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Scottish Parliament

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

General Question Time

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

1. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether decisions regarding Highlands and Islands Enterprise economic development and social support spending will be made locally by people who live and work in the area. (S5O-00449)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): Highlands and Islands Enterprise will continue to be locally based, managed and directed to provide dedicated support to the Highlands and Islands economy.

Rhoda Grant: At what level of financial assistance will HIE staff have to revert to the board for a decision? Although the Government insists that there is support for its plan for an overarching board, none of the 126 published responses shows that support. Could it be that everyone else wants major decisions relating to the Highlands and Islands to be taken in the Highlands and Islands?

Keith Brown: On financial matters, I said last week in the chamber that decision making remains with Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Issues relating to governance are being taken forward by a number of people in the ministerial review group, which includes people from the Highlands and Islands.

I disagree with the number that Rhoda Grant has given: more than 300 individuals or groups responded, and within those responses a substantial number, including from Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and Strathclyde University, talked about the need for an overarching strategic board, so there is evidence of support for that.

It has been our view that what HIE currently does, it does very well, but it is also the case that some other things that have been brought to the Highlands, such as the first-ever Government commitment to the dualling of the A9 and the A96—no previous Government did that—and the establishment of a city deal, as well as the work that has been done by Fergus Ewing on the Rio Tinto investments, have happened in addition to what HIE has done. We want to ensure that more

of that happens, so it could well be the case that HIE—far from the picture that is being painted by Rhoda Grant and others—ends up with more authority and more powers than it had at the start of the review.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): When HIE's predecessor, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, was first established, its founder, Willie Ross, said that the Highlands needed an agency with the powers to "deal comprehensively" with every obstacle in the way of economic and social improvement. Will HIE continue to be in a position to do that?

Keith Brown: The Government has made it clear that we will maintain the dedicated support, including HIE's remit to strengthen communities, that is the basis of Kate Forbes's question. That remit will be locally based, managed and directed by HIE and will protect the unique services that HIE delivers for our Highlands and Islands economy. As I said in my response to Rhoda Grant, it is our intention that HIE be more than that—not least in terms of skills, and certainly in terms of support for attracting international investment, in which we believe more can be done in respect of the activities of HIE. The vital components of what HIE has done until now will remain, but with additional powers and support from the other agencies that are subject to the review.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be aware that the campaign to save the HIE board has received support from its former chairman and a member of his party, the respected Professor Jim Hunter, who not only accused the Government of committing an "assault" on HIE's founding principles but said:

"In a country as diverse as ours ... this centralism run riot needs resisting."

Does the cabinet secretary agree with those comments by a member of his own party?

Keith Brown: It is fair to say that the SNP is a broad church, and that we include people with different views, which is important in a democratic party and gives the lie to previous accusations from the Conservatives.

However, it is important to recognise, as I have done already, that the Highlands and Islands development agency has substantial support in the Highlands for the work that it has done over many years. That is why we have said that we intend to maintain Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It will be enshrined, as it is now, as a legal agency, and the chief executive and staff will remain, so the people who provide the vital services that I mentioned will remain. However, as I have said in my two previous responses, we

think that it is possible to build on what has been done and to achieve even more.

Jim Clark Rally

2. **John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to concerns regarding the future of the Jim Clark rally. (S5O-00450)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government recognises the importance of events such as the Jim Clark rally, but we need to balance the potential for economic benefit from such events with the imperative for a high degree of safety, both for spectators and road users.

John Lamont: I welcome the fact that progress is now being made on the investigations into the tragic events of 2014. The Jim Clark rally contributes greatly to the Borders economy, and its loss over the past few years has impacted significantly on local businesses. Thoughts are now turning to the 2017 event, which the organisers have told me is within weeks of being cancelled.

Will the Government do all that it can, alongside Police Scotland and Scottish Borders Council, to facilitate the holding of a closed-road rally event next year? Will she confirm that the holding of a fatal accident inquiry does not preclude the rally's taking place?

Shona Robison: I am aware that the event organisers have notified the Scottish ministers of their intention to hold the Jim Clark rally in 2017, and that they have submitted a report that sets out how the promoters intend to implement the Motor Sports Association's "Stage Rally Safety Requirements". That report is under consideration.

As ministers, we continue to have a higher-level supervisory role. John Lamont will be aware that, as the lead road and traffic authority, Scottish Borders Council, along with Police Scotland, remains the authority that authorises the detailed arrangements for the rally.

As John Lamont said, another factor that needs to be considered is the announcement by the Crown Office on 1 December of the establishment of a fatal accident inquiry into the tragic death of a spectator at the Snowman rally in January 2013 and the deaths of three spectators at the Jim Clark rally in May 2014.

I am happy to make sure that the member is kept abreast of consideration of the report that I mentioned. I will ask the Minister for Public Health and Sport to write to him to keep him apprised of the facts if there are any further developments.

National Health Service (Blood Stocks)

3. **Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that the NHS has sufficient stocks of blood for the winter period. (S5O-00451)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Each year, the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service makes robust plans to raise awareness of the need for blood donations during the winter period and to maintain supplies of blood across Scotland. SNBTS employs various strategies to boost the number of donors. For example, throughout the period, SNBTS will contact existing donors in order to build up supplies of each of the eight major blood groups, and a television campaign, which is supported by a digital campaign, commenced on 28 November.

I thank all donors for their support and I encourage everyone who can to donate.

Stuart McMillan: We all accept that it is impossible, because blood stocks have a limited shelf life, to stockpile supplies. At the beginning of the week, types O negative, O positive and B negative were down to five or six days' supply. Will the Scottish Government increase the promotional output for the annual "Give blood" campaign to encourage more people to give blood for the first time or to do so again?

Shona Robison: The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service aims to stock a six-day supply of every major blood group. At the current time, it has six or more days' supply of all but two of the eight main blood groups—it has a five-day supply of O positive and B negative blood. As a result, it does not have significant concerns about stock levels at present, but we will fully support its publicity campaign to encourage more blood donations over the winter period. In addition, we are supporting its efforts to encourage new donors.

As I said in my earlier answer, people who have never previously given blood could not pick a better time to start than during the festive period.

Spaceports (Licence Applications)

4. **David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to assist sites in Scotland that are preparing to apply for licences to operate as spaceports. (S5O-00452)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): We remain focused on ensuring that a spaceport is based in Scotland, and the Scottish Government and its agencies will provide advice and support to any

Scottish airfield that wishes to pursue the spaceport opportunity.

The modern transport bill, which will include the spaceport legislation and the licensing process, is not due at Westminster until early 2017 and it will then take a year to become law, so the Civil Aviation Authority is not expecting to issue the licensing process until 2018. We await clarification from the United Kingdom Government regarding the infrastructure requirements that will be involved in a site becoming a spaceport. That clarity is necessary to allow sites to develop viable business models for possible spaceflight operations. The Scottish Government and its agencies will continue to support Scottish sites in any way that they can at the appropriate time. Currently, each site has the ability to have direct contact with the CAA for updates and inquiries on the process.

David Stewart: The cabinet secretary will be well aware that the UK space sector is one of Britain's fastest-growing and most innovative industries. Discover Space UK is bidding to license Machrihanish as a horizontal-launch spaceport facility, which would make it the UK's first commercial spaceport. Machrihanish already has a fully functioning 3,000m runway that was an alternative landing site for the US space shuttles. Will the cabinet secretary reconsider enterprise area status for Machrihanish, which outscored two existing enterprise areas in the 2011 appraisal process?

Keith Brown: As I said in my initial response, it is up to each airfield to say whether it wants to participate in the bid and to put in place the things that it thinks would advantage its application. However, we must wait until it is obvious from the UK Government's modern transport bill what the infrastructure requirements and business models will be for spaceport bids. We need clarity on that before places that want to apply can put together infrastructure and other initiatives to support their bid. We must wait for that clarification before we can take forward commitments in relation to any bid that arises.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Glasgow Prestwick airport and Houston spaceport on Tuesday, does the cabinet secretary agree that, provided that Prestwick airport can meet the licensing obligations, it is now the preferred site for horizontal take-off space launches in Scotland and that the Prestwick maintenance, repair and overhaul infrastructure could be used to support vertical take-off space launches at other Scottish sites?

Keith Brown: What I said in relation to the previous question applies to any sites, but I recognise some of the points that have been made

by John Scott in relation to the work that Prestwick airport has undertaken, and I recognise—as I have mentioned—the advantages of Machrihanish in terms of its runway and so on. Prestwick airport is putting in place an awful lot of infrastructure and has, of course, some benefits already. However, as John Scott well knows, Prestwick would require further infrastructure development if it were to bid.

Again, I say that both Prestwick and Machrihanish will want to see the modern transport bill progress through the UK Parliament so that they know exactly what the infrastructure requirements will be and what the best possible business model will be, should they decide to bid.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I hear what the cabinet secretary says, but as John Scott pointed out, Glasgow Prestwick airport and Houston Spaceport have formed an exciting new partnership that met just two days ago. Prestwick already has 3,000 aerospace engineers working there. Will the Scottish Government now finally commit itself to the bid from Prestwick—which is an airport and not, like Machrihanish, an airfield—in order to boost Scotland's chances of securing the UK's and Europe's first operational spaceport?

Keith Brown: I do not want to deviate from the responses that I gave to the previous two questions on the matter. It also remains the case—this has been mooted in the past—that the airfields, or airports, might wish to work together on a bid. However, the point still applies that for any bid to be given full form—I recognise the work that has been undertaken at Prestwick and the aspirations at Machrihanish—those who are bidding require knowledge of what will be needed in terms of infrastructure. We do not yet know that, definitively. Once we know what the infrastructure requirements are, those who are keen to bid will know how to put together their business plans. We have to await that process but, at the same time, encourage those who want to participate.

Tax Policies

5. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Back on earth: to ask the Scottish Government what impact it expects its tax policies to have on inequality of wealth and income. (S5O-00453)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government will set out its proposals for tax policies in its draft budget, which will be published on 15 December. The Scottish Government is committed to delivering policies that support the delivery of inclusive growth.

Patrick Harvie: The cabinet secretary has said on many occasions—and I agree—that it is wrong to give a tax break to wealthy people, particularly

in the current context, when very many people are struggling. However, the cumulative effect of the personal allowance change at the United Kingdom level and the Scottish Government's proposal to change the threshold for the higher rate will be a tax cut for high earners of about £178 a year. That comes at a time when the Scottish Government has the ability to claw back what the UK Government is giving to the wealthy and to ensure that we have a more progressive policy.

If the Scottish Government is not going to do that, what is the cabinet secretary going to spend his extra 15 quid a month on?

Derek Mackay: As I have said to members in the chamber, I look forward to setting out the budget proposition on 15 December. Patrick Harvie has raised matters in the past, citing the Resolution Foundation's work in a number of areas including the personal allowance and the interplay with social security decisions. This Government will take forward a balanced approach on taxation to fund high-quality public services in a package that is fair and reasonable to the public and the taxpayers of Scotland. That proposition gained the support of the people at the most recent Scottish Parliament elections.

Scottish History (School Curriculum)

6. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will consider making Scottish history a priority subject on the school curriculum. (S5O-00454)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Learning about Scotland's history, heritage and culture is promoted and supported in the context of curriculum for excellence. That includes a unit on Scottish history in the national 4 and 5 and higher history courses.

Rona Mackay: In my constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden, we are currently celebrating the Thomas Muir festival, which is an annual event organised by the Friends of Thomas Muir to commemorate the father of Scottish democracy. Does the cabinet secretary agree that our children should learn all that there is to know about Scotland's great pioneers?

John Swinney: I do. It is important that there is a deep understanding of the figures in Scottish history who have shaped our country, its values and its identity. There is a significant opportunity for that to be developed through our curriculum and for young people to appreciate the depth of Scottish history and the contribution of individuals such as Thomas Muir to the formation of the modern Scotland that we know today.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I think that

the cabinet secretary will agree with me that our Scottish culture—both history and literature—should be embedded in our children's learning. I raised the issue of literature with the cabinet secretary, and he stated in his letter to me of 8 November:

"Many primary schools study the works of Burns, for example".

However, is that not the problem? In my day, a few moons ago, we "did" Burns in January. Has much changed or is it still the case that the study of Scots literature is peripheral and, if I may say so, even tokenistic?

John Swinney: I have to say that I was not around when Christine Grahame was at school—

Members: Oh!

John Swinney: However, from my wild speculation of what might have been going on at that time, I, too, think that it is very important that there is a broad understanding of the contribution of Scottish authors to literature, and I see a range of evidence of that in the school curriculum. The understanding of the work of our makar, Jackie Kay, is important, and within some of our certificated qualifications there is a requirement to consider a text from Scottish literature. In all those respects, I think that due account is taken.

