Labour’s reasonable amendment today simply asks that we place on record what we all know: that our health and social care workforce faces significant challenges, as was highlighted in the Audit Scotland report. If we accept Audit Scotland’s recommendations in full, there is no reason for us not to accept Labour’s amendment today.

As Anas Sarwar said, we know that staffing levels are under pressure: there is a shortfall of 830 GPs just to take us back to 2009 levels, and there are 350 consultant and 2,500 nursing and midwifery vacancies. We are struggling to fill posts with access to all EU nationals, so recruiting the additional 65,000 health and care staff that the sector will need by 2022 will be even more challenging. Therefore, we need to redouble our efforts in valuing our health and social care workers for the job that they do.

When I made my first speech on health in the Parliament in June, I said that,

“As someone who was instrumental in ensuring that ... Dumfries and Galloway Council became the first council to gain living wage accreditation”,

I very much welcomed

“the commitment to pay the living wage in the social care sector.”—[*Official Report*, 7 June 2016; c 60.]

We need to complete that unfinished business and make sure that payment of the living wage is extended to all care workers, including those who carry out sleepover shifts, and then build on that achievement with not only fair pay, but training and adequate time to care. Indeed, I commend Unison’s ethical care charter as a template for the fair and ethical employment practices that we would all like to see.

It has been clear from the debate that Brexit creates considerable threats for the health and social care sector—a sector that we know is already under considerable pressure.

16:45

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I would like to say, at the outset, what a fascinating, illuminating and novel debate we have had this afternoon—but I cannot. This is the 10th in a series of debates. As my colleague Oliver Mundell lamented in closing last week:

“It is essentially the same debate ... the Government has cut out the word ‘environment’ and inserted the word ‘justice’. ... As members have said, it is becoming a bit like groundhog day.”—[*Official Report*, 1 November 2016; c 62.]

The point is as valid today as it was last week.

It would not be so concerning if the quality of contribution from the Government seats was not so weak. Last week, at portfolio question time, in one of the classic sycophantic exchanges that the Scottish Government enjoys, Graeme Dey cued up Keith Brown, who replied:

“In addition to the jobs and financial benefits that we have received, we benefit massively from being a more rich and diverse country because of our membership of the European Union.”—[*Official Report*, 2 November 2016; c 6.]

Let us just think about that answer. It is not “membership” of the European Union that makes Scotland a more rich and diverse country. Mr Brown conflated and confused the two separate concepts of “membership” and “relationship”—hence our amendment today. The Government really needs to work out the difference and reflect on whether it is comfortable supporting its initial, ambiguously worded motion.

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): On the member’s point about groundhog day, when is his party going to tell us what Brexit means?

Liam Kerr: I thank the minister for that intervention. Our party is negotiating, and it is talking to her party about what Brexit means. I expect that to continue.

Does Scotland value its EU workforce? Of course it does. When the Government set up the debate, it did not think that anyone would disagree. Maree Todd was right to say that we should be able to assume certain things, and member after member queued up to appreciate the valuable contribution that EU nationals make to our health and social care sector. Their contribution is just as valuable as that of the UK nationals in the health and social care sector, just as valuable as the contribution of the non-UK, non-EU nationals in Scotland’s health and social care sector and—as Donald Cameron made clear at the outset—just as valuable as the contributions of those nationals to our wider economy in industry, agriculture and construction.

Just yesterday, I visited a fish processor in Peterhead and was told about the fear that its EU nationals felt because of the apparent uncertainty that exists—this despite the UK Government having committed to retain all EU employment protections post-Brexit and having stated its intention to protect the status of all EU nationals who are currently in the UK.

Joan McAlpine: Perhaps the member’s constituents at the fish-processing factory are concerned because Liam Fox described them as bargaining cards. That might be the reason for their fear.

Liam Kerr: I am not convinced that Liam Fox ever used those exact words. Let me come on to

what is going on—I thank Joan McAlpine for bringing the matter up.

Only last month, Ruth Davidson said:

“for those who have already chosen to build a life, open a business, make a contribution, I say this is your home, and you are welcome here.”

So, why the fear? Actually, it is not surprising because, almost on a weekly basis, we have sat on these seats and listened as SNP member after SNP member has decried the allegedly bigoted language of the Tory party and has tried to suggest—as Maree Todd did today—that we are xenophobic. Donald Cameron talked positively of opportunities only for Joan McAlpine to accuse the Tories of wanting to get rid of EU staff and of “pulling up the drawbridge” on foreign-born NHS staff. John Mason then confirmed the UK Government’s positive words but said that, behind them was the sense that those people are “not wanted”. As Miles Briggs said, the Scottish Government refuses to acknowledge the reassurances that are being given, and such rhetoric is very dangerous indeed.

John Mason: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam Kerr: I will not, because I have a lot to get through.

The rhetoric is likely to rebound given that, as Jackson Carlaw pointed out, in 2014 Nicola Sturgeon threatened to strip EU nationals of their “right to remain” in an independent Scotland unless the EU accepted Scotland as a member state. SNP members should read the reports. Half of SNP supporters backed plans to make firms report foreign worker numbers, and roughly 400,000 of the more than 1 million people in Scotland who voted to leave the EU voted for the SNP in 2015, so Joan McAlpine should recognise that it is hardly a “Conservative Brexit gamble”. I say to the SNP that we have had enough of the scaremongering. The people of Scotland can see what is going on.

The Scottish Government is using Brexit as a convenient shield to disguise the facts. We have an NHS that is in crisis—as James Kelly said, it has missed seven out of eight of its targets and has rocketing waiting lists. There is a crisis of confidence in our educational establishments: school teachers are unhappy with intolerable pressure and low numbers; 150,000 college places have been slashed; and universities are concerned about the limited number of places that are available for Scots students.

The Government is also using Brexit as a shield to disguise its raid on the council tax, in which it is plundering hard-working families and spending not locally but elsewhere, and to disguise the fact that we have yet to have presented to the Parliament

one bill that the Government wants to implement this session.

I hope that today marks a watershed, after which we will see the end of the SNP's use of petty, ill-informed and generic language. I also hope that, in accepting our amendment, the Government can set a marker as to how we can move ahead constructively and for all the people of Scotland in a manner that does not airbrush 1 million leave voters from history. Let us get back to debating bills, programmes and ways to save the NHS, our education system and our local councils from the chaos that is being visited upon them by the SNP Government instead of spending two hours talking about inoffensive, safe and ultimately meaningless motions that have been presented by an Executive so tired, so out of ideas, so stuck in a rut and so obsessed with separatism that governing is the last thing on its mind. Let us see some governing from this Executive, for all our sakes.

16:51

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell):

Thank you very much Presiding Officer, and let me start at the end, with Liam Kerr's contribution. Mr Kerr quoted my speech about the closing speech of Oliver Mundell last week. In my closing speech in that debate, I praised Oliver Mundell. He made a fine speech, in which he raised some real issues. I have to say to Mr Kerr that he is no Oliver Mundell.

It is astonishing that the Tories are still resistant to debating and discussing the issues of Brexit. The Tories—Mr Kerr, in particular—want to sweep under the carpet the concerns of hundreds of thousands of people and the worsening prospects for the economy and for trade. In his speech, Mr Kerr asked why he is not being believed. Let me tell him. In his speech, he talked about the EU citizens in the independence referendum. I was active in the referendum and I heard what the no campaign—the Tories, in particular—said during it. They threatened European citizens: they told them that if they voted yes, they would have nowhere to stay and would be sent home. Those citizens were lied to. That is why no one—no one in those communities, no one in the Parliament and no one in Scotland—will believe the Tories ever again.