The serious point that Christine Grahame makes is that there is a significant contribution from Scottish literature to our education system and to knowledge within our country, and it should be a central part of what young people experience as part of their education.

Obesity Strategy (Physical Literacy Programmes)

7. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will introduce personal physical literacy programmes, such as the STEP programme, in schools as part of its obesity strategy. (S5O-00455)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): The evidence on tackling obesity says that, for success, we must maintain activity across a wide range of actions that make it easier for people to be more active, to eat less and to eat better. As part of the review process for our strategy, we will be considering how we link our obesity strategy to other cross-Government work, including that on promoting physical activity and on developing our approach to being a good food nation.

I will be meeting Kenny Logan early in the new year to discuss the STEP programme. Along with the daily mile, the STEP programme is an example of how physical activity can be

embedded into the daily life of Scottish schools, which, as we know, can have a positive impact on pupils' health, educational attainment and life chances.

Brian Whittle: My frustration here is that the Government always talks about the importance of physical activity in tackling obesity but takes little action. The principle of the Government's getting it right for every child policy would suggest that meeting the individual needs of every child is fundamental. The rate at which children learn physical literacy is as diverse as the rate at which they learn numeracy, literacy and language.

Given the recognition that there is an alarming decline in child activity rates, which is linked to the rise in obesity and poor mental health, why does the Government treat physical literacy as the poor relation in education?

John Swinney: Mr Whittle and I have gone round the houses on that question before. I do not recognise Mr Whittle's portrayal of Scottish education. There is a high level of engagement and participation in activities such as the daily mile across Scottish schools: 98 per cent of schools are fulfilling their physical education commitments. As I go around the country, I see countless examples of schools making every effort to encourage physical activity and exercise, with an emphasis on health and wellbeing within the activities of Scottish education.

I am committed to action in that area and that is reflected in Education Scotland. I hope that Mr Whittle can recognise some of the achievements that have been made by Scottish schools in promoting physical activity among children.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): That concludes general questions.

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Engagements

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S5F-00605)

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

Ruth Davidson: I thank you, Presiding Officer, the First Minister and members for your comments over the last 24 hours about Alex Johnstone. We are all in mourning right now. However, Alex would not want me to talk about him, but would want me to get stuck into the Government's record.

This week, the latest set of programme for international student assessment figures were released. After a decade of Scottish National Party control of Scottish education, those are the worst set of results ever recorded. To pre-empt the usual excuses, who does the First Minister blame for that? Is it the Labour Party or is it us?

The First Minister: I also take the opportunity to pay tribute to the late Alex Johnstone. With his passing the Scottish Parliament has lost one of its great personalities and he will be sorely missed across the chamber. All our thoughts today are with Linda, the rest of his family and all his colleagues.

I take responsibility, on behalf of the Scottish Government, for the performance of Scottish education. If anyone thinks that I will stand here and give excuses, they are wrong. There is lots of other evidence on Scottish education that I could cite, but I am not going to do that today because the results of the PISA survey published earlier this week show that we are not where I want us to be. They are not good enough. I am determined that we take the action that will lead to improvement.

The only thing that I will say about those figures is the contextual point—I say it simply because it is a fact—that the survey was drawn from a sample carried out almost two years ago, in March 2015. I say that because that was around the same time that we had the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy, which prompted the programme of reform that is now under way.

Our programme of reform in education is firmly based on the advice that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development gave us in its review of curriculum for excellence back in 2015. I am determined that we move forward with that reform and that that will lead to the

improvements in Scottish education that we all want to see.

Ruth Davidson: The answer was the same as it always seems to be: “Don’t worry, bear with us, give us a bit more time and it’ll all be fine.” It is a stuck record and we have heard it all before.

In 2007, education secretary Fiona Hyslop, in response to falling standards, said:

“We are determined to reverse that trend.”—[*Official Report*, 5 December 2007; c 4069.]

In 2013, Alasdair Allan, the minister for learning, in response to falling standards, said:

“I am confident that we will see continued progress in future years.”

Just last year, Angela Constance, in response to falling literacy standards, promised that she was the one, after all the previous education ministers, who would sort things out. That went well.

We have had 10 years of promises from education secretary after SNP education secretary. How does the First Minister mark their efforts—pass or fail?

The First Minister: We have a record number of exam passes in Scottish education; that is simply a statement of fact. We also have a higher percentage of young people going to positive destinations than was previously the case.

I come back to the point that I made earlier. The PISA survey results are not good enough and I want to see them improve. Last year, we asked the OECD to carry out a review of curriculum for excellence. That review was published in December 2015. The OECD report told us to focus on a number of things. First, it said that we had to focus on closing the attainment gap, so we have established the attainment fund. That is already working in schools across our country.

Secondly, it told us to put in place a measurement system, so we established the national improvement framework. Initial data at school level from the national improvement framework will be published next week and, from next year, it will be informed by new standardised assessments that we are going to introduce.

Thirdly, the OECD told us to simplify the curriculum, and John Swinney has been taking action to strip away bureaucracy, reduce teacher workload and allow teachers to focus on what they are doing.

The OECD said that we had to put schools at the heart of the system, so the governance review is now looking at how we empower schools. Finally, it said to improve leadership in our schools, so we are taking forward a new programme of developing head teachers through the Scottish College for Educational Leadership.

Those are hard, concrete and tangible actions. I know that the Opposition will want to criticise for the PISA survey and I can have no complaint about that. However, it is now important for us all to get behind the reforms because they will lead to the improvements that we want to see in Scottish education.

Ruth Davidson: That was not even an attempt from the First Minister to defend her ministers’ performance. We have been warning about the state of our education system for years.

The First Minister talks of a governance review that is to come, but we still await the details. Given the evidence of this week, that has to go deeper.

The single biggest education reform under the SNP Government has been curriculum for excellence. Nobody here can simply brush aside the fact that, since it has come in, standards have fallen. I am telling the First Minister today that our on-going support for curriculum for excellence cannot be taken for granted. I believe that the entire project should now be put on probation.

I ask a simple question, and I ask it in all sincerity: if standards are going down because of curriculum for excellence, why are we sticking by it?

The First Minister:

“The principles behind the curriculum for excellence are absolutely right. There is unanimous agreement within the Parliament that it is the right way, as there is within the teaching professions and we have to accept that this is something that can work.”

Those are not my words. Those are the words of the Tory education spokesperson, Liz Smith, on 7 December. I believe that curriculum for excellence is the right way forward.

Ruth Davidson has, quite rightly and understandably, quoted the PISA survey, which was carried out by the OECD. We asked the OECD to review curriculum for excellence. It has said that curriculum for excellence is the right thing to do but it has given us the advice that I narrated in my previous answer about how we can improve it and how we can improve standards in our schools. We will continue to take forward that action because that is what the parents and pupils of the country have a right to expect.

Ruth Davidson: That was a pretty selective summary of what the First Minister wants us to believe that the OECD report says. Let me read out what the OECD report actually says:

“We emphasise that this summary is not an evaluation of CfE itself, and indeed the evidence is not available for such an evaluation”.

All that we have had from this Government is bland platitudes, and all the while, standards have gone down. We have gone backwards in reading,

backwards in science, backwards in maths, and this week, the First Minister's SNP colleagues told us that, despite all the challenges that we face right now, what would be good for Scotland is a constitutional crisis. It is not another constitutional crisis that we need; it is a Government that faces up to its failures and tackles them head on. What is more important—picking yet another fight over the constitution or picking a fight to improve our schools?

The First Minister: It might have escaped Ruth Davidson's notice, but the entire United Kingdom faces a constitutional crisis right now. It is being played out in the Supreme Court this very day, as it has been all week, and it is a constitutional crisis that was created by the European obsession—the Brexit obsession—of the Conservatives.

I will leave Ruth Davidson to do the politics today. I want to get back to the important matter of Scottish education. I noticed that Ruth Davidson did not comment on the quotation from Liz Smith from earlier this week, when Liz Smith said that the principles behind curriculum for excellence are “absolutely right”. That is the view of the Tory education spokesperson; it is also my view and the view, I think, of most members of this Parliament.

What we need to do now is focus on implementing the OECD's recommendations, ensuring that we invest in raising attainment, as we are doing through the attainment fund, ensuring that we have much more data available at school level about our schools' performance, and ensuring that we are taking away bureaucracy and investing in educational leadership. Those are the hard actions that this Government will get on with, because that is what parents across this country have a right to expect us to do—and we will do it.

Engagements

2. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): This is indeed a sombre day for the Parliament. On behalf of Scottish Labour, I extend our condolences to the family and friends of Alex Johnstone. He had a reputation as a proud and devoted family man and a great character, and as a politician he was respected widely throughout the Parliament.

To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the week. (S5F-00610)

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

Kezia Dugdale: Across Scotland, every day of every week, thousands of children attend football training sessions—young boys and girls who are desperate to emulate their sporting heroes. In recent days, we have discovered that our national

game is not so beautiful. Football has become enmeshed in society's shame: child sex abuse. Once again, trusted people who were expected to nurture and care for our children have been found to have been abusing them.

Former footballers have found the courage to come forward and disclose how they suffered at the hands of paedophile coaches. Does the First Minister agree that those survivors of abuse deserve to have their courage matched by justice?

The First Minister: Yes—of course I do. The allegations of abuse that are surfacing in relation to football are extremely serious and sicken all of us. The inquiries that must now take place into the allegations of abuse are first and foremost police inquiries, so that anyone who has been the victim of abuse gets the justice that they so rightly deserve. What is being alleged is criminal behaviour of the most serious kind.

The Scottish Football Association and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children have established a dedicated advice line for anyone who has concerns that relate to abuse in football. All agencies are committed to working with the police to ensure that allegations are thoroughly and properly investigated, so that anyone who has suffered abuse can get access to justice.

Kezia Dugdale: We are all horrified by child sex abuse and we all hope that current regulations ensure that such abuse could not happen now, but that is no comfort to the ex-footballers who have come forward—such abuse happened to them. They will not be able to bring their cases to the Scottish child abuse inquiry, because they were not in care when they were abused. That is true for all those who suffered abuse in youth clubs, in parishes or in sports clubs.

Survivors groups have asked for the inquiry's remit to be extended to all situations where a duty of care existed. Labour has backed that call, and the growing tide of revelations from footballers adds to that demand. Will the First Minister reconsider the inquiry's remit?

The First Minister: First, I say again that the inquiries that must take place now into the allegations that are being made about football are first and foremost police inquiries. What is being alleged is criminal behaviour, and the police must investigate thoroughly and robustly.

I turn to the question about the child abuse public inquiry. Of course I understand the motivations of those who now call for that inquiry's remit to be extended. Kezia Dugdale is right to say that some survivors groups have called for that extension, but it is equally true to say that others have said that they do not wish the remit to be extended in that way.

The Government has given the issue the most careful consideration. The inquiry, which is already the most wide-ranging public inquiry ever to be held in Scotland, deliberately focuses on in-care abuse—abuse that took place in institutions or other settings that had a legal responsibility for the long-term care of children in place of their parents. Widening the remit of that inquiry would mean that it would take perhaps many years longer to conclude its investigations and would risk becoming completely unwieldy, and I think that we would be at risk of breaking our word to the survivors of in-care abuse.

We should allow the inquiry to get on with its job and we should allow the police to get on with their job of investigating allegations of abuse in football. As the police inquiries take their course, if it emerges that there are wider systemic issues to be addressed, we will of course consider very seriously how that should be taken forward.

Kezia Dugdale: I understand that all abuse is criminal and that there are practical concerns about inquiries. I get that, but this is about a fundamental principle. The First Minister should look to Australia to see how this can be done. Survivors of child abuse deserve justice and the wait for the inquiry has already been too long.

The inquiry holds out the promise of justice but, in restricting who and what will be investigated, it will deny that justice. As it stands, the inquiry is excluding the vast majority of people who were abused. First Minister, how can that be right? Please think again.

The First Minister: The Government has considered the issue very carefully and John Swinney made a statement on that very matter a couple of weeks ago. We take it very seriously, and we have to balance a number of issues.

We owe it to survivors of in-care abuse to have an inquiry that can reasonably quickly give them the answers that they want, to ensure that we learn the lessons that they want to be learned and so that we can say that such in-care abuse will never be allowed to happen again in Scotland.

Of course we should look at experience in other countries; we should also, perhaps, look at the experience in England now of what could happen if an inquiry's remit becomes unwieldy. We have to take those issues into account and come to a balanced conclusion, and that is what we are seeking to do.

All abuse and any abuse, no matter who is the victim of the abuse and where it occurs, is serious and must be properly and fully investigated. There is a distinction that concerns in-care abuse, in which the institution where the abuse happened was in the place of the child's parent and had legal responsibility for the child's long-term care.

We will continue to take all those issues very seriously and through all our actions—whether that is through the public inquiry or the action that we fully support by the SFA and by the police, which they will rightly take—we will continue to make sure that anybody who is the victim of abuse, no matter where it happens, gets access to justice, because they deserve that justice.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There is a constituency question from Sandra White.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): What discussions has the Scottish Government had with Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board about the movement of staff from the minor injuries unit at Yorkhill hospital in my constituency? That movement could lead to the closure of the unit, which has raised great concerns that there will be no minor injuries unit in the west of Glasgow and that constituents will need to go to Stobhill hospital in the north or to the Southern general hospital in the south.

The First Minister: The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport had discussions this morning with the chair of Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board about that very issue. The health board has announced that it plans to move some staff from the minor injuries unit at Yorkhill to the Queen Elizabeth university hospital as part of its overall plans for the winter. As I said, the health secretary spoke this morning to the chair of the board, who has given assurances that the move is temporary and is intended to make best use of expert nursing staff, in order to help as many people as possible. The health secretary will be more than happy to discuss the issue in more detail with Sandra White and to have further discussions with the health board as required.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): What is the First Minister's response to Tuesday's announcement of 270 job losses at Doosan Babcock in Renfrewshire? How will her Government assist the local economy, as that latest announcement follows on from the recent announcements that Chivas Bros and Scottish Enterprise are moving out of Paisley?

The First Minister: The business minister has met Chivas Bros and Renfrewshire Council, and they are convening a round-table discussion in February to discuss the best way forward following the announcement. An option that I have previously discussed with Renfrewshire Council is to set up a task force.

We are extremely concerned to hear that Doosan Babcock intends to consult staff on potential job losses at the Renfrewshire site. It will be a difficult time for the workers there. Scottish Enterprise is in contact with the company and will continue to engage with it throughout the

consultation period to explore all possible options to support the business and to protect jobs.

I encourage the company to do all that it can to avoid redundancies. Of course, in the unfortunate event that any redundancies proceed, we will make sure that the support of the partnership action for continuing employment is there to help the affected workers. We will do everything that we can to help in those circumstances.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I associate the Scottish Green Party with the remarks that have been made about Alex Johnstone. Over the years, we all enjoyed many debates with Alex, not least when we disagreed—which, let us face it, was probably most of the time. He always took that role in a spirit of good humour and respect. We will miss him.

To ask the First Minister when the Cabinet will next meet. (S5F-00617)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Cabinet will next meet on Tuesday.

Patrick Harvie: In February, I described Donald Trump as

“an arrogant and racist bully”

and a “dangerous extremist”—to be honest, I could have said much worse. The First Minister said that she

“would probably use more diplomatic language”—[*Official Report*, 25 February 2016; c 21-22.]

but thought that her “views on Donald Trump” were “not materially different” from my own.

Like others around the world, we need to work out how to deal with the reality that Donald Trump will be the US President without denying what kind of person he truly is. As he fills his team with powerful economic elites, white nationalists, misogynist homophobes and now climate change deniers, we must consider how our relationship with the US is going to have to change. Does the First Minister agree that the appointment of Scott Pruitt—a climate change denier who has helped the fossil fuel industry to undermine climate policy—to lead the Environmental Protection Agency is, as Bernie Sanders put it, a “sad and dangerous” decision, and that that decision will be dangerous not just for US domestic policy, but for the global climate change agenda?

The First Minister: We should challenge the views of anybody who denies the science around climate change. This Parliament has shown a lead in years gone by, and it is really important that it continues to take a lead in arguing the case for the action that is necessary to tackle climate change.

Patrick Harvie asked me when the Cabinet will next meet, and when it last met on Tuesday, we had a substantive discussion about our climate change plan, led by Roseanna Cunningham, and our plans for further legislation to toughen our targets on carbon emissions and tackling climate change. We should continue to lead by example.

Whether on climate change or anything else, all of us should stick up for our principles. We should also seek to work at protecting the relationship between the peoples of Scotland and the United States of America. As I have said previously, it is an important and long-standing relationship of culture, family ties and, of course, business. I will continue to do what I can to make sure that that relationship goes from strength to strength.

Patrick Harvie: I look forward—as I am sure that we all do—to the results of that Cabinet discussion. At the weekend, the First Minister gave a more detailed speech on climate policy than I can remember her giving before, so we all look forward to more progress on the issue at the domestic level.

If the relationship with the US, which the First Minister rightly says is important, is going to be of value to us all—to them and to us—surely it has to be with those state and city governments that want the US to continue to be a progressive force on climate change and which are willing to resist the dangerous policies of the Trump regime once it comes into power? There is a range of regional climate change initiatives, individual state Governments and networks of city mayors that are active on that agenda. What actions is the Scottish Government taking to make contact with people who will be genuinely useful allies in the climate change agenda around the world and to help them resist the actions of the Trump Government?

The First Minister: We are very active in working with other states and regions. We work very closely with the Committee of the Regions. In fact, this time last year, I was in Paris for the climate change talks and took part in discussions with that group, within which Scotland is seen as a leader.

Patrick Harvie makes a very important and accurate point that, in the United States, much of the action that is required to tackle climate change comes not from the federal Government but from state Governments. A couple of weeks ago, along with many members, I was at the Scottish business awards dinner, which was addressed by Leonardo DiCaprio, and I had the opportunity to meet the man who now runs the Leonardo DiCaprio climate change foundation, who was previously the climate change adviser to Governor Schwarzenegger in California. Some of the work that California is doing around clean, green energy

and many other aspects of the agenda should give all of us a lot of cause for optimism.

We will continue to work with the American Administration on these and other issues but we will also work with states in America and states and other regions across Europe and the wider world. As we do so, we will continue to make sure that we are taking action here that gives us genuine credibility as a world leader.

Cabinet (Meetings)

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): He was a mischievous, humorous and engaging man and I know that the whole chamber will miss Alex Johnstone.

To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S5F-00616)

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

Willie Rennie: Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland, Estonia, Canada, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Slovenia, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Norway, Austria, Vietnam, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Russia and France—Scotland used to have one of the best education systems in the world; now we have dropped behind all those countries. After 10 years of Scottish National Party rule, we are not even as good as England any more. Scotland's children and teachers have still not had a proper explanation. Can the First Minister tell them what has gone wrong?

The First Minister: I am not going to rise to the bait on the politics of this issue, because it is too important to all of us. However, as I said in response to an earlier question, I can point to much in Scottish education that shows improvement, whether that is exam passes, positive destinations or the evidence on the narrowing of the attainment gap—although that is not yet going far or fast enough.

As I said in response to earlier questions, the outcome of the programme for international student assessment—PISA—survey is not where I want Scottish education to be. It is not good enough. That is why I am not going to rise to the bait on the politics; I am going to continue to focus the Government that I lead on taking the action that will change the position. That is why all the action that I ran through in response to Ruth Davidson's question is so important, because that is what will make the difference in Scottish education.

Out of everything that I talked about earlier, perhaps the most important thing in terms of holding the Government to account as well as

making sure that we see improvements is the data that we will publish starting next week. For the first time, we will publish data not just at local authority level but on a school-by-school basis. From next year, that data will be informed by standardised assessment, which Willie Rennie has opposed at every turn so far in the chamber.

We will continue to focus on taking the action that needs to be taken. We are serious about making those improvements and I hope that the whole Parliament will get behind us, because some of what we are going to do over the next period will be controversial and some of it will run into resistance. At that point, it will be interesting to see whether the Opposition parties are behind us on these things or not.

Willie Rennie: When the First Minister accuses other parties of politics, it is because she has no answers, and there have been no answers again today. Children have been denied the explanation as to why we are where we are and why we are behind all those countries. They deserve an explanation.

Complacency has been oozing out of ministers for a whole decade. Keith Brown said:

"We are now in an era in which the performance of Scotland's teachers will finally be matched by the performance of Scotland's Government."—[*Official Report*, 16 Jan 2008; c 5087.]

Angela Constance said:

"The Government's record is, of course, far superior"—[*Official Report*, 22 September 2015; c 63.]

The ever-modest Michael Russell delivered a speech entitled, "Scottish Education—from Good to Great".

All of that while they presided over the worst results ever, and yet they all still sit round the cabinet table and block the transformational investment that our education needs. They prefer the reintroduction of Thatcherite school league tables, the centralisation of education and 20,000 pages of guidance. Will the First Minister overrule all those ministers and invest £500 million in education in the budget next week?

The First Minister: Here is the nub of the matter. Investment in education is important, which is why we have established the attainment fund to ensure that the £750 million of investment gets to the areas of greatest need. However, if Willie Rennie cares to read the December 2015 report that we commissioned the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development to do, he will find this observation—in chapter 8, I think. Although investment is, of course, important, it is not in itself enough. The report makes the point that the difference in PISA scores between countries is less to do with variation in investment

and more to do with differences in policy and practice.

Yes, we will invest, but we will also ensure that we carry forward the reforms to our school system that require to be made. Every single one of the reforms that we have brought forward so far has been opposed—we heard some of that just now—by Willie Rennie. The proof of the pudding is coming. As we bring forward the necessary reforms in our schools, will we have the support of the chamber and the Opposition? The Opposition is good at the rhetoric around all this, but will we have its support when we come to do the tough things that need to be done in Scottish education? We will find out sooner rather than later.

The Presiding Officer: We have two supplementary questions.

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): My constituent Elaine Holmes has been an outstanding leader of the campaign arising from the transvaginal mesh implant scandal. She, and so many other Scottish women, have been full of anticipation ahead of the publication of the report of the review that was commissioned by the former Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Alex Neil. However, they are dismayed that, just weeks before publication, the independent chairman has resigned and will be replaced by a serving senior health board medical practitioner, amid suggestions that there has been undue influence on either the conclusions or the recommendations of the review.

Can the First Minister give an assurance that there has been, and will be, no interference and no pressure? Can she couple that with a comment regarding a letter that I received from Shona Robison? In that letter, Shona Robison accepted that counterfeit material may well have been inserted into women, but she noted that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency—a United Kingdom body that has singularly failed women in Scotland and the rest of the UK—had said that, because there have been no adverse incidents so far, no further action is required. Surely it is not the Scottish Government's position that the fitting of counterfeit material is acceptable. If it is not, what next?

The First Minister: Jackson Carlaw raises a very important issue, and I take this opportunity to give credit to the women who have so bravely brought it to the fore. It is absolutely the case that there has been no undue influence on the inquiry, and nor will there be any undue influence. I am aware of the resignation of the chair, which is an unfortunate development.

In response to Jackson Carlaw's question, I will personally look into all the issues, and I will write to him or have the Cabinet Secretary for Health

and Sport do so in order that we can give an assurance that the inquiry will conclude and that whatever recommendations and findings it publishes will be taken forward.

On the second part of Jackson Carlaw's question, what he describes is not the position of the Scottish Government. The MHRA is an independent regulatory body and therefore a reserved matter that is not the responsibility of this Parliament. However, the issues that have been raised are serious and extremely painful for the women concerned, and we want to ensure that the inquiry concludes properly and that any lessons or actions for the Scottish Government are taken forward as people would expect. As I said, I will ensure that we respond in full to give the even more detailed assurance that Jackson Carlaw is looking for.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): This week, the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians has exposed contractors on the Forth crossing project that are ripping off workers and undercutting the pay of joiners and other tradesmen by up to £5 an hour. It has also exposed health and safety breaches, a culture of harassment, failure to pay holiday pay, the use of umbrella companies and workers being allowed on site without appropriate safety accreditation. Will the First Minister meet me and UCATT representatives to address those issues and ensure that this iconic bridge is not built on the backs of exploited workers?

The First Minister: The kinds of practices that Neil Findlay outlines—if they are indeed practices that have been undertaken—are completely unacceptable and the Scottish Government would not tolerate such behaviour. I am more than happy to ask the cabinet secretary to discuss the matter with Neil Findlay, so that we can ensure that we are taking forward whatever action is necessary. Neil Findlay is right: the bridge, which is nearing completion, is an iconic structure and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to every worker who has worked hard on it. However, we owe them more than a debt of gratitude. We owe it to them always to take seriously any such allegations. I assure the chamber that we will very much do that.

Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency (Funding)

5. Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how much the Scottish Government has allocated to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency in this parliamentary session. (S5F-00622)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): This year we have allocated more than £130 million, and by the end of this session we will have committed more than £1 billion, to improve the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes and tackle

fuel poverty. Figures that were released on Tuesday showed that almost 100,000 fewer households were living in fuel poverty in 2015 than in 2014. Although that is welcome news, we know that a great deal more work is still to be done.

Half of that reduction, incidentally, is due to lower energy prices during that time, which is why we have continually called on the United Kingdom Government to do more in response to above-inflation energy price increases in recent years.