If that were not a big enough problem, at the end of his speech, Mr Kerr described the debate—a debate about the work of hard-working NHS staff and individuals who have contributed to our society, who wish to stay here; I will come on to some of the tributes that have been paid to them shortly—as “meaningless”. No one will trust a Tory who says that it is “meaningless” to talk about the work of NHS staff. That will be remembered in

Parliament for a long, long time. Oliver Mundell would not have made that mistake.

I turn to the other contributions to the debate. I was particularly impressed by those of three members. The first was the speech of my old colleague and friend, Richard Lochhead, who talked about the impact of the NHS and NHS workers on his own family. That was not “meaningless”. Maree Todd spoke about the impact on friends and colleagues of hers in the NHS when they were treated as foreigners. They did not regard that as “meaningless”.

Emma Harper talked about the good practice in the operating theatre that she worked in, where they used a method that was promoted by Dr Atul Gawande, who is very much worth reading. She also talked about the way in which people worked together, no matter where they came from. That is not a “meaningless” contribution to the health of citizens in this country.

Anas Sarwar will find it surprising that I want to mention his contribution to the debate, too. However, for the most part, he put aside the political divides that exist to make it clear that on this issue we all need to do

“all that we can to minimise the consequences”

of the current Brexit debate on all who work in the NHS and all who use it. He was absolutely right to make that point, which was echoed by James Kelly and others.

Richard Lochhead pointed out something that Colin Smyth referred to, which was the mysterious missing £350 million a week, of which at least a proportion was to come to Scotland to be used in the NHS. Not a single penny of that money is going to be seen because that was, unfortunately, another lie. It was a lie that no doubt persuaded some people to vote to leave. It is not money that we will ever see—it is money that will not come to Scotland but which could have been useful in Scotland. Unfortunately, the claim about it was not true.

Among the contributions to the debate were two distinguished Tory speeches. I am going to embarrass both the contributors, who were Oliver Mundells in that sense. Jackson Carlaw was very clear that he wants a message to be sent out to NHS staff that they are valued and that he wants them to stay. Indeed, he made the very good point that the demographics in Scotland require that those staff be employed here. Donald Cameron gave the same message, although it was perhaps circumscribed a little by his role on the Tory front bench. However, he said that he wants to ensure that those staff stay.

I say to both those members—who I know were both strong remainers—that all they have to do in

the circumstances is say to the Prime Minister, who is another Tory party remainer, that those NHS workers are needed. They need to say it often—surely the Prime Minister will listen to that message from those two distinguished contributors. If she does, perhaps we can get an end to the endless speculation that Liam Kerr apparently believes is “meaningless” but which is actually about the entire future of those NHS staff and, indeed, their families.

I now come to the least cogent Tory contribution to the debate—I am sorry that I wrote that down before I heard Liam Kerr’s contribution—which I am afraid came from Miles Briggs, who is experienced in politics; he worked in Parliament for some time. Unfortunately, he was factually incorrect on two key issues, the first of which was the education cap. There is no cap on Scottish university places—that is quite clear. In health, as elsewhere, there is workforce planning.

Miles Briggs: Universities Scotland has said that it is getting harder and harder for Scottish applicants to win a place at universities here, thanks to the strict controls that have been imposed. Is that a cap, or not? What is Universities Scotland referring to?

Michael Russell: The number of places was increased this year. I am quite happy to quote the figures, which suggest that 8.6 per cent of the total of 40,000 places in these islands should be in Scottish medical schools, which would be 3,446. However, there are actually 4,857 places. We are therefore training a third more than we have to, and the reason for that is workforce planning. Alex Neil, who has been—*[Interruption.]* The Tories, of course, do not like—

Miles Briggs: Will the minister take an intervention?

Michael Russell: No, I am sorry. I have to make this point.

The Tories do not like the idea of workforce planning, but the reality is that every year the deans of the medical schools sit down with the cabinet secretaries for health and education and plan what will go ahead. However, according to Mr Briggs, they should just abandon that planning. Does Mr Briggs know better than the deans of the medical schools; does he know how many places are required? No, he does not know how many are required. That information is held by universities and the Government. The result is that we train more than our population share.

I will correct Mr Briggs on another point. He described me as a Grinch. I find that very sad. However, the more I thought about it, the more I decided to go into the role this afternoon. The definition of a Grinch is someone who

“spoils or dampens the pleasures of others.”

I am delighted to spoil or dampen the pleasures of those who reject the importance of migration to Scotland. I am delighted to spoil or dampen the pleasures of those who refuse to listen to the Scottish electorate, who said that they want to stay in Europe, and I am absolutely delighted to spoil or dampen the pleasure of the born-again Brexiteers in the Tory party.

Finally, I relish the chance of spoiling or dampening the pleasure of any member of this Parliament who thinks that the contribution to the health service of those from other parts of the EU is “meaningless”. I rejoice in that role.

Business Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-02405, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 9 November 2016—

after

2.00 pm

Portfolio Questions

Rural Economy and Connectivity;

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

insert

followed by

Ministerial Statement: MoD Basing Reforms—[*Joe FitzPatrick*].

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-02325, on substitution on committees.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following nominated committee substitutes, as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

Scottish Liberal Democrats

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee: Mike Rumbles

Education and Skills Committee: Liam McArthur

Equalities and Human Rights Committee: Willie Rennie

Health and Sport Committee: Willie Rennie

Justice Committee: Tavish Scott

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee: Alex Cole-Hamilton—[*Joe FitzPatrick*].

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

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put today. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Donald Cameron is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Anas Sarwar will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-02355.2, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S5M-02355, in the name of Shona Robison, on Scotland values its European Union workforce, 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)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (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)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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 28, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-02355.1, in the name of Anas Sarwar, which seeks to amend motion S5M-02355, in the name of Shona Robison, on Scotland values its EU workforce, 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)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (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)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (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 Annesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 86, Against 29, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-02355, in the name of Shona Robison, on Scotland values its EU workforce, 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)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (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)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)

Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (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)
 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)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that Scotland's interests are best served by protecting its existing relationship in

Europe, maintaining membership of the single market; recognises the valuable contribution that health and care staff from across the EU, and beyond, make to Scotland; notes that around 1 in 20 NHS doctors in Scotland come from other parts of the EU; resolves to continue promoting Scotland as a welcoming place for Europeans to work in the health and social care sector; is concerned that the outcome of the EU referendum will make it harder to recruit and retain EU citizens to work in health and care services in Scotland, and to study medicine, nursing and dentistry here, particularly as the health and social care workforce already face significant challenges, as highlighted in the recent Audit Scotland report, *NHS in Scotland 2016*, and considers that Brexit will only add to the pressures facing staff; deplores the potential threat that Brexit poses to social and employment protection, which are vital to NHS staff; demands that the UK Government stops using NHS staff from the EU as “bargaining chips”, and calls on the UK Government to ensure that Scotland is fully involved in decision-making, and in all negotiations between the UK Government and the EU to protect the interests of the health and social care workforce in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-02325, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees the following nominated committee substitutes, as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

Scottish Liberal Democrats

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee: Mike Rumbles

Education and Skills Committee: Liam McArthur

Equalities and Human Rights Committee: Willie Rennie

Health and Sport Committee: Willie Rennie

Justice Committee: Tavish Scott

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee: Alex Cole-Hamilton

Species Champions Initiative (Relaunch)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members’ business debate on motion S5M-01734, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the relaunch of the species champions initiative. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the relaunch of the Species Champions initiative; understands that Scottish Environment LINK is asking MSPs to become species champions so that they can contribute to the conservation of “their” species in Parliament and help support action in the wider community; welcomes the at least 50 members from across all five parties in the Parliament who have already signed up to the initiative, and understands that, in order to help protect biodiversity in Angus South and across Scotland, Scottish Environment LINK hopes that those members who are yet to get involved will be able to do so.