Kate Forbes: I welcome the finding that rural fuel poverty has fallen, partly due to the falling price of domestic fuel, as the First Minister has said, but energy prices are higher in the Highlands and Islands, despite multiple requests for the UK Government to do something about that, and those higher prices remain a major driver of household fuel poverty. What more can the First Minister do to help low-income households with their fuel bills?

The First Minister: There are particular issues in rural areas and many of them were looked at by the working group that concluded recently. We will continue to take action to improve the energy efficiency of our homes, which is why the Scottish Government investment that I spoke about is so important. We will continue to work with energy companies to ensure that there is fair treatment, particularly for those on low incomes. For example, it is unacceptable that the most vulnerable consumers, particularly those on pre-payment meters, should be paying more.

Next week, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities is convening a meeting with facilities companies to challenge them to help low-income consumers to get a better deal on their fuel bills. We will carry on taking action across a range of the issues to ensure that the trend that we have seen in the most recent figures, which is a reduction in the number of people in Scotland who are living in fuel poverty, continues.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): Recently, I met Di Alexander, the chair of the Scottish rural fuel poverty task force. He was keen to promote energy carer schemes, which are

“high quality, in-home locally delivered holistic support in bringing verifiable affordable warmth improvements to cold, vulnerable fuel poor households living in any part of remote rural Scotland.”

What proportion of any investment that the Government will make in tackling fuel poverty will be spent on energy carer schemes?

The First Minister: We will respond in full at the start of next year to the report that Andy Wightman cites, when we will lay out the actions that we will take in response to all its recommendations. Andy Wightman raises an important issue, and of

course we want to address such areas with the funding that we have committed to. More detail of our approach to that and other issues that were raised in the working group’s report will be set out at the start of the year by the communities secretary.

Dangerous Driving (Sentencing)

6. Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government’s position is on increasing the sentences imposed for causing death by dangerous driving. (S5F-00612)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Those who drive dangerously and kill people ruin lives; not just the lives of those who die but the lives of their family and friends. The United Kingdom Government is consulting on whether courts should have increased powers to deal with such offenders. While increasing available penalties cannot ever compensate for the loss of a family member or friend, it might help to discourage people from driving dangerously in the first place. Of course, this important area of law is not devolved to Scotland, and I encourage all those with views on it to respond to the Government’s consultation.

Alison Harris: With the review on-going, is the Scottish Government aware of *The Falkirk Herald’s* drive for justice campaign, and will it support the campaign’s aims of increased sentences for the worst offenders; longer driving bans for those who risk causing death and serious injury; an end to the loophole through which drink-drivers often get shorter sentences if they flee the scene of the accident; and a review of the number of drivers who cause death while driving but are charged with the lesser offence of careless driving?

The First Minister: I endorse *The Falkirk Herald’s* campaign. It is very important to raise awareness of the dangers associated with anyone driving a car dangerously and it is perfectly legitimate to campaign for tougher sentences—although I point out that sentencing anyone who kills someone while driving dangerously is always a matter for the courts.

Some of the issues raised by the member that are part of the campaign are, of course, being looked at in the United Kingdom’s consultation, which is why I encourage everyone not just in the Parliament but across the country to respond to it. I think that there is a strong case for toughening up the sentences that are available to the courts in such circumstances, and I very much hope that that will be the UK Government’s direction of travel once it has had the opportunity to consider the consultation responses.

EY Scottish ITEM Club (Growth Forecast)

7. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the recent revised growth forecast by the EY Scottish ITEM club. (S5F-00608)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The EY ITEM club's recent growth forecast for Scotland signals a weaker outlook for the Scottish economy than was forecast in June, prior to the European Union referendum, and the report makes it clear that the referendum result has had an immediate impact on economic and business confidence in Scotland, from which slower growth is expected over the next couple of years. As a result, the Government's immediate focus is on seeking to safeguard Scotland's place in Europe and our membership of the single market in order to protect us from Brexit's negative economic impacts, which I think are becoming clearer by the day.

Jackie Baillie: Given that every economic forecaster has now revised its growth projections downwards and that growth is expected to be even slower in Scotland than in the rest of the UK, will the First Minister order a review of the economic strategy published in March 2015 and the inward investment strategy published in March 2016—before Brexit—to reflect the challenging market conditions for our businesses?

The First Minister: Jackie Baillie has raised reasonable points. We keep our economic strategy under review on an on-going basis, as I think people would expect us to, and we are looking particularly closely at some of its aspects in light of Brexit. Our budget next week will set out our plans to ensure that Scotland is a competitive place to do business and that we are absolutely focusing on growth in our economy.

Of course, the enterprise and skills review is very much about making sure that all of our agencies in this area are working in a co-ordinated and comprehensive way to take forward the economic strategy. We will continue to review the strategy to ensure that we have the right measures in place, and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work will be very happy to discuss the matter in more detail with any member in the chamber.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): How will making Scotland the most highly taxed part of the United Kingdom help our economy grow?

The First Minister: I intend to ensure that we have fair and balanced taxation for individuals and companies in this country. One of the things that has been imposed on us by the Tories and which we are dealing with is not just Brexit but deep cuts to public spending, which impact on this

Government's budget. We will balance all of those things in our budget and ensure that we focus not just on growth but on protecting our public services and the most vulnerable in our society. Conservative policies are hitting the most vulnerable and making it harder to protect public services. Next week, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution will set out our budget, and that budget will be in the interests of Scotland in all of those areas.

Loneliness (Age Scotland Campaign)

8. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government can take in light of Age Scotland's campaign to tackle loneliness during the festive season. (S5F-00631)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Dealing with loneliness and isolation can be incredibly difficult, but at this time of year it is especially heartbreaking to think that many of our older neighbours will spend Christmas alone. That is why on Monday I helped launch Age Scotland's festive no one should have no one at Christmas campaign, and I encourage people throughout Scotland to reach out to older people in their local communities. We are developing a national strategy to help to tackle the problems of loneliness and isolation; we have invested £0.5 million pounds in a specific social isolation and loneliness fund; and our £20 million empowering communities fund currently supports seven projects that tackle the social isolation experienced by older people.

Christine Grahame: We cannot leave everything to Government and personal neighbourly contact is important. Will the national strategy that the First Minister referred to consider the isolation that is experienced by older people, who might have a concessionary bus pass, but no transport—let alone buses—particularly in rural areas of the Borders and Midlothian in my constituency?

Knowing that loneliness has serious implications for physical and mental health, I believe that money spent on it could save money for the national health service and give older people a better quality of life. Will that have a place in the strategy?

The First Minister: Christine Grahame raises a very pertinent point about the power of preventative spending: if we invest small amounts of money in tackling some problems, we save even more money for the NHS, local authorities and other services. She also raised important points about those who live in rural areas, for whom the issues of isolation are often more acute. I can give Christine Grahame and other members

an assurance that, in developing the national strategy that I spoke about, we will consider all those issues across Government so that we tackle them as effectively as possible.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time.

On behalf of the Parliament, I thank all the party leaders for their thoughtful and touching remarks following the death of our colleague, Alex Johnstone. As a mark of respect, our flags are flying at half-mast today and there will be an opportunity for members to pay their own tributes during a debate on a motion of condolence when that is scheduled. There will also be a book of condolence available after First Minister's question time today in room P1.02, and I know that members and staff will wish to add their names.

Doon Valley Boxing Club

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-02537, in the name of Brian Whittle, on Doon valley boxing club. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the success of Doon Valley Boxing Club in Dalmellington; understands that the club attracts members from across Ayrshire and that some of those who train there have gone on to compete at a national level; believes that local sports clubs play a hugely important role in their communities, by providing positive opportunities for young people, improving physical and mental health, reducing antisocial behaviour and helping to improve performance in school; recognises the vital contribution that volunteers play in sustaining such clubs and commend them for their hard work, and wishes community sports clubs across Scotland, including Doon Valley Boxing Club, continued success.

12:48

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): During my recent visit to Dalmellington, the Doon valley boxing club was brought to my attention as being a really positive influence in the local community. The club invited me for a visit and—because the lift does not always go to the top floor, where I am concerned—I decided to bring my training kit with me and take part in a session. I went in with a plan: I joined in with the under-12 age group. However, as that great educator Iron Mike Tyson once said:

“Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.”

After a shadow boxing session and six two-minute rounds of hitting the pads, followed by circuits, I left the building in a wheelbarrow. I will turn my speech up the right way—that will help.

Under the tutelage of head trainer Sam Mullen, what the club has achieved for a community that does not have to seek its own challenges is quite remarkable. With local facilities closing down, he took it upon himself to start the club 13 years ago in a garage. He now runs a weight-training gym and boxing gym from an industrial unit in the town. To say that the club is busy is an understatement. He trains children and young people of all ages and the club is open all day and in the evening. Everybody in the community knows about the club. When I arrived, the youngest age group were in training, and I listened to Mr Mullen drilling into them the importance of healthy eating. Many of the parents were next door in the weight-training room, working out after dropping off their children at the club. The enthusiasm from Sam, the parents and the youngsters was fantastic to see.

It may be hard for my fellow parliamentarians to hear this, but the brutal reality is that the members of that club will not listen to advice that we give from the chamber, but they will listen with complete attention to Mr Mullen and his trainee coaches, because they speak directly to the members' enthusiasms and aspirations. In these times, when we hear about children's increasing inactivity, obesity and poor mental health, we need to acknowledge in our communities local champions and the impact that they have—which, to be frank, Parliament cannot begin to replicate.

Third and voluntary sector organisations are by far best placed to create a feeling of community and inclusivity through activity. We cannot impose solutions, but we can and should support our sports' governing bodies and councils, which can in turn ensure that community initiatives such as Doon valley boxing club are properly resourced and financed so that they can open up opportunities and choices for people, irrespective of their backgrounds or personal circumstances. Kids want to participate, but they can do so only if the opportunities are there for them.

The sense of community pride, parental pride and personal pride among members of the club is there for all to see, and that collective pride speaks to the health and wellbeing of the community. If we are serious about tackling the rise in inactivity, increasing health inequality, the widening attainment gap, the rise in poor mental health, the obesity crisis and the rise in type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions and heart and lung conditions, we need look no further than the example that is set by Doon valley boxing club.

In my view, sport is consistently undervalued and underfunded in this country. SportsScotland works with a budget of £34 million to represent the one in five of the population who are members of sports clubs across all sports. What other portfolio delivers to so many people in our nation with such a small budget? Sports' governing bodies are being ever more stretched in delivering world-class sports opportunities through the club system, which is the lifeblood of Scottish sport and which is so often a centre of community activity.

We should not forget that—as the medical profession continually tells us—inclusivity and physical and mental activity are major solutions in the treatment and prevention of poor mental health. That applies not only to participants but to the army of coaches, officials and administrators who tirelessly keep the club system alive. I hope that the budget statement next week recognises the crucial part that sport plays in our nation's health and wellbeing as well as its ability to build that important sense of community. We should also recognise the long-term positive impact on

the health budget and on education, welfare and social behaviour.

With the aspiration and perspiration of the youngsters, the joy of participation and of getting fit, learning movement skills and developing self-awareness, self-control and confidence—all of which are eminently transferable skills—Doon valley boxing club ably demonstrates what is possible when the will exists.

My favourite quotation is from Henry Ford, who said:

“Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.”

Sam Mullen, his training staff and the parents and community of Dalmellington certainly believe that they can. What they have achieved, and continue to achieve, for the local community is a shining example of what is possible. We need to seek out, recognise and support all the Sam Mullens and Doon valley boxing clubs in every community around the country who give so much of their time to help others. I wish the club every success in the future, and I promise that I will see the club soon for another training session—if they just give me a little time to get a bit fitter.

12:53

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I thank Brian Whittle for bringing the issue to the chamber and for giving me the opportunity to speak on it. I also say well done to Doon valley boxing club for being acknowledged by Brian Whittle in the chamber.

I will not pretend to be an expert on boxing, but when I saw that the debate was on the agenda, I felt that I had to speak in it because my constituency of Coatbridge and Chryston—in particular, the Coatbridge part—has a very rich history in boxing.

Members may know that Ricky Burns, the current world number 1 World Boxing Association super-lightweight title holder, former World Boxing Organization super-featherweight title holder and WBO lightweight title holder, is from Coatbridge. He is the first person from Scotland to hold three boxing world titles—which we in Coatbridge are very proud of. This month, he won the inspirational performance award at the Scottish sport awards.

I want to talk about a place that is very similar to the Doon valley boxing club and helped to produce Ricky Burns—the Bannan fitness club in Coatbridge. Rab Bannan is a well-known face in Coatbridge and has, with his family, including Peter and Chris, put 40 years of his life into the Barn boxing club. He has put a lot of time into the local people of Coatbridge and is recognised by parliamentarians, councillors, police officers and

the community at large as a positive influence on generations of young people in the area. He is well respected and loved by the people of the town and has produced greats such as Lawrence Murphy and, of course, Ricky Burns.