17:06

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I thank members across the chamber, from all five parties, for supporting the motion, which celebrates the relaunch of Scottish Environment LINK’s species champion initiative, and I welcome to the visitors gallery Eleanor Harris and Daphne Vlastari from Scottish Environment LINK.

I am delighted to advise members that 57 of us have now taken on the role of species champion. We are participating in a programme that asks MSPs to lend political support to the protection of Scotland’s threatened wildlife and to work alongside 15 organisations through Scottish Environment LINK. The figure falls some way short of the figure that was achieved in the previous session, when the initiative was launched but, given that we are just six months into the current session and that retirements have robbed us of stalwarts such as Rob Gibson, Jamie McGrigor and Mary Scanlon, it is fair to say that we are well on course to better the previous total of 76 species champions. That is important because, given the scale of the challenge that we face in protecting threatened species and our wider biodiversity, it is incumbent on all of us—not just those of us who serve on the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee—to provide leadership in the area.

I invite colleagues who have not yet signed up to come along to the introduction event that I will host in the Parliament at lunch time on Thursday and make the commitment. Scottish Environment LINK hopes to have more than 100 champions in the Parliament, and I offer fair warning to the remaining 72 members that it is persistent.

It is good to see again MSPs from urban as well as rural areas participating, because nature, as with the threats to its variety, is not restricted to the countryside. Although we have wonderful countryside in my constituency and in wider Scotland, there is wildlife and the natural environment in our towns and cities, too.

It has been great to see MSPs diving right into their new roles. Maree Todd did that literally in trying Scotland's new snorkel trail with the Scottish Wildlife Trust in order to learn more about flame shells. I note that Ruth Maguire and Angus MacDonald got up close and personal with their species. However, I have to say gently to Tavish Scott, who is the orca champion, that being filmed holding a toy replica, even at the waterside, really does not count.

I became the species champion for the woolly willow in 2013. That role has taken me to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Corrie Fee in Glen Doll in my constituency and the Ben Lawers nature reserve to learn more about the challenges that have to be overcome if we are to restore the damage that has been done to the woolly willow by overgrazing and climate change. Those visits helped to inform a newsletter that I sent around all the primary schools in my area. I hoped that it would prompt nature projects or at least help to inform nature projects that were taking place.

To prove that I was listening when I was out and about, I will tell members a wee bit about the woolly willow. It is a low shrub with woolly, grey-green leaves that is now restricted to ungrazed areas at high altitude. In all non-arid mountain systems, montane scrub, which consists of species such as the woolly willow, is an important habitat above the tree line. Montane scrub supports a range of unusual plants and invertebrates and is an important foraging area for birds and mammals. In Scotland, that habitat is now virtually absent because of historical grazing by red deer and sheep.

Woolly willow formerly occurred in the scrub zone at the upper limit of forest on mountains with the richest soils, but it has more recently become largely restricted to cliffs. Mountain hares now get in on the grazing act thanks to reduced snow lines, courtesy of climate change.

Nearly all the present localities for the woolly willow are in the central Highlands. Only four of its 13 remaining populations have more than 100 plants. It is estimated that the total number across Scotland is about 1,800 plants. That is why the species is on the endangered list, along with many other species, and that is why Scottish Environment LINK needs MSPs to help to raise awareness of the situation.

The "State of Nature 2016—Scotland" report, which was published in September, detailed work by a number of environmental organisations. It revealed that in Scotland, despite undisputed progress being made in a majority of the areas that are covered by the biodiversity route map to 2020, more than half—I repeat half—of the plant and bird species are declining. A great deal more is required to be done by all of us and not least by us species champions.

With your agreement, Presiding Officer, I will conclude there, because although in the normal course of events, I would happily take up my allocated time in a members' business debate, in this instance I think that my role is more that of scene setter than being centre stage. I know that a considerable number of colleagues are seeking the opportunity to highlight their allotted species, the challenges that those species face and what actions we as MSPs intend to take to make constituents much more aware and mindful of the threats that are posed to our biodiversity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Dey. You are stealing the words from my script—indeed, a load of members want to speak, so I am minded to accept a motion from Graeme Dey, under rule 8.14.3 of standing orders, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I hope that members will all stick to three minutes each, because that is the only way in which we will manage to get all the species mentioned and let everyone speak.

17:11

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I sincerely thank and congratulate my friend Graeme Dey on securing the debate. The number of MSPs who are taking part demonstrates well the pride that we all take in being species champions. I also thank Scottish Environment LINK, which has done a fantastic job in encouraging MSPs to adopt and promote a species.

Today I proclaim myself to be the proud slow worm champion. In all truth, since the day that I was first elected to a council in 1988, I never imagined in almost 30 years of Sundays that I would ever utter such words. However, I have a job to do on behalf of the slow worm and the first thing that I want to clear up is the fact that it is not a worm at all, and neither is it a snake—it is a fantastic reptile. Although it is superficially a

snake, it is actually a legless lizard. *[Laughter.]* I am glad that I brought a laugh to the minister.

The slow worm is 40cm long and can live for up to 50 years. Unlike snakes, slow worms can blink. They have a flat, forked tongue and, very cleverly, they can lose their tails if they are attacked.

Slow worms are one of our most threatened species. Although they may not be the cutest of animals, they are striking. Males are usually grey or brown—some with bright blue spots—and females and juveniles are bronze or gold, with dark flanks, and often with a stripe down the back. I have brought along a picture of a particularly handsome slow worm for everyone to see. I think that members will agree with me that it is a particularly enhanced variety.

It may surprise some to hear, after seeing the picture, that the slow worm is something of a Casanova—yes, it is true. Courtship in the slow worm world can often last for as long as 10 hours before copulation occurs. I never in my wildest dreams—and I have had some wild dreams, I can tell you—thought that I would be standing in the chamber talking about the sex life of a reptile.

On a completely unrelated matter, I have no idea why I was chosen to be the slow worm champion. However, as a gardener, I am pleased that we have slow worms in some gardens in Scotland—unfortunately, not enough. Known as the gardener's friend, they spend the majority of their time in deep vegetation or underground in humid, overgrown areas of rough grassland, woodland edges, scrub, gardens, allotments and railway embankments. Best of all, they eat lots and lots of slugs and other garden pests. No wonder they are called the gardener's friend.

In all seriousness, Scottish Environment LINK and, in the case of the slow worm, Froglife, are doing a fantastic and invaluable job of promoting species. That is my three minutes up, so thank you, Presiding Officer.

17:14

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): It is an honour and a privilege to participate in the debate. I recognise the contribution of the Woodland Trust and of Lorna Scott from RSPB Scotland, whom Graeme Dey missed out when he mentioned people from Scottish Environment LINK. I thank everyone who has made the debate possible.

I am the species champion for the Arran whitebeam, which, like me, resides in the west of Scotland. It is an endangered endemic tree species that is found naturally only on the Isle of Arran and which is believed to have been a

feature of Arran woodlands since around 4,500 BC.