The Bannan fitness club—like Doon valley boxing club, by the sound of it—is an example of how a poor community can come together and better itself. With only the financial support of an annual community grant and small membership fees to pay its rent, it puts everything it has straight back into the club. At its heart, it offers an alternative to a life of alcohol, drugs and vandalism and to the culture of unemployment. The club teaches discipline, life skills, and positive mental and physical health. It can give the most vulnerable people in society an identity, a sense of purpose and a place in the community. As can be seen by the couple of examples that I gave, it can change lives quite dramatically.

The club has a wide range of participants, including five to 11-year-olds—boys and girls—teenagers and adults. It probably has about 50 or 60 active members. More than that, though, there is community engagement. In the past year alone, I have attended two events that the club has put on at its base at the Langloan health and fitness centre, where it has brought the community together with kids events, including face painting and football games. There was a Rangers versus Celtic game on the big pitch. The events not only brought the community together but raised a phenomenal amount of money for charities—the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society and Crohn's and Colitis UK. They were fantastic days and both of them were mobbed.

Rab Bannan himself has been recognised for his outstanding achievements in the world of boxing. In November 2015, he was awarded the BBC “Get Inspired” unsung hero award. The boxing club is a great example of community engagement in the Coatbridge and Chryston area. Ricky Burns is an example of a Coatbridge boy done good and shows how lives can be changed by community involvement and by selfless and dedicated volunteers giving themselves to their community for most of their lives.

12:58

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I congratulate Brian Whittle on securing this debate on the Doon valley boxing club and support his commendation of the club. I apologise to the chamber for having to leave after speaking, to meet constituents.

That the Doon valley boxing club attracts members—male and female—from throughout Ayrshire is recognition and an achievement in itself. That the club attracts people from across

south-west Scotland, prepared to make the 110-mile round trip from Stranraer and elsewhere, is little short of extraordinary and should be a source of pride to the club officials.

Although I do not believe that I know Sam Mullen, his reputation travels before him. From all that I have read about him, he is obviously the driving force behind the club's success, and success does not come easily in Dalmellington, originally an Ayrshire mining village in the Doon valley. Life was hard and for real every day for that mining and rural community. It is close to Patna, a similar village, where boys became men very quickly, and employment historically was either down the pits or on the farms. There is little difference between them, both types of work being at best back breaking. The major difference is that one is below ground and the other is in the open air. Barrhill, where I grew up, was a village not unlike Dalmellington, but without the coal.

When Doon valley amateur boxing club started in Dalmellington 13 years ago, it did so in a post-mining era and in an area where life was and remains, hard. Opencast pits have come and gone, replacing traditional mining in East Ayrshire, and although some remain, the communities of Bellsbank, Logan, Cumnock, New Cumnock, Rankinston, Drongan and Dalrymple, to name but a few, have a tradition of extracting a hard-fought living from what is at best a difficult environment and sometimes a downright dangerous and hostile one. The Doon valley boxing club, however, offers hope. It is little wonder, then, that the Doon valley boxing club has prospered in its 13 years of existence. It is little wonder that the club has so engaged with the wider Ayrshire community and little wonder that it has been so successful.

Success, of course, can be measured in several ways. First, let us acknowledge that that Dalmellington boxing club has produced a youth Commonwealth bronze medallist, which is a very real achievement. Brian Whittle, of all people, knows how hard it is to do that, with or without footwear. The club has also brought forward 30 young Scottish and six British champions in the past, and most recently we have a new group of talented young people, as reported by Mike Wilson in the *Daily Record* in February of this year, when a gold medal was won by Donny McPike in the Scottish intermediate championship at Ravenscraig. Silvers went to Keigan McGuire, Rhys Mitchell and Arran McGarvie, and they were coached by Sam Mullen and David McNally, and those current successes tell us that the club is in good heart and that its proud 13-year history is not just being maintained but built upon, that its future is secure and that it, and clubs like it across Ayrshire, will continue into the future. Alex and Carlyn Paton, who are sponsors of the club and whose fathers and grandfathers I know and knew,

have wisely supported a club that embodies a gritty determination to succeed against the odds, and which improves the life chances of its members.

Clubs such as the Doon valley boxing club are a good example of what sports clubs across Scotland can achieve in terms of character building and development, even in this internet age, but they also demonstrate the value of inspired leadership and role models for those boys and girls to follow. Sam Mullen has provided that, and is now supported by David McInally and Billy McCubbin, and I congratulate them on their achievement and wish them well in the future.

13:02

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I echo the congratulations to Brian Whittle on bringing the motion before Parliament today and providing members with the opportunity to celebrate the outstanding work that community sports clubs do in our constituencies and regions.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Whitlets activity centre in Ayr with Mr Whittle, who kindly asked me to be part of the MSP team in a power chair football match, along with John Scott, against the South Ayrshire Tigers. I will not tell members what the result was, but let us just say that Mr Whittle will not be repeating his European, Commonwealth or Olympic track success in the sport of power chair football, and John Scott and I will not be giving up our day jobs. Judging by Mr Whittle's Twitter photos of him lying flat on his back in the ring at Doon valley boxing club, he probably will not be taking up boxing any time soon either.

However, when we met the players and coaches at South Ayrshire Tigers, and when Mr Whittle met the coach, Sam Mullen, and the kids at Doon valley boxing club, as we have heard, it showed that the work that our community sports clubs do really is truly inspirational. The boxing club in Dalmellington may be small in size and numbers, but it is clear that it is punching well above its weight. The club's vision is to use the sport

"to change people's lives, to improve communities and change a nation."

As the motion before us highlights, that is exactly what sports clubs across all our communities do. Our sports clubs teach us incredibly important lessons about life, about the joy of triumph, but also about learning to be resilient when we lose, and to lose with grace—a bit like politics, I suppose. They also provide a platform for many fantastic volunteers to contribute to their local areas. They help young people to do well at school, they bring communities together with

shared goals, strengthening local networks, reinforcing a sense of place and diverting young people away from crime, and they give a positive opportunity for young people to improve their physical and mental health, which has never been more important than it is today.

Since being elected to the Parliament in May, I have had the privilege of being Labour's spokesperson on public health and social care, and of serving on the Health and Sport Committee. This week, the committee held a round-table discussion on obesity, which is probably the most pressing public health issue that Scotland faces today. Two thirds of Scotland's adults are now classed as being overweight and, shamefully, almost a third of children are "at risk" of becoming overweight. Children are more likely to be overweight in Scotland than they are in any other part of the United Kingdom.

At the committee's meeting, I raised the fact that there is a clear link between obesity and deprivation, particularly among women and children. A quarter of four and five-year-olds from the most deprived areas are at risk of being overweight compared with around 18 per cent of children of that age from the least deprived areas.

What does that mean for our nation's health? We know that obesity contributes to a whole number of health issues: type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, depression and anxiety, liver disease, osteoarthritis and back pain, asthma, reproductive complications and sleep apnoea. In fact, obesity reduces life expectancy by an average of three years, and severe obesity does so by between eight and 10 years.

Obesity does not have an impact only on our health. It is associated with worse employment outcomes and is a source of unacceptable discrimination for applicants in the workplace. It also impacts on our public finances. Estimates by the Scottish Government in 2007-08 suggested that overweight and obesity combined were responsible for healthcare costs of £312 million, which is more than £350 million at today's prices.

Although addressing diet and calorie intake is the most effective way to tackle obesity, physical exercise is also crucial, and that is why our sports clubs are so important to our nation's health and wellbeing. I therefore welcome the opportunity to debate the issue and to place on record my support for sports clubs across the south of Scotland and beyond. In particular, I would like to say thank you to the army of volunteers who make them happen.

As Brian Whittle said, we can do more than just express our support; we can provide practical help. I was elected to the Parliament on a manifesto that included a commitment to use the

Barnett consequential that would be raised from the so-called sugar tax to invest £40 million in after-school sports clubs. That is a positive measure that I will continue to pursue so that our sports clubs can continue to do their outstanding work in all our communities.

13:07

Rachael Hamilton (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to be speaking in Brian Whittle's sport-themed members' business debate. I know from speaking to Mr Whittle that Doon valley boxing club packs a punch in the small village of Dalmellington in Ayrshire. Since 2003, the club has produced 30 national champions, six British champions and a youth Commonwealth bronze medallist. The recognition that such clubs and individuals receive is undoubtedly deserved, and the contribution that all coaches, officials and volunteers make across the country is truly exceptional and must not go unnoticed. Today's debate is testament to the hard work that goes into running sports clubs such as Doon valley boxing club.

Let us take a closer look at the work of Sam Mullen, who established the boxing club. He opened the community gym after an injury forced him to retire. There are many ways to give back to your community and one is to volunteer in sport. Without the generosity of volunteers, such clubs simply could not operate. It is volunteers such as Sam and his team who help to create the next generation of sporting stars. I am a volunteer netball coach, and I encourage everyone to get involved—it is extremely rewarding.

Crucial to the continuing success of boxing across Scotland is Boxing Scotland, which does great work throughout the country. It continues to make boxing accessible and to develop the sport so that all have the opportunity to reach their potential. It also works to create a strong boxing community.

My colleague Brian Whittle briefly entered that community when he visited Doon valley boxing club. I am not sure whether members—apart from Colin Smyth—were privy to the photographs of him visiting the club. Brian Whittle is, of course, a decorated athlete who competed with the world's best, but when he went up against his opponent at the club pound for pound, his opponent had the upper hand, showing that Brian is just a lightweight.

On Sunday, I watched a programme called "Fern Britton Meets ...", in which Fern met boxing legend and two-time world champion, Nigel Benn. As well as speaking about his glittering career, he shared his more troubled personal journey. Benn was a difficult teenager and a worry to his family.

At 17, he was persuaded to join the British Army, where he became a first-class boxer. He turned professional in 1987. Nicknamed "The Dark Destroyer" for his formidable punching power and aggressive fighting style, he won many titles and is ranked by BoxRec as the fourth-best British super-middleweight boxer of all time. His success demonstrates that activity in sport can turn lives around positively.

Yesterday, I had a tweeting session with Josh Taylor, a professional boxer from Prestonpans, East Lothian. Josh was part of the Olympic boxing team in London and he won a gold medal at the Commonwealth games in Glasgow—he turned professional in 2015. When he first started boxing aged 15, there were no boxing facilities in East Lothian, so he travelled here to Edinburgh for them. He told me that through his boxing he learned discipline and respect, which kept him out of trouble. He said that

"boxing is great for that."

One of the Doon valley club members is a pupil at Ayr Academy, a young lad with boxing talent called Donny McPike. He is coached at Doon by Sam Mullen, who, as has been said, has built an outstanding record of turning out champions over the years. Apparently, Donny eats, sleeps and breathes boxing, and wants to get right to the top of his game. That dedication to the sport has seen him win a domestic treble: the Scottish intermediate championships, the western district championships and, for the second year in a row, the Scottish title. Donny is the only Ayrshire boy to achieve that. Those accolades highlight not only Donny's talent but the value to the area of the Doon valley boxing club. The boxing club facilitated the growth and development of Donny's talent. That highlights the crucial role that such clubs play in the development of young sporting lives, providing an environment of encouragement and opportunity.

Again, I thank Brian Whittle for bringing this debate to the chamber, and I acknowledge the great work of Doon Valley boxing club and pay tribute to all those volunteers in all sports across Scotland who do so much for their respective clubs.

13:11

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): I, too, thank Brian Whittle for lodging his motion and I thank members for their contributions to the debate. We have heard of the fantastic record of the small Doon valley boxing club, which is certainly punching above its weight. I also thank the coaches and volunteers who help to keep the club running, particularly Sam Mullen, who sounds like a truly inspirational character.

I would certainly be keen to meet the people from the club or to visit the club and try my right hook, although perhaps I should not do that, as it might be a wee bit different from the bouts that we regularly experience in the chamber. However, if time permits and the opportunity arises, I would be keen to meet those from the club.

I do not think that it is uncomfortable for us as parliamentarians to hear that messages on, for example, healthy eating, personal discipline and physical activity are more keenly heard when they are delivered by sportsmen and sportswomen. I know that sport has that reach, and that we must harness that potential to transform lives. That is being done by projects such as those that we heard are happening in Dalmellington and in clubs that are familiar to members in their constituencies. In my constituency, Biggar rugby club, of which I am a member, has delivered phenomenal results for many people across rural Lanarkshire. The Government supports projects such as football fans in training, which engages people, builds on community assets and empowers people to take control of their lives.

We see improvements and real results when we harness sport to transform lives. We know the health challenges that Scotland faces, but sport helps to reverse some of the unfortunate trends around sedentary lifestyles that we see in Scotland. Sport and physical activity have been proven to improve both physical and mental health. Being active has many health, social and economic benefits, and reduces the risks from more than 25 chronic conditions. It is estimated that physical inactivity in Scotland results in around 2,500 premature deaths and costs our national health service around £94.1 million annually. The tragedy is that such things are often preventable.

On providing opportunities for children, creating a culture in which healthy behaviours are the norm must start in the early years so that children and young people can develop a lifelong habit of activity. Research has shown that it is vital that children are active before they reach school age. That can be done through active play, which improves not only co-ordination but social skills with peers, siblings, parents, grandparents and nursery workers. That was, in part, why we developed a play strategy, which I think flows seamlessly into the work that we do once children reach school age. Through investment from this Government, 98 per cent of schools now provide their pupils with two hours or two periods of physical education per week, compared with the less than 10 per cent that did so in 2004-05.

However, we must not be complacent. We will continue to support sportscotland, Education Scotland and Scottish local authorities to maintain

and improve the quality of PE provision, and we will position that within the Government's overarching aims around raising attainment.

Outside school hours, children can access the active schools programme. Since 2007, sportscotland has invested over £80 million in that programme, and it will invest up to £50 million in the period 2015 to 2019, across all 32 local authorities. As a result, during the school session 2015-16, school pupils across Scotland made 6.5 million visits to active schools sport and physical activity sessions. That record high represents a 7 per cent increase on the previous 12 months.

The figures show that, during the same academic year, the number of activity sessions that were offered increased by 5 per cent to 350,000, with a range of more than 100 different sports and activities being on offer. We have also seen an increase in the number of people delivering those sessions, 19,000 of whom are volunteers. The active schools programme also provides a helpful pathway into club sport to encourage children to continue with their sporting activities once they leave school. That is a great foundation that we must build on if we want to make inroads into inactivity levels across our country.

One of the lasting legacies of the 2014 Commonwealth games is the development of community sport hubs. Scotland can now boast of having 157 of those hubs, which bring together local clubs to work together in the way that best suits local circumstances. Many of the hubs are based in local schools. Sportscotland has announced a further investment of £6 million to create a total of 200 hubs by 2020. Colin Smyth might be interested to know that my letter of direction to sportscotland covers looking at ways in which we can enhance that provision in areas of deprivation.

It is important to remember that Scotland's sedentary lifestyle is about more than just sport. It is about activity more generally, and that is why we support the paths for all partnership. Our dedication to walking in our national strategy has seen an increase of 5 per cent in that free-of-charge activity. We are also investing in active travel and, through the spirit of 2012 trust, we are investing in collecting data about what works in getting our inactive population active. Yesterday, I was impressed by the work that is happening at Edinburgh Leisure, which is truly targeting and engaging with the community in order to figure out what it needs to do differently to get its inactive population active across all ages.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): The minister has highlighted various groups. One group that I think we are all aware of is jogscotland, which is trying to do exactly what the minister said those other

groups are doing. However, its funding has all been cut. Will the minister review that to see how that group can continue to provide the physical exercise that we all want to see, which it says it will have to scale back on?

Aileen Campbell: We are always looking to see in what ways we can improve on situations. I certainly know that the work that jogscotland continues to do is recognised and appreciated, but we need to look at the whole picture, and that is why we are investing in things such as paths for all, to encourage people to take up that free-of-charge activity, and making sure that we celebrate the 5 per cent increase in walking across Scotland. That happens not by accident but through the investment, the dedication and the focus that we have had through our national walking strategy.

Others have mentioned sport's ability to reach into our communities, transform lives, engage with people and help the Government more generally to tackle issues around inequality, health and wellbeing and employability. All those things have a reach that sport can help with, and they help us to transform lives and our communities. That is why it is important that we continue to focus on and understand that more general reach.

We continue to work with the Scottish governing bodies to see whether they can have more rigour and robustness in their figures so that we can truly tell that story much more powerfully across our country.

Sport has a phenomenal reach, and we need to harness that and use it to transform lives. I congratulate everyone who is involved in Doon valley boxing club for the work that they are doing to transform lives in their area. As others have done, I pay tribute to the volunteers who are providing opportunities and happy memories for children and young people right across our nation.

13:19

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Disability Delivery Plan

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-02948, in the name of Jeane Freeman, entitled "Creating a Fairer Scotland: Our Disability Delivery Plan".

Members might wish to note that British Sign Language interpreters are present in the chamber today, and will be signing this afternoon's business.

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): I am pleased to open the debate on "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Our Delivery Plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", which was published last week to coincide with the UN international day of persons with disabilities. More than a million disabled people contribute their talent, energy, and ability to Scotland's communities and add richness to our lives.

This year, 2016, is the 20th anniversary of the United Kingdom Disability Discrimination Act 1995, but too many disabled people still have their ambitions, dreams and promise denied them because of the barriers that are in their way. Inaccessible communication, negative attitudes, low expectations, discrimination and inequality affect the lives and chances of disabled people every single day. Their disability is not the problem; the barriers that we allow to stand in their way are the problem. Removal of those barriers and the achievement of equality of opportunity is the transformational change that this Government wants for Scotland.

Two months ago, we published the "Fairer Scotland Action Plan", which sets out specific actions that we need to take in order to move Scotland towards where we need it to be, which is a fairer and more economically and socially just country. The "Fairer Scotland Action Plan" is there to work for everyone in Scotland, but not everyone starts from the same place. We need to tackle the particular barriers that disabled people face. Those barriers—barriers to living the independent life that every disabled person has a right to—are either put in their way or are allowed to stay unchallenged by those of us who are not disabled. Our homes, transport, workplaces, public services and local environments all too often operate, or are designed, in ways that exclude disabled people. We have to change that with a genuine transformational change in our attitude and our approach.

Disabled people and the organisations that represent them have worked incredibly hard with us to identify the critical actions that we need to take to secure that change across Government, across the public and third sectors, and in the private sector. Many of those who have contributed directly to the plan are here today in the gallery. I thank them all, and the hundreds more who took part in the consultation events, for their continuing help and support for us.

The plan outlines five clear long-term ambitions: support services that meet disabled people's needs, decent incomes and fairer working lives, places that are accessible to everyone, protected rights, and active participation. Those are all achievable, but we know that the scale and extent of the change that is necessary for the experience and life chances of disabled people will take concerted action during this parliamentary session and beyond. Working with disabled people, we have set out the 93 specific concrete actions that need to be taken in order to make significant progress towards those ambitions by 2021.

We are not starting from scratch: we have made significant advances in important areas of policy and service delivery, including self-directed support, supported employment, strengthening building standards and our new accessible travel framework. I hope that the action that we have taken in response to the United Kingdom Government's policy decisions—including welfare cuts—and the principles of respect and dignity that we will build into the establishment of our own social security system in Scotland, show that we are serious about protecting disabled people's human rights.

As members will know, this Saturday, 10 December, is human rights day, and this year the UN has drawn particular attention to the need to stand up for the rights of disabled people. The call to action that is the theme for human rights day 2016 challenges us all to do more. The Scottish Government will take on that challenge, and our delivery plan commits us to increasing the pace and depth of change.

I will draw out some of the key commitments that we have made. We will work with disabled people, local authorities and providers to reform adult social care so that we shift its focus on to achievement of independent living. Next year, we will begin work to consult on the future of long-term care capacity. On self-directed support, we know that there is more to do to make the information about it and the rights that it brings more widely available and understood, and to improve access and reinforce the focus on the individual's choice and control. With the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and disabled people, we will improve portability

between local authorities of care and support packages.

We will promote independent advocacy so that people know about, and can claim, their rights in mental health. Through our new national framework for families with disabled children and the commitment that we have made to improve the transitions from education to training and employment, we will work together on the best possible provision and support so that all our young people can grow up to meet their full potential.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): We are supportive of the introduction of a framework for families who are affected by disability, but the title suggests that it might not include young people who are affected by disability and who are on a supervision order or are looked after. Can the minister confirm that those people will be included in the new framework or strategy?

Jeane Freeman: Yes, I can. The strategy will be worked through with disabled people and people who care for children with disabilities. It will include all such children, because we are talking about the rights of all disabled people and young people.

We know that we need to align learning and skills better, so we will look to promote the Project Search model; to introduce our own voluntary and person-led pre-employment support programme; to deliver on the specific improvement targets to make our modern apprenticeship programmes genuinely accessible to disabled people, including through part-time and flexible engagement; and, with immediate effect, to provide young disabled people with the highest level of modern apprenticeship funding until the age of 30.

To help employers to see the employee's potential rather than the barrier, we will actively promote the Department for Work and Pensions access to work scheme and, from next year, providers of our devolved employment services will be required to ensure that disabled people are supported to claim and receive the access to work money so that they can sustain employment.

Disabled people's organisations tell us that barriers to getting the first opportunity to work can affect future work and life chances. I hope that the new work experience pilot for young disabled people, together with the 120-place internship programme across the public and third sectors, show our intention to make a real difference in removing the barriers to employment that many young disabled people face. We need all that in place in order to transform the employment opportunities that are open to disabled people. We want at least to halve the employment gap

between disabled people and the rest of the working-age population in Scotland. We will consult on setting a clear target for employment levels in the public sector, in which only just under 12 per cent of employees are disabled.

Disabled people have as much creativity and enterprise as anyone else and as many good ideas and business brains. Therefore, we will stimulate more pre-start activity for social enterprise and provide support for the set-up of micro and social enterprises.

In transport, the new accessible travel framework, which was developed with disabled people and transport providers, includes a number of specific steps to make public transport more accessible and, importantly, to involve disabled people in key areas of decision making.

Disabled people should be supported—in or out of work. Our approach to social security is to build a rights-based system that is founded on dignity, fairness and respect. That is in stark contrast to the UK Government, whose welfare so-called reforms and abolition of the independent living fund have already been internationally judged as delivering “grave and systematic violations” of disabled people’s rights.

Housing has been described as the cornerstone of independent living, but many houses are not designed or built to be homes for disabled people. Working with disabled people, local authorities and other housing providers, we will ensure that each local authority sets within its local housing strategy a realistic target for the delivery of wheelchair-accessible housing across all tenures. We will take a number of other steps to improve housing for disabled people, including carrying out research into creating tailor-made wheelchair-accessible mass-market homes, and producing new guidance on timescales for installing adaptations.

Stigma and discrimination continue to blight the lives of disabled people, so we agree with those who have called for a publicity campaign to tackle negative attitudes. I am pleased to confirm that we will do that next year as part of the one Scotland campaign. One measure of how far we have come will be when disabled people are fairly represented in public life among our leaders and our elected politicians. Earlier this year, I announced the access to elected office fund to provide support for the 2017 local government elections. I am pleased that we will maintain that fund for those who want to stand in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections.

Our shared goal is nothing less than for all disabled people to have choice, control, dignity and freedom to live the life they choose, with the support that they need to do so. The reason is simple: equal rights for disabled people are about human rights, and none of us can enjoy our

human rights when even one of us does not. I commend “A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People” to the Parliament and ask members throughout the chamber to join us in committing Scotland’s Parliament to giving full effect to the rights of all disabled people. As Dr Sally Witcher, chief executive of Inclusion Scotland, has said:

“the challenge now is to transform ambitions into actions that will, in turn, transform disabled people’s lives and the country we live in. There is much to be done and no time to lose.”

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities in drawing attention to the human rights of disabled people around the world; acknowledges that there is a need for a transformational change to achieve disability equality and therefore welcomes the publication of the report, *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Our Delivery Plan to 2021 for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*; expresses its thanks to all the individuals and organisations who responded and contributed to the consultation on this plan and agrees that the Scottish Government should continue to engage with disabled people as the experts in the continued actions that need to be taken to ensure that rights and independent living can be enjoyed and that as a society the long-term ambitions set out in the plan can be achieved; agrees that the Scottish Government should be firmly committed to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in full so that disabled people in Scotland can realise all of their human rights, and condemns the actions and welfare cuts of the UK Government, which have led the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to conclude that there have been “grave and systematic violations” of disabled people’s human rights.

14:42

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I welcome the fact that this debate is being signed, which is something that I hope we can do much more often in Parliament, and indeed in public life in Scotland more generally.

There is much that I agree with in the minister’s speech; in fact, I agree with nearly all of it, although there were one or two unnecessary sentences. I particularly and strongly agree with what she said about skills, work and transport.

I start on that theme of where we agree. We welcome the Scottish Government’s fairer Scotland action plan for disabled people and we agree, by and large, with the Scottish Government’s stated ambitions for it. Like the Scottish Government, we want support services that promote independent living, meet needs and enable a life of choices, opportunities and participation. Like the Scottish Government, we want decent incomes and fairer working lives for disabled people, as we do for able-bodied people. Like the Scottish Government, we want fully accessible workplaces, homes and transport. Like the Scottish Government, we want society to do

everything that it can to ensure that people with disabilities have full and active participation in all aspects of public, and indeed commercial, life.