All the Arran whitebeams are under threat. In 2004, a Scottish Natural Heritage report stated that only 857 Arran whitebeams were left on the island, and it is believed that only a handful of Catacol whitebeams are growing naturally on Arran. That makes it one of the rarest trees in the world. The small size of the population leaves it incredibly vulnerable to extinction.

The existing tree population is threatened by a number of factors, including grazing by deer and sheep, poor soil, exposure to bad weather and pests. One way of assisting the species is to increase surrounding woodland cover to enable the whitebeams to reproduce—Bruce Crawford and I seem to be on a bit of a line in that respect.

SNH is working with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the local Dougarie estate to protect the trees. To ensure their long-term survival, the botanic garden is growing saplings in its nursery, and it has recently planted examples of the trees outside the Scottish Parliament. On Arran, enclosures have been established to protect the trees from overgrazing and the condition of the trees is regularly monitored.

Not only is the whitebeam species very rare but it represents one of the very few tree species that are unique to Scotland, which are therefore a hugely important part of our natural heritage. Such trees provide an invaluable insight into the evolution of trees and species diversification, and their study offers an incredibly important contribution to scientific research. I am therefore committed to the protection and promotion of the trees, which is enormously important.

17:17

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I am delighted to be the species champion for the red squirrel, which is the United Kingdom's only native squirrel. Numbers have declined rapidly since the introduction in the 19th century of grey squirrels from North America. Greys have replaced the native reds in much of the UK, because they compete for food and habitat and transmit the deadly squirrel pox virus. Action to protect the reds from the greys through population control is therefore necessary.

The saving Scotland's red squirrels programme aims to sustain populations of reds across the current red-only range, north of the grey squirrel distribution, and in the central Lowlands and key areas of south Scotland. The project partners are the Scottish Wildlife Trust, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates and the Red Squirrel Survival Trust.

In my constituency, 40 red squirrels were released at Dundonnell estate. Some managed to migrate towards Ullapool and, at the end of 2015, they were being seen around cottages 3 miles south of Ullapool. Sadly, some are being killed on the roads. In light of that, BEAR Scotland was approached to ask whether squirrel signs could be erected. BEAR said that it was considering putting up signs, but there was a consultation process, which went on for months. The community decided to take matters into its own hands and put up two signs either side of Leckmelm garden, but one of those was on a council road sign and BEAR came and took it away.

As members will imagine, that upset the locals, especially the children, so they decided to make their own signs, which got great publicity in the press and on social media. That resulted in the intervention by the then transport minister, and signs were eventually put up.

As a lot of the traffic comes from the Stornoway ferry, people also approached CalMac Ferries, which allowed the kids to go on board a ferry, meet the captain and put up signs to warn people from the ferry to drive carefully when they saw squirrels. That has had a positive effect, as there have been more babies this year but, sadly, six have been reported dead on the roads in the past few weeks. In fact, there might be even more dead, as they are often driven over and destroyed before being identified or reported.

I have supported appeals to BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland, and we await a meeting with staff to look at putting up a road bridge that the squirrels might use. The hope is that that will minimise fatalities at Leckmelm, and it can perhaps be tried on other roads around Ullapool as squirrel numbers rise.

I ask BEAR Scotland, Transport Scotland and Mr Yousaf, if they are listening, to please help us—and all the other volunteers who are so committed to the project—to save our squirrels.

17:20

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing today's debate, which has had widespread interest from members and which is one of the most interesting debates that we have had so far. I thank Scottish Environment LINK for developing the species champion model. Alert members will notice that I am wearing my species champion badge. I was never good enough to get a Blue Peter badge, but, as far as I am concerned, a species champion badge is much better.

I champion the great yellow bumblebee, which can be found on the north coast of Scotland and on some of our islands. Their breeding cycle is

relatively short, which is probably an adaptation to the very brief Highland and Island summers that I experience first hand, too. Interestingly, they nest underground, often in the old burrows of small mammals.

Great yellow bumblebees are the UK's rarest bumblebees. Their population declined more than 80 per cent in the previous century, largely due to the loss of flower-rich meadows, the intensification of farming and changes in grazing practices. They only really survive in the Highlands and Islands region that I represent, where there is flower-rich machair and where traditional crofting practices are still maintained. They are found in the Western Isles, Orkney and the Hebrides; the only mainland population is in Caithness and Sutherland.

Agricultural intensification has drastically changed the landscape and taken away the three main requirements for the great yellow bumblebees' survival: nesting sites, a pollen supply throughout the season and a suitable place to hibernate through the long winters. Any action to protect them against further depletion—caused by, for example, heavy summer grazing, the addition of harmful fertilisers, the adoption of monocultures or the abandonment of rotational machair cropping—is likely also to hugely benefit a range of other insect species.

Thurso was privileged to receive a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund last year to create a fantastic project called Thurso: gateway to the great yellow, which I have had the great privilege to visit. The project created the first great yellow bumblebee town and includes education and outreach activities as well as wide-ranging practical measures to help with the preservation of this dwindling species. That has been a great boost for local biodiversity—not just for the great yellow bumblebee, but for many pollinators in the area. They have been struggling due to the reduction in wildflowers and the use of pesticides such as neonicotinoids, which are known to be destructive to those species.

Many organisations are already taking steps to work together for the great yellow bumblebee. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust has been monitoring the species and working on habitat management, and has received funding from Scottish National Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund for a dedicated bee conservation officer for Scotland. The species action framework programme has also trained many volunteers who support the species, and organisations such as the RSPB are managing their sites within the bees' distribution range to encourage them.

The initiative is excellent and I will encourage Labour members who are not yet involved to become species champions during the parliamentary session.

17:24

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I thank Scottish Environment LINK and the Marine Conservation Society for introducing me to my species. I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk tonight about the amazing flame shell. It is a beautiful scallop-like creature with lots of bright orange tentacles appearing between its two shells. It might look as if it belongs in tropical seas, but it lives off the west coast of Scotland and is a vital component of the marine ecosystem there.

What is so special about the flame shell? Few of us will ever see it in its natural habitat. It lives almost completely hidden on the seabed inside nests that are built up from shells, stones and other materials around them. The flame shell reefs are good hunting grounds for juvenile cod and haddock, and offer good attachment for scallop spat. Protecting flame shell beds helps to protect hundreds of other species and supports important nursery and feeding areas for commercial species.

Conservation of flame shell beds and other priority marine features makes commercial as well as ecological sense. Because flame shells are recognised as such an important habitat-forming species, the new marine protected areas protect them from trawling and dredging. MPAs have been welcomed in my community, but we recognise the need to have a marine monitoring strategy, to make sure that the protection is working and to demonstrate the wider benefits.

As Graeme Dey said, during the October recess, I tried out Scotland's first snorkel trail, in Clachtoll in Sutherland. The Scottish Wildlife Trust has put together welcome guidance to help visitors explore our coastline, which is bursting with marine life. I did not manage to see a flame shell, but swimming in crystal-clear waters with white sands and turquoise seas was hardly a disappointment, and I saw plenty of crabs, flounders and pollock among the sea kelp. Members might think that October is not the best time of year for snorkelling in Scotland, but I had a good wetsuit, the sun was out and, in autumn, the water is a wee bit warmer, as there is just a wee bit less melted snow flowing into the sea than there is earlier in the year.