We Conservatives are proud of our long record of supporting and promoting people with disability. The minister mentioned the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which was passed under a Conservative Government. William Hague described the passage of that legislation as his greatest political achievement—and who are we to disagree? As our amendment states, the act has long been regarded internationally as a model of effective anti-discrimination legislation. With its requirements for “reasonable adjustments” to be made by employers and service providers, it went considerably further than non-discrimination legislation passed under Labour Governments in the 1960s and 1970s—invaluable and essential though that was in its day.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Adam Tomkins: I am happy to give way to Sandra White.

Sandra White: I thank the member and hope that we can continue with the agreement that he has mentioned. Does he agree with the UN report that mentions that the UK Government’s treatment of disabled people has led to “grave and systematic violations” of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

Adam Tomkins: No, I do not, and I shall explain why in a few moments.

It is not a matter of law making alone, but also of public expenditure. Under the Conservatives, the United Kingdom spends £6 billion more per year on benefits for people with disabilities and health conditions than it did when we came to power in 2010. That is to say, under the Conservatives, the United Kingdom spends more on disabled people and people with health conditions than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average—more than France, more than Germany and more than the United States.

I also point out that the UK has a record of leading internationally when it comes to supporting the rights of disabled people elsewhere in the world. Last year, for example, the Department for International Development collaborated with the International Disability Alliance to create the global action on disability group, with the aim of stimulating further action on disability inclusion.

Unfortunately, little of that work was recognised in the recent report by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Sandra White referred to and which is also mentioned in the Government’s motion. It is an exceptionally

poor-quality report, riddled with errors and misunderstanding. [*Laughter.*] I do not know why members seem to think that that is humorous. The report is mistaken about the public sector equality duty, it is wrong about legal aid, it misunderstands hate crimes and it gets the Care Act 2014 badly wrong. That is all set out in detail in the UK Government’s comprehensive response to the UN committee’s report. The situation is unfortunate, given that the United Kingdom strongly supported the development of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was among the first countries to sign it in 2007. As our amendment today makes plain, the convention is aligned with the UK approach to disability equality, which focuses on inclusion and mainstreaming.

That brings me to work and employability. I particularly welcome and—if I may do so without doing either of our political careers damage—endorse that section of the minister’s speech. It is one of the great success stories of modern Britain—modern Conservative Britain—that we now have more jobs in the British economy than ever before. We have more women in employment than ever before, and we have more people with disabilities in employment than ever before—nearly 500,000 more since 2013 and 360,000 more than just two years ago. Despite that progress, however, employment rates among disabled people continue to reveal what the UK Government recently called:

“one of the most significant inequalities in the UK today: less than half (48%) of disabled people are in employment compared to 80% of the non disabled population.”

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

Adam Tomkins: No, I want to develop the point.

The figures are even worse in Scotland, where the disability employment rate is a shocking 42 per cent. That is an injustice, and it is why the Conservatives have a longstanding commitment to halve the disability employment gap. Yesterday at question time, the Minister for Social Security said that that is now Scottish Government policy too, and I welcome that—yet another Conservative policy copied and borrowed by the SNP; it does not do everything wrong.

Jeane Freeman: Will Mr Tomkins acknowledge what I also said yesterday about the Westminster cross-party working group’s assessment of how long it would take the UK Government to meet that target of halving the employment gap based on its current actions? The group said that that would take till 2065, so does he agree that the group’s proposed actions are actions that the UK Government should address with some speed?

Adam Tomkins: I agree that it is taking too long to close the disability employment gap, and that is why our amendment welcomes not only the Scottish Government's fairer Scotland action plan but the UK Government's recent green paper on work, health and disability, which addresses a number of those points head on. Article 27 of the aforementioned UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the importance of work and the dignity, fairness and respect that come with it. The UK's commitment to that is underscored by the new approach set out in the green paper, which addresses a number of the concerns that the minister has raised, illustrated, for example, by the establishment of the new work and health unit.

Like the Scottish Government's action plan, the green paper was developed in collaboration with disabled people. Among its features are the following: significant support for people with disabilities or health conditions in the form of a new personal support package; reform of the current schemes that support employers; and plans to increase access to psychological therapies and to more than double the number of employment advisers in those services. There is increased funding for those with mental health conditions, and there is increased assistance for small employers through the provision of in-work support and advice on disability issues and workplace adaptations, as well as additional funding.

Those are measures that we need to see across the whole of the UK, including in Scotland. The UK and Scottish Governments can—and, in my view, should—work in harmony together to provide and facilitate that support.

For those reasons, I move amendment S5M-02948.2, to leave out from “report” to end and insert:

“UK Government report, *Work, Health and Disability Green Paper: Improving Lives*, and the Scottish Government report, *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Our Delivery Plan to 2021 for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*; expresses its thanks to all the individuals and organisations who contributed to the development of these publications and agrees that the Scottish and UK governments should continue to engage with disabled people as the experts in the continued actions that need to be taken to ensure that rights and independent living can be enjoyed and that as a society the long-term ambitions set out in the two publications can be achieved; recognises that the UK was among the first countries to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and that the convention is aligned with the UK approach to disability equality, which focuses on inclusion and mainstreaming; understands that the UK Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been recognised internationally as a model of effective anti-discrimination legislation, and supports the UK's aspiration that disabled people get the same opportunities as other people to find work, while ensuring that people who cannot work because

of a disability or health condition receive the support that they need.”

14:50

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the Presiding Officer and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body for their good offices in again making the Parliament an exemplar in the provision of access to people who are deaf and who use British Sign Language. In that respect, we are carrying on the good work from the previous parliamentary session.

We support the publication of “A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People” and the five key ambitions. We feel that they reflect some of the commitments to disabled people that we made during the election campaign, which included promises to enhance their ability and freedom to work or to set up a business; to enable them to get more involved in civic life; to ensure that they could access justice, in particular when they were victims of hate crime; and to make sure that public services—in particular, education, the national health service and transport—were truly accessible.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has just released a report that shows that although Scotland has the lowest rate of poverty in the UK, a massive 960,000 people still live below the poverty line. The report provides shocking detail on the poverty that disabled people face. In particular, 26 per cent of people in poverty in Scotland are disabled, which is the second-highest rate in the UK after the north-east of England. The foundation said that, across the UK,

“modern poverty is also increasingly linked with disability.”

As a result of the higher costs of being disabled, half of people in poverty are disabled or are living with a disabled person in their household.

The Learning Disability Alliance Scotland built on that assessment. It said that 39 per cent of people in poverty live in a household with at least one disabled person and that the costs that are associated with disability average at around £550 per month. A key thrust and ambition of the delivery plan is to provide decent incomes and fairer working lives, and we absolutely support that.

In November, it was announced that the Scottish Government would not take control of welfare powers, including those on disability benefits, until 2020. Those powers will give us the chance to restore dignity and respect to the heart of the social security system. During that time, the Tories will continue to make their savage cuts and the most vulnerable will continue to suffer.

In a letter to the Social Security Committee, the cabinet secretary said:

“For so long as executive competence remains reserved, the UK Government has the ability to administer the existing benefits and to adjust the detail of their delivery.”

At the moment, the UK Government is moving disabled people from disability living allowance to personal independence payments, which, according to research by Sheffield Hallam University, will lead to Scots losing—collectively—£190 million a year. In last month’s social security debate, we revealed that up to 150,000 disabled people in Scotland who are currently on DLA remain at risk of going through the new PIP assessment process. As long as those powers stay with Westminster, we cannot stop PIP reassessments taking place and we cannot meet the calls of the stop PIP campaign.

During last month’s debate, Alison Johnstone called on the Scottish Government to ask the UK Government to halt reassessments in Scotland, and we support that call to protect up to 150,000 DLA recipients. Ministers should use their next meeting with the joint ministerial working group or their meetings with Department for Work and Pensions ministers to make that call.

Until those powers are devolved and changes are made, the Tories will continue to make their cuts and the most vulnerable will continue to suffer. Rightly, expectation is building again that we will make different choices to alleviate that suffering, given the challenges that disabled people are still facing and that campaigners are fighting against every day. Those campaigners will watch closely how we approach the new powers. There is an expectation of a system for not just those directly affected by the powers but the country as a whole that does not tie disabled people up in red tape; that preserves people’s independence and provides not just a safety net to allow them to survive but a springboard to playing a full part in society; and that moves us beyond the idea of social protection. That is a social security system that many people in Scotland just cannot wait for.

I said earlier that one of our priorities for disabled people was to ensure that they can access justice, in particular when they are a victim of hate crime. One in five people in Scotland lives with a disability, but they also often live with prejudice and discrimination. The disability delivery plan is a good start and one that we support, but the Scottish Government must now deliver on its promises and build on them to cut through the discrimination that people with a disability face. Since 2010, hate crime towards disabled people has trebled: it is up by 319 per cent in six years. The legislation for the newer categories of hate crime came into force on 24

March 2010. That legislation was promoted by Patrick Harvie and gained cross-party support when it was introduced.

Disability Alliance Scotland is calling for the Scottish Government to fund a significant national campaign to raise awareness of disability and reduce stigma and discrimination that includes education, training and the necessary evaluation. Last month, the Parliament debated a motion on preventing and eradicating hate crime and prejudice and agreed an amendment to it that proposed

“a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime across Scotland”.

That provides a good opportunity to commit to action today. I welcome what the minister said in her opening speech about committing to the necessary awareness-raising campaign to tackle stigma and discrimination.

We support the Government’s ambitions for a fairer Scotland for disabled people and simply ask members to recognise that the new Scottish social security system will be a vital tool to ensure that disabled people have independence, decent incomes and fairer working lives.

I move amendment S5M-02948.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises that the new Scottish social security system will be a vital tool to ensure that disabled people have independence, decent incomes and fairer working lives; further recognises that two fifths of people in poverty live in a household with at least one disabled person and that the costs associated with a disability can average £550 per month, and agrees that new disability benefits powers will give the Parliament and the Scottish Government both the substantial responsibility and opportunity to support Scotland’s disabled people by halting and reversing the worst effects of Tory social security cuts, under a system that is based on the principles of dignity and respect.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to open speeches of around six minutes, please. We have some time in hand, so I can give extra time for interventions or for anyone who has something very special that has to be said. I call George Adam.

14:58

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. It is nice to know that I have a wee bit of time today.

I welcome this debate and I am glad to take part in it. Many members will be aware that my wife, Stacey, has multiple sclerosis and therefore has mobility issues. Because of that and her day-to-day struggle with access, I am aware of some of the issues that disabled people face in Scotland. The minister, Jeane Freeman, is correct that the problem is not disability but the barriers that we put up for disabled people.

During my time as a councillor in Renfrewshire Council I became a member, and remain one to this day, of the Renfrewshire access panel. Through that, I became involved in a national access campaign and became the patron of the Scottish disability equality forum, which is the national forum for all Scotland's access forums.

If someone does not have a disability or a family member who has a disability, they are completely unaware of the many challenges and barriers that disabled people face. I remember attending a disability awareness day in Paisley town hall many years ago at which we were asked to use either a wheelchair or a specially designed pair of glasses that would give us an example of how it would be if we had a visual impairment. We progressed from the town hall across to Renfrewshire House to see how difficult it was to access services in the council building.

I was stuck with the visual impairment glasses, and I was shocked by how difficult it was to access the building. I had difficulty with depth perception on the stairs and there was a situation when I stood at one of the information monitors. I do not think that the council ever expected a visually impaired person to be 6 foot 3, because I banged my head on a monitor that I could not see.

I and the then provost, Celia Lawson, did that exercise and we found that everything was changed. In 21st century Scotland, however, those problems should not exist. We should ensure that disabled people can get access to all buildings where that is possible. That is why I welcome the Scottish Government's disability delivery plan and applaud its ambitions. The first ambition is to

"Support services that promote independent living, meet needs and work together to enable a life of choices, opportunities and participation."

That gives us a start in making sure that people get involved in public life in general. The second and third ambitions are:

"Decent incomes and fairer working lives. Making sure disabled people can enjoy full participation with an adequate income to participate in learning."

"Places that are accessible to everyone."

We really need to work on that one. It involves ensuring that

"Housing and transport and the wider environment are fully accessible to enable disabled people to participate as full and equal citizens."

The fourth and fifth ambitions are:

"Protected rights. The rights of disabled people are fully protected."

"Active participation. Disabled people can participate as active citizens in all aspects of ... life in Scotland".

All those ambitions can and should make a difference to the lives of disabled people in Scotland.

Susan McGinley, disabled person and member of Glasgow Disability Alliance's drivers for change network, said:

"The Scottish Government Disability Plan is much needed and the particular commitments around both establishing a strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness and funding opportunities for disabled people to volunteer are backed by thousands ... I firmly believe that with the right support and connections, we can make our important contributions."