Growing up on the west coast, on the shores of Loch Broom—where, I must add, there is a healthy population of flame shells—it was blatantly obvious that our lives and our livelihoods were inextricably linked to the sea. Good stewardship of that fragile ecosystem is vital for human survival in the north-west Highlands. Conservation, tourism, fishing and seafood are all critical elements of life, work and culture in the north-west. I invite all members to come and see the area for themselves.

17:27

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I thank Graeme Dey for hosting this important and popular debate. I am the proud champion of the hare and, in order to make the most of this brief parliamentary opportunity, I am going to speak almost as fast as the brown hare—Europe's fastest land mammal—can run.

I want to cover what we need to do to ensure that the brown hare and the mountain hare have a future in Scotland. I also want to thank Scottish Environment LINK, the Scottish Wildlife Trust, OneKind and the League Against Cruel Sports, as well as the people—constituents and non-constituents—who have written to me on the subject.

The brown hare is listed as a vulnerable and declining species, and a UK biodiversity action plan has been written for it. The brown hare needs us to maintain a diverse range of habitats, particularly in intensive agricultural settings, so that it can fully exploit its natural anti-predator strategies of avoiding detection and having a means of escape. In 2014, experts from the Scottish Wildlife Trust and I headed to the wilds of Lothian, just a few miles west of the chamber, and were much obliged to the hare who appeared and allowed us to marvel at him or her. Those experts pointed out that simply letting the edges of fields grow wild would do much to help the species, as would reforming our agricultural subsidy system to better enable farmers to deliver maximum environmental benefits.

The introduction of a national ecological network for Scotland would provide greater connectivity and would help with the availability of habitat, food and cover for the brown hare and other species. Such a network would place the same importance on planning for green and blue infrastructure as is placed on planning for grey infrastructure at the moment. I ask the cabinet secretary to ensure that we have diverse habitats and a national ecological network, please, as well as action to end the barbaric sport of hare coursing.

I will now focus on the mountain hare, which is confined to Scotland and indigenous to Scotland. Large-scale culling of mountain hares is now routine on many of our upland sporting estates in the belief that it protects red grouse against the louping ill virus, which is spread by ticks—I say "belief" because there is no scientific evidence to back that up.

Constituents and non-constituents alike have raised concerns with me about the culling of mountain hares in Scotland. One constituent wrote:

"It's most unfortunate for the white hare, that it and the red grouse can live together in such harmony in their

beautiful environment, yet they are so far apart in the financial world”,

and said that

“the sad truth is this is a case of the persecution of one species in favour of another.”

I support the Scottish conservation bodies that are calling for a compulsory three-year moratorium on the culling of mountain hares on grouse moors. It seems clear that the voluntary restraint called for by Scottish Natural Heritage provides inadequate protection for mountain hares. Given the special status of our national parks and their importance for the mountain hare, I wonder whether the cabinet secretary would consider using her powers to introduce a nature conservation order to prohibit culls and driven hare hunts in those areas.

I invite all members of Parliament to join me on 17 November at a mass lobby here, which will seek an end to the culling of mountain hares.

17:30

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I will be honest and say that, when I first heard about the species champion programme, I asked for a fox. I was not allowed one as, I am told, they are not an endangered species. They are definitely in danger, though, which I hope we can highlight at a later date.

I am grateful to my colleague Graeme Dey for securing the debate and giving me the opportunity to speak about the species that I was very lucky to be given to champion: the hedgehog. This wonderful creature got its name because of its peculiar foraging habits. It roots through hedges and other undergrowth in search of its favourite food: small creatures such as insects, worms, centipedes, snails, mice, frogs and snakes. As it moves through the hedges, it emits pig-like grunts—thus the name hedgehog. It is the diet of the hedgehog, which includes many pests, that has led to its reputation as the gardener’s friend.

Hedgehogs are in dramatic decline—a quarter of the population has been lost in the past decade. There is no single reason for the decline in hedgehog numbers; it is likely to be a combination of several factors that together make life pretty difficult for them. There are environmental changes, such as the loss and fragmentation of habitat. There are fewer hedges, woodlands and wild areas than there used to be. We are now more likely to see a hedgehog in an urban garden than in the countryside, but even there their habitat is under threat as a result of the popularity of tidy, manicured spaces, decking and monoblock, and the fencing in of gardens.

There are a number of things that people can do to encourage hedgehogs to their gardens,

including leaving areas of the garden wild or getting a hedgehog home. They can provide a little bit of food and water, make ponds safe for hedgehogs and avoid using slug pellets and other chemicals. A quick online search will give people full details about those things.

The hedgehog is nocturnal—it comes out at night and spends the day sleeping in a nest under bushes or in thick shrubs. If anyone sees a hedgehog during the day at this time of the year, it is likely to be a young one that has not had enough food yet to hibernate. In that situation, people should contact their local wildlife rescue centre, which will be able to help and advise.

I thank Hessilhead Wildlife Rescue in Beith for hosting my visit to its hedgehog hospital, and for giving me the opportunity to meet some of these amazing wee creatures and learn more about what we can all do to help. I hope that folk will consider some of the small steps that they can take in their gardens to help hedgehogs, and I look forward to playing my part as their species champion over the coming parliamentary session.

17:33

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I thank Graeme Dey for securing the debate and Scottish Environment LINK for inviting me to follow in the footsteps of former Conservative MSP Mary Scanlon and be species champion for the freshwater pearl mussel. Once again, I must declare an interest—this time in a stretch of the River Dee where we have carried out work over many years to protect what is one of the most critically endangered molluscs in the world. Half of those that remain are found in the north-west of Scotland and the Cairngorms.

Normally such a debate would allow me to go straight to the good works that are being done by so many people—but not today. Just this weekend, a pile of 100 freshwater pearl mussels were found dead at Lochinver in the Highlands. It is a protected species, so that is outrageous and nothing short of conservation vandalism. The law is very clear, so how does that continue to happen? We in Scotland have an obligation to do all that we can to protect the species from extinction.

Despite their name, freshwater pearl mussels only very occasionally bear a pearl. That results in overexploitation by pearl fishers and mass population decline. Over the past century, they have been lost from more than a third of our rivers. It was therefore great to hear in 2013 about the discovery of an unexploited population of 500,000 mussels in “River X”. That will become the benchmark for the rest of Europe. It speaks to the seriousness of the problem that we have to make

sure that the river remains nameless in order to avoid its being targeted by pearl fishers. It is vital that, as we leave the European Union, we can tailor new protection laws for our mussels.

There is good work, too. Just the other week, with the pearls in peril project, I joined the River Dee Trust, SNH, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and many volunteers to plant trees at the Invercauld estate. Tree planting not only helps flood-risk river catchments but reduces pollution and silt pouring into the river, which in turn encourages a healthier population of mussels.

The situation for freshwater pearl mussels may be dire, but they are not extinct yet. If members could get together to help to prevent poaching and to protect their habitat, we would save that humble mollusc for our benefit. It is a native species, and so is something that we must all champion.

17:35

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I thank Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber and for his work in promoting the species champion initiative in this and the previous parliamentary session. I am pleased to be speaking in support of the bog sun-jumper spider and the species champion initiative as a whole.

Although the bog sun-jumper spider is just 3mm long, the importance of this tiny creature to my constituency cannot be overstated, so I thank Buglife for making me aware of its plight. As members might expect, the little beauty makes its home in the peat bogs that are a unique part of our natural heritage. I am proud to say that, of the five peat bogs where the spider can be found in Scotland, two are in my Falkirk East constituency.

In my role as the species champion for that spider, I had the chance a few weeks ago to visit a newly restored peat bog on the Slamannan plateau, which will serve as a site in which endangered peat-bog species such as the bog sun-jumper spider can live and thrive. Sadly, we did not manage to find any on the day that I visited, which might suggest that they are more endangered than we had originally thought, but I hope that there is a squad of them marching towards the Slamannan plateau as we speak.

It is opportune that the debate is being held on the same day as the ministerial statement on unconventional oil and gas, because originally there were concerns that exploitation of coal-bed methane in my constituency, particularly on Letham moss near Airth, where much of the activity was taking place and where the bog sun-jumper spider lives, was going to affect seriously the spider's habitat. With coal-bed methane extraction suspended thanks to the moratorium on fracking, the little bog sun-jumper spider is being

given a reprieve and the opportunity to go forth and multiply.

Preserving biodiversity through initiatives such as the species champion programme highlights the importance of protections for endangered species of all types, from little spiders to Ruth Maguire's hedgehogs and Gail Ross's red squirrels, which are found in a broad range of habitats across Scotland.

I do not have time to go into the benefits of peatland restoration, but the issue has been well rehearsed at the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, and its predecessor Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment committee, which had a peatland restoration champion in its convener—the moss boss, himself: the well-respected retired MSP Rob Gibson.

The species champion initiative is a source of positive action for not just the sponsored species, but their habitats, the citizens of Scotland and even the broader global community. If members have not already done so, they should sign up for the species champion initiative at the Parliament event on Thursday.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I reassure you, Mr MacDonald, that the clock stopped and was restarted. You did in fact speak for longer than one and a half minutes.

Angus MacDonald: I wondered.

17:38

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): It is a privilege to be part of the debate. They say that every day is a school day, and today I have learned probably a great deal more than I needed to know about the slow worm. It is an important debate and I congratulate Graeme Dey.

Members might ask why somebody who represents Glasgow should be part of the initiative. Apart from the fact that I am the number 1 fan of "The Archers" in the Parliament and know more than anybody needs to know about the agricultural challenges that our farmers face, I spent my childhood going on holiday to the island of Tiree, understanding the importance of love of the land and the elements, and the importance of the way in which humans, the land and animals must work together. I have a great love of the bird of which I am a champion—the lapwing, or peewit.

I have to confess that I had a bit of a desire to be the champion for the corncrake, but not for the first time Mike Russell beat me to it. Many of the issues that are faced by the lapwing are the challenges that were faced by the corncrake, and perhaps they could have the same solutions. The experience of the corncrake should give us

optimism that it is possible to manage the land in a way that values the animals that live upon it.

However, as with everything else, there is inequality. We all said “Aw” at the idea of the wee hedgehog, but we were not aw-ing at the slow worm. I must congratulate Bruce Crawford on championing a species that probably only its own mammy would love. However, it is important that we love all creatures and understand how they all play a part in enriching our world. I am a lot cheaper and more shallow than Bruce Crawford, and I am the champion for the lapwing.

However the poor lapwing has a champion who, I am sad to say, cannot match the words of the people here who have described all the wonderful things they have done as species champion, and who have succeeded in educating me and shaming me at the same time. I promise to do more in the future to talk about and be a champion on behalf of the lapwing.

“Lapwings are part of the plover family of wading birds and can be seen in the UK all year round. Also known as the peewit in imitation of its display calls, its proper name describes its wavering flight. They breed throughout Scotland with the highest concentrations in the Hebrides and Northern Isles, and in lowland agricultural areas of the south and east. In the winter, lapwings will tend to fly in loose bunched flocks with Scottish birds moving to lower ground and estuaries, some migrating to Ireland and even further to France or Portugal. Despite their migrations, they come back”

—amazingly—

“to the same fields to nest every year. Although widespread in Scotland, the number of lapwings declined by 59% between 1995 and 2013. In 2015, the lapwing was listed as ‘globally near threatened’ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.”

There is plenty to do to highlight the importance of protecting the species. We need to know how we can work with the people who work the land to develop practices that do not threaten species, and to understand that there is a role for Government in ensuring that the conditions exist that mean that we do not lose these precious creatures. We know that farmers, crofters and landowners are very often willing to work with those who want to see species protected. The campaign is an important one because it affords the opportunity to talk to all our young people and to talk all across Scotland—urban and rural—about the fact that the things that we do have consequences for the future, and that these are things that actually matter, and that although we can have enjoyment when we talk about these things—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Come to a close, please.

Johann Lamont: This is a very important public awareness issue. I thank Graeme Dey again and

look forward to continuing as species champion for the lapwing.

17:42

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I am delighted to speak today in support of my colleague Graeme Dey MSP’s motion on the species champion initiative. Furthermore, as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, I am only too aware of the importance of raising public awareness of Scotland’s threatened wildlife.

I recently met with the Woodland Trust in my constituency. Across Mid Fife and Glenrothes, the trust owns two small sites at Largo and a larger site at Formonthills, just at the back of Glenrothes. In the late 1990s, 80,000 trees were planted at the Formonthills site with the help of the local community. Primary school pupils from across Glenrothes were involved in creating the drawings of wildlife and plants that follow the path way-markers around the site. The trees that were planted are all native species including oak, ash, birch, cherry and the tree for which I am the species champion, the rowan.

The rowan tree has long been a part of Scottish identity. It is a native tree that grows across the country and has a strong cultural association with folklore in Scotland. Historically it was believed that planting a rowan tree at the door of a house would protect those inside while keeping evil spirits at bay. I remember the croft where my granny was brought up in Muir of Ord and the rowan tree that stood at the foot of the path. Indeed, there is a rowan tree planted at the passholders’ entrance to Parliament—a tree that protects all MSPs, regardless of party-political affiliation or even voting intentions when it comes to referenda.

Members might be familiar with one of Scotland’s most famous regimental pieces of music—Lady Nairne’s early 19th-century piece entitled “Rowan Tree”. Presiding Officer, I am sure you will be delighted to hear that I will not be regaling the chamber this evening with a rendition. However, I would like to remind members from across the chamber of the former First Minister’s recording of the song, which can be viewed on YouTube at any time for fellow MSPs’ convenience.

In 2012, the Scottish Government set a target of 10,000 hectares of new tree planting every year until 2022, of which 4,500 hectares was assigned to be native woodlands. That target is yet to be achieved. The rowan is also threatened by overgrazing, so the Government needs to continue to promote sustainable deer management practices.

To conclude, the rowan tree is part of Scotland's history, and a vital part of this Government's commitment to tree planting. It brings us luck and it protects us from evil. I am proud to be its species champion.

17:45

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber and I congratulate Scottish Environment LINK on successfully relaunching the species champion programme into the fifth session of Parliament.

At one level, the initiative is a great bit of fun, but it is also a deeply humbling thought that we are living through the sixth great extinction period in the planet's history. At Holyrood, we think in terms of electoral and budget cycles and, on occasion, we dare to think intergenerationally, too. However, to see the true vision of the garden planet that we are trying to regenerate, we need to look further back to previous millennia.

I turn to the species that I am the champion for—the white-tailed eagle, or the sea eagle as it is sometimes known. One hundred years ago, the species was extinct in Scotland and across the British isles. Records that go back to the late 1800s show that sea and golden eagles were limited to just a few hundred pairs.

Ground-breaking work that was led by the late Richard Evans examined ancient cultural references to eagles across the British isles that emerged through place names of about 1,500 years ago. For example, he found 276 place names that referenced eagles in Scots Gaelic and 152 in Old English. That was combined with modern ecological knowledge to build up a picture that showed far greater numbers than had been previously imagined. There were up to 1,400 sea eagle pairs and 1,500 golden eagle pairs across these islands, and they were not just in the Highlands but as far as the south coast of England, with large overlapping territories between the two species. Richard Evans's work was critical because it gave us a tantalising glimpse of the state of nature in previous millennia, and it mapped out landscapes where the habitat might still exist to support reintroduced eagles today.

The reintroduction of the white-tailed eagle has already had early success. The first pairs were reintroduced to Rum from Norway in 1975, and the first wild chick fledged on Mull in 1985. Further reintroductions were done across Wester Ross in the 1990s and for the first time on the east coast of Fife in 2007.

Those programmes thrive because of the support of conservationists, landowners, farmers and the police, as well as the many community

groups, passionate volunteers, the RSPB and the Forestry Commission, and they are all oiled with lottery and European funding. We now have more than 100 breeding pairs in Scotland, and an SNH study earlier this year predicted a doubling of that number in the next 10 years. The success of such an iconic species now inspires thousands of people, with eagle tourism bringing about £5 million to Mull's economy every year.

Getting back to the late 18th century population levels would be a welcome second step to recovery, but pressures remain. Poisoning and destruction of nest sites still happen in 21st century Scotland, often on or close to driven grouse moors. The game bird shooting sector needs to take a long, hard look in the mirror in the months to come. The petition that is on its way to the Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee highlights the disgrace of raptor persecution and the need to consider a licensing regime for game bird shooting.

There is much work to do to champion beleaguered species and we must celebrate success while keeping an eye on the progress that we need to ensure continued success.

17:48

Mairi Evans (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and I thank Graeme Dey for relaunching the initiative, which I hope that all MSPs will eventually sign up to. I also echo the thanks to Scottish Environment LINK, because it is fantastic to see such a good turnout for the debate and to hear all about the species that other members represent.

I have to say that the peewit, as described by Johann Lamont, has a special place in my heart, because it lies at the heart of my constituency in the Mearns and was written about so elegantly in "Sunset Song" by Lewis Grassie Gibbon. That is a special species to me.

The campaign is very important. There are so many species out there that need individual focus and promotion in the Parliament and among the wider public, because we must protect the natural habitats of the animals, plants and flowers that make up the incredible, diverse and unique environment that we have in Scotland.

It will take a lot of work to hold on to some of those species—probably none more so than the species for which I am champion: the hen harrier. Some members might have been exceptionally lucky to see a hen harrier, in which case they are in a privileged and tiny minority, but I imagine that most members have at least heard of the hen

harrier, and chances are that what they have heard has not been positive.

The hen harrier is one of the most spectacular birds in Scotland. It is a beautiful, agile hunter, which is often referred to as a sky dancer because of its elegant and acrobatic flight. It is a medium-sized raptor that feeds on small mammals and birds, and it can be found in upland heather moorland during the breeding season and in lowland farmland in winter.

Hen harriers may be found across the UK, but over the past couple of decades they have become an increasingly rare sight. Between the previous two surveys to determine their numbers, in 2004 and 2010, the population was found to have fallen by 22 per cent, to 525 pairs. In the north-east of Scotland, where my constituency sits, the population peaked at 28 pairs in the 1990s, but in 2014 there was only one. The hen harrier is red listed; it is a UK bird of conservation concern.

What has caused such a significant decline? Predation of eggs and chicks, bad weather and food shortage contribute to unsuccessful breeding attempts, but one of the biggest threats is illegal persecution. The hen harrier is one of the most intensively persecuted raptors in the UK, and persecution has persisted even though it has been illegal since 1954.

What can we do now? We have to do what we can to protect endangered species that are particular to our country. That is why I support the RSPB's life project, which is helping to protect hen harriers through satellite tagging, improved monitoring and nest protection.

In its manifesto, the Scottish National Party committed to accepting the recommendation of the wildlife crime penalties review group to introduce tough new maximum penalties for people who commit crimes against wildlife. The SNP also promised to set up a wildlife crime investigation unit in Police Scotland. I hope that that will have an impact.

The hen harrier is not the easiest species to champion. The work will not be easy, but I hope that we will start to see positive results.

17:52

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland (Lab)): I thank Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the Parliament. I have been fortunate—after hearing Bruce Crawford and Angus MacDonald, I think that I have been very fortunate—to be species champion for the curlew for the past three years. With the support of the RSPB, I have been able to visit sites in the north-east that have a connection with that emblematic species.

Everyone knows that the curlew is a bird of loch and shore, so the Loch of Strathbeg in Buchan was an obvious destination. I recommend a visit to anyone who has not yet been; they will see a huge number and variety of bird species, of which the curlew is only one. The RSPB recently completed a £60,000 refurbishment of the Loch of Strathbeg visitor centre, which will enable it to host many more volunteers each year and provide an even better experience for tourists and wildlife enthusiasts.

Less well known to city dwellers, perhaps, is that the curlew breeds on high moors and farmland, where it is equally a defining species. I saw that for myself at Corgarff, in Strathdon, not long ago, where I also saw the work of the RSPB to protect and encourage breeding curlews and their chicks.

All that really matters for the future of the species. Like a number of the species that we have heard about this evening, the curlew has red status on the list of birds of conservation concern, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature classifies it as near-threatened.

Britain as a whole is the third most important country in the world for breeding curlew populations, with between one in four and one in six of the global population. Around half the UK's breeding population is here in Scotland—about 36,000 breeding pairs. That might sound like a large number of birds in comparison with some of the numbers that we have heard in the debate, but it is a significant reduction from the numbers in the past, which is why the threat has been well identified.

As with so many other native spaces—we heard this from Alison Johnstone about the hare, as well as from other members about other bird species—changes in farming practices have reduced the curlew's breeding success rate, while the number of predators that take eggs and chicks in the breeding season has increased. Curlew numbers have also been affected by changes not just in the breeding grounds inland and uphill, but in the wintering grounds on and near the coast.

Farmers who have adjusted their farming practices to encourage the curlew to breed on their land should themselves be encouraged. As has been mentioned, big decisions on how we support agriculture in future are imminent. Those adjustments should be taken very much into consideration. Other practices, such as new forestry and whether it is designed to protect breeding grounds in upland areas, should also be considered.

There is a job of work to be done for the curlew, as there is for other species. I very much welcome the efforts that have gone into making the debate

happen, and I look forward to work in the area continuing.

17:55

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate. I am pleased to state that this is my second year as species champion for the house sparrow, or speug. I am doing my bit for them, because my garden is bursting with speugs from dawn to dusk. They live in my neighbour's holly tree, which I call Speug Towers. They commute to the many feeding stations that I have, living the high life on fat balls, seeds and mealworms. They then visit my neighbour's birdbath and have a bit of a dip before they move on to my weeping birch for a little bit of a preen and then fly back to Speug Towers.

On occasion, they are confronted by a gang of marauding thrushes, but they simply bide their time and then resume their own quarrelsome feeding. When I walk down the garden to refill the feeders, they tweet to all and sundry that food is on the way. That probably alerts the thrushes.

The speugs provide Mr Smokey, my rescue cat, with hours of tormented pleasure as he eyes them up through glass walls, with chattering teeth. They remind me of a poem by Norman MacCaig called—funnily enough—“Sparrow”:

“He’s no artist.
His taste in clothes is more
dowdy than gaudy.
And his nest—that blackbird, writing
pretty scrolls on the air with the gold nib of his beak,
would call it a slum.

To stalk solitary on lawns,
to sing solitary in midnight trees,
to glide solitary over gray Atlantics—
not for him: he’d rather
a punch-up in a gutter.

He carries what learning he has
lightly—it is in fact, based only
on the usefulness whose result
is survival. A proletarian bird.
No scholar.

But when winter soft-shoes in
and these other birds—
ballet dancers, musicians, architects—
die the snow
and freeze to branches,
watch him happily flying
on the O-levels and A-levels
of the air.”

I say, three cheers for the humble speug: he survives.

17:57

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): As you know, Presiding Officer, I always listen very

carefully to Roseanna Cunningham’s winding-up speeches. Tonight will be no exception, especially as she is going to have to deal with the sex life of the slow worm, as described by Bruce Crawford. I saw the civil servants passing down notes to her on the subject: they took 45 minutes to arrive on the front bench. We will listen carefully to her detailed interpretation of that activity.

I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate. He mentioned the fluffy orca. If anyone ever meets a real killer whale, they would want it to be fluffy. In August, some of our wild swimmers in Shetland were swimming around Lerwick harbour when they had a very close encounter with a pod of killer whales—or orcas—that had been swimming around the Shetland coastline during most of the summer. From the description of that encounter, one would not wish to get too close, particularly given that swimmers look just like seals to a pod of orcas.

There is method in my madness in relation to my reference to the fluffy orca. I am running a competition with all our primary schools in the Shetland Islands to name the orca, because of the importance of sightings. That promotional work is the point of much of the work that we do as species champions. The future of the orca lies in understanding their patterns of behaviour. Schools can play a hugely important role in achieving that understanding by providing documentary evidence on where they are, their direction of travel and how they are moving.

My colleagues had a name for the orca, too. John Thurso, who is now the chairman of VisitScotland, had a problem with wild salmon being eaten by seals at the head of a river. He did what any person would have done in the circumstances: he bought a 20-foot inflatable orca and moored it at the head of the river to scare off the seals, which it did. He thought that he had better give it a name, and I am told that he called it “my orca”—which makes a lot of sense when you think about it.

I thank Sarah Dolman of Whale and Dolphin Conservation for all her help. I also thank Hugh Harrop at Shetland Wildlife and the 5,727—and rising—members of the Shetland orca sightings group for all the work that they have done, particularly on Facebook and on social media. Their posts on those sites have been astronomical this summer, although they have been slightly held back by the fact that, around the coast of Shetland, there is no wi-fi or 3G—there is no 1G, let alone 3G—and the postings take a while.

Nevertheless, there is huge interest in the orca, which is a fantastic species and a wonderful mammal. I whole-heartedly agree with colleagues that people should get involved in the programme because of the work that can be done to highlight

the serious issues around nature conservation and the marine environment, which Mark Ruskell highlighted, but also for the fun that we can pass on to the next generation. More than in any species, that can be seen in the humble orca.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the open debate. I have really enjoyed all the speeches. I have been sitting here, trying to imagine the characteristics that you all share with your championed species. Some day, I might tell you what I have come up with.

18:01

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate and thank all members for their contributions. It has been good to focus on the wonderful diversity of species that we have in Scotland and to hear the enthusiasm and commitment of members who have spoken in the debate.

I welcome the relaunch of the species champions initiative by Scottish Environment LINK. It was a very successful initiative during the previous session of Parliament—indeed, I understand that it was nominated for several awards and has inspired similar programmes in Wales, Northern Ireland and England. It is yet another example of our forward-thinking approach in Scotland.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, I am in the privileged position of being a champion for all the species. I do not intend that to be a flippant remark—the challenge of protecting and enhancing Scotland’s biodiversity is important, which is why we are fully committed to working with partners to deliver the Scottish biodiversity strategy and the accompanying route map to 2020. The route map has work under way or planned for the conservation and management of many individual species, including the Scottish wildcat, the red squirrel, the great yellow bumblebee—David Stewart will be pleased to hear that—and the rare lichens that prefer Scotland’s west-coast woodlands.

I am delighted to see that we have almost 60 species champions already, but as Graeme Dey pointed out, that means that the majority of MSPs are not involved. I encourage members who are not currently a species champion to find out about the wonderful and, at times, fragile species in their constituencies and to see what they can do to champion biodiversity. As Johann Lamont suggested, there is often a temptation to seek out the cute and the cuddly species, but the wonderful thing about nature is its diversity. I therefore hope

that someone will adopt the tadpole shrimp or learn to love the pond mud snail just as Bruce Crawford has clearly learned to love the slow worm—although his description of its having a forked tongue and being legless led me to think that he had strayed into a description of some of his parliamentary colleagues.

Other colleagues were more circumspect in their descriptions, but it is fair to say that we are all better informed about a number of species than we were at 5 pm—in fact, we may know of the existence of more species than we did at 5 pm. It is also fair to say that some species champions face bigger presentational challenges than others. Nevertheless, I look forward to—and could likely sell tickets for—the forthcoming attraction “Dances with Orcas” starring Tavish Scott, albeit perhaps only briefly.

As some members may be aware, at the end of September Scottish Natural Heritage published a report showing progress across the first full year of activity on the route map. The report shows that almost 80 per cent of the listed actions are on track to achieve or exceed their targets by 2020. However, that means that we also have a clear indication of where attention needs to be focused to ensure that progress is made across all the actions.

The importance of that activity is twofold. First, it is important that we strive to meet our international obligations. Secondly, we must ensure that Scotland’s wonderful biodiversity, including all our fascinating species and habitats, is protected and continues to flourish now and for future generations.

It is good to focus on individual species, so I am grateful to Scottish Environment LINK for raising awareness and providing the impetus through the species champions initiative. However, as a number of members have said, we need to be mindful of the fact that species do not thrive in isolation: they need habitats in which to live, and there are many interactions and dependencies between species. That aspect of the discussion was highlighted by Ruth Maguire—or, as we may now refer to her, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle.

We recognise the importance of the wider and more holistic approach that embraces the whole ecosystem. Much of the work that is under way to deliver against the route map targets is focused at landscape scale, so that the wider ecosystem will be restored or enhanced, thereby delivering a range of other benefits. Just for Angus MacDonald, I will mention the example of our peatland restoration programme. More than 10,000 hectares of peatland have been restored in Scotland since 2012 through the Scottish Natural Heritage led peatland action initiative. As well as providing habitat and space for individual species

to thrive, those restored peatlands sequester carbon, improve water storage and provide benefits for the local communities.

I urge all members not just to think of species in terms of the individual bird, animal, insect or plant, but to think more broadly about how protecting and enhancing our biodiversity can benefit a wide range of policy outcomes, including for people. Most important is that healthy species and habitats make for healthy people's health and wellbeing. For that reason, I am delighted to see that the relaunched species champions initiative has a new focus on urban species. An exemplar of how investing in an improved natural environment benefits species and habitats, and also improves the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of the local communities is the central Scotland green network, which many members will be very familiar with. It is Europe's largest green-space project, and it covers pretty much the whole central belt.

Today's debate has raised awareness of some of our important species and of the Scottish Environment LINK initiative. My closing remarks could hardly do justice to all the members who have proudly told us of the various species that they now champion, some of which they might not have heard of before they were allocated the said species. I hope that the debate has prompted us all to take further action to enhance biodiversity right across Scotland.

Meeting closed at 18:07.

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