That is what this debate is all about—the right support so that Scots with a disability can contribute to life in Scotland.

That support can come in various guises, and one example is access to transport. Stacey and I have been at the other end of various public transport journeys from hell. We need to ensure that people with disabilities get the support that they need to be able to access employment, volunteering and social activities. That is why I particularly welcome the Government's commitment to its accessible travel framework. That is the subject of action 66, which states that the Government will

"Develop our Accessible Travel Hub"

and

"Scope requirements for training with disabled people and transport providers/operators".

You have no idea, Presiding Officer, how simple it would be to do that, and how much easier it would make things for people and families who live with disability.

The plan also states that the Government will

"Specify and agree common standards of service for disabled people if their public transport journeys are disrupted"

and

"Produce information about bus layout designs which improve accessibility".

That is another important action. For people who have a mobility issue, it is almost like the Normandy D-day landings when they want to organise a night out. Individuals have to be confident that the facilities are there for them. Morven Brooks, the chief executive officer of the Scottish Disability Equality Forum, stated:

"Accessible transport is vital to disabled people being able to enjoy their rights as citizens of a fair society."

This is all a step in the right direction. The important point to make is that the delivery plan is based on a social model of disability. Unlike in the medical model, where an individual is understood to be disabled by their impairment, the social

model views disability as the relationship between the individual and society. The delivery plan recognises the human rights of disabled people and it must underpin all our activities across the whole range of policy and legislation that affects disabled people. The Law Society of Scotland praises the Scottish Government for taking a groundbreaking approach.

Incidentally, it is telling that the Conservative amendment seeks to drop from the motion everything that mentions human rights.

The focal point of this debate is the main differences between the ideologies of the Scottish Government and the UK Government. While, here in Scotland, we try to find a better way forward for our people, the Government at Westminster continues to pursue its failed austerity agenda and does not care whose lives it destroys in the process. For me, this is about standing up for disabled people in Scotland and protecting them from the dark cloud of Westminster and its attack on the disabled.

15:04

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I apologise to you, Presiding Officer, and to the minister for being late. It was nothing to do with disability—I just cannot read a watch.

I have met a number of disabled groups since I was elected to the Scottish Parliament in May. All the groups identified the same three priorities: removing the stigma associated with disability, preventing bullying and getting more people with disability into employment. I welcome the Government's delivery plan, aimed at improving the employment of people with disabilities, particularly those who are young, especially as our record in Scotland is not particularly good. Since 2008, the proportion of Scottish working-age disabled people in employment has fallen from 49 to 42 per cent. Just 2 per cent of working-age disabled people in Scotland get support from access to work, which is proportionately much less than the rest of the UK. There are many reasons for that, one of which I suspect goes back to education.

This lunch time, along with other members, I attended a briefing on mainstreaming in schools. The clear message that came from that was that mainstreaming does not mean inclusion. If we are going to follow a policy of mainstreaming for most people with disability, we need to ensure that it includes everything that is part of the educational experience.

After one year, school leavers with impairment-related additional support needs are more than twice as likely to be unemployed or workless as those with no additional support needs. Although

disabled people make up 11.6 per cent of all 16 to 24-year-olds, in 2015-16, only 3.9 per cent of modern apprenticeships went to disabled people. That needs to change—and quickly.

My experience of meeting individuals with a disability is that many of them want to work but cannot find employment. Studies show that work is generally good for health. As well as a financial reward, it gives us self-esteem, companionship and a sense of purpose. Further evidence suggests that participating in internship schemes significantly improves one's future hope for employment. For example, 10 of the 12 disabled graduates who participated in the Scottish Parliament internship scheme run by Inclusion Scotland moved into employment or full-time academic research.

The findings of the report, "Equal? Still not, why not?", published by Disability Agenda Scotland at the end of November, identified that most people with a disability still experience some form of stigma, prejudice, harassment and bullying in the workplace. The report brought together some case studies. The Capability Scotland focus group included an individual who said:

"I did a work placement and the first day the person I was sitting next to was asking me all sorts of questions, which was fine. The second day I went in I was on my own and they told me because the woman sitting next to me had called me a spastic and said she didn't want to work with a spastic."

She did not want to be close to someone like that. It is clear that in Scotland we have a long way to go in all areas.

It is clear that all parties have to support efforts to raise awareness of disability, reduce stigma and discrimination and improve equality. We need to look at why discrimination is taking place.

We also have to look at the type of jobs that disabled people are going into. Is there still a glass ceiling for certain jobs that are simply not open to people with disability? Are there certain jobs that people think that disabled people should go into, rather than having the choice from a whole spectrum? What kind of development do people have? I was talking to a lady at lunchtime who had been in the same job for 30 years—not because she wanted to stay there, but because she was scared to move on because there was no training for that.

Disability comes in many different forms and we need to make sure that there is appropriate training. Earlier this week, I was pleased to see that the Scottish Parliament held disability equality training to help MSPs' researchers to better engage with disabled constituents.

The parties and the Government must do more. We are underrepresented in the parties. If my

maths is right, 23 disabled people should have been elected to the chamber. Part of that is to do with the electorate and who people vote for, but are enough disabled people being given the opportunity to stand?

Scotland has a vibrant and vocal disability movement, and we should welcome that and encourage them as they seek to lobby us all.

I hope that the outcomes of the Scottish Government delivery plan are felt in Parliament and, more importantly, across the disabled community. It is good to hear nice words from politicians, but what makes the difference is a job, security and a purpose. I wish the plan well and hope that it can be achieved.

15:10

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): I, too, thank the hundreds of people who responded to the fairer Scotland consultation. One of the most important lines in Jeane Freeman's motion is the determination to

"continue to engage with disabled people as the experts in the continued actions that need to be taken to ensure that rights and independent living can be enjoyed".

The fairer Scotland report defines disadvantage not in terms of an individual's disability but in terms of the barriers created by society. I will quote in full from the report, which says:

"Unlike the medical model, where an individual is understood to be disabled by their impairment, the social model views disability as the relationship between the individual and society. In other words, it sees the barriers created by society, such as negative attitudes towards disabled people, and inaccessible buildings, transport and communication, as the cause of disadvantage and exclusion, rather than the impairment itself. The aim, then, is to remove the barriers that isolate, exclude and so disable the individual."

As the minister said, disabilities are enormously varied. We are each unique and one policy for all is not the answer. I welcome the fairer Scotland report because its focus is on giving people the means and opportunities to live as independently as possible and to make their own choices.

In the spirit of celebrating uniqueness, if members will indulge me, I would like to talk about my uncle, who works in a café and as a gardener. He is St Johnstone Football Club's biggest fan. He goes to the football almost every Saturday and to church almost every Sunday. Throughout my childhood, the happiest parties that I went to were with him and his friends. He recently celebrated his 50th birthday with a big karaoke night with friends and family, including Tory MSP Alexander Stewart, who knows him well. Sadly for both of us—I will say this very quietly—my uncle is a Labour supporter through and through and will not be persuaded to see the light.

Every Christmas, my uncle dresses up as Santa and bestows presents on all his nieces and nephews, which almost makes up for the fact that he has spent most of the year telling us that he is the boss and sitting in the front seat of the car. He has been an avid swimmer and horse rider in the past. He lives in Perth on his own in a house with a small garden. And he has Down's syndrome.

My uncle's life works well. He makes the choices—until his environment stops working. Recently, traffic works meant that the pelican crossing immediately outside his house was out of action, and life completely stopped, for the simple but transformational reason that he could not cross the road. Work, football, shopping and visiting friends all stopped. Independent living was gone, not because of who he is or what he can do but because of a simple matter of traffic works. Whose fault is that—his or ours?

We are all dependent in some way—some ways might be more obvious than others or some might be more freely admitted than others—and we must see people and not disabilities, because each of us is unique. People make a community and that community is all the richer, happier and stronger for including people such as my uncle.

Real community is also the means of support for individuals, and the debate is about how our national community removes the barriers to independent living, opens up employment opportunities, improves accessibility to buildings and institutions—physical and virtual—and promotes active participation.

I will briefly mention two ideas from the fairer Scotland report that provide great examples of how to do just that. They are based on the belief that the hurdle to participation is caused not by the disability but by the challenges of our environment. The first is the access to elected office fund, which aims to improve representation in democratic institutions by meeting the additional costs that disabled people face when they stand for election—Jeremy Balfour commented on that. The second is the forthcoming strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness, which is to be published in 2017 and which promises to address the issues to do with forming and maintaining relationships with which many people struggle.

A few weeks ago, an older gentleman, who could not walk easily, cycled to my office straight from the jobcentre. He was in a genuine state of shock, because his income was being more than halved. His fears were about not his bank balance but what that money meant. It meant a warm home and transport so that he could get out of the house and spend time with others. It meant the difference between more independence and more dependence, between having choices and not

having choices and between participating in society and not participating.

The burden is on us, as representatives of the national community that we call Scotland, to ensure that disabled people exercise choice, live independently and participate fully in society and to ensure that we do not put up barriers that cause disabled people to be excluded from doing any of those things.

15:16

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

As the minister did, I thank everyone who was involved in the consultation and in the production of the fairer Scotland report, which we absolutely support, as Mark Griffin said.

There needs to be a level of honesty on the part of Tory members in the Parliament about the impact of welfare reforms on disabled people. I took Jeremy Balfour's point about the need for more than warm words from politicians but, if politicians are to be taken seriously, we have to acknowledge the scale of the problem that is out there. Adam Tomkins does the Tories in Scotland no service by being in complete denial about the impact of welfare reforms on disabled people.

The Disability Agenda Scotland alliance said in its briefing for this debate that

"The changes to the social security system in recent years have undermined disabled people's right to live independently and their right to family life in contravention of article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities ... and Article 8 of the United Nations Convention on Human Rights ... This affects disabled people, carers and others around them and the wider society and economy."

Adam Tomkins: Does the member accept the fact that £6 billion a year more is being spent on disability benefits in the United Kingdom than was the case when the Labour Party was last in government?

Alex Rowley: We just heard Kate Forbes talk about the constituent who came to her office. A constituent of mine spoke to me just last week, along with his mother. He has been suffering from mental health issues and is getting support from NHS Fife, but his benefits have been pulled and he has been told that he is fit for work. There is case after case like that.

Adam Tomkins needs to look at the evidence from organisations that support and advocate on behalf of disabled people. He and Ruth Davidson's Tories in Scotland can play around with questions about who did what when in power, but the fact is that right now the welfare reforms that a Tory Government is putting in place are having a detrimental impact on disabled people and others in Scotland.

Mark Griffin referred to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report that came out yesterday and it is worth repeating what he said. He said that 26 per cent of people who are in poverty in Scotland are disabled, which is the second highest such rate in the UK. As the JRF has said,

"modern poverty is also increasingly linked with disability."

If, for whatever reason, someone who is working hard in life, paying their taxes and getting on becomes ill and cannot continue to work, we can be sure of one thing—that the current Tory Government will penalise them, make them feel much worse and, in some cases, drive them towards starvation.

I turn to the Scottish Government and the issues that Inclusion Scotland raises in its briefing. It talks about social care being

"part of the essential infrastructure that is required to enable disabled people to participate in family, community and economic life",

but it goes on to talk about

"Cuts to social care packages, whether as a result of ... eligibility criteria or reductions in"

services directly to people. That is a key point. It is great to have strategies such as "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People", and I commend everyone who has been involved in that, but what we need in Scotland is joined-up government.

As a result of massive cuts to local government funding, health and social care packages are being cut. We are beginning to see that, because one of the first things that happen when a budget is under pressure is that the eligibility criteria are changed. Suddenly, people who were previously eligible for the care packages no longer are. That is one of the techniques that are used, and it has an impact on people.

In the area where I live, it is not just the numbers of people who are trying to get out of hospital—that number stands at around 90—who are waiting for a care package, in a situation that is described as bed blocking. There are massive waiting lists of people who need assessments to get to the point of receiving a care package. When they have been assessed, there is another waiting list.

Our health and social care services are not being properly funded. Community care was never about care on the cheap. I do not doubt the Government's commitment to trying to deliver such services, but it needs to recognise that we need joined-up care and joined-up government. Unless we fund health and social care, there will be a massive gap, and disabled people will pay a higher price because of how that goes.

The Inclusion Scotland briefing also talks about care charges, which have been one of the answers to the cuts in local authority budgets in many parts of Scotland. In Fife Council, under the minister's party, home care charges were put up from £4 per week to £11 an hour. When the next administration came in—it included me—we abolished the charges, but that is not true across Scotland.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I, too, am concerned about care charges, which is why I spoke in the members' business debate on them earlier this week. Mr Rowley mentioned Fife Council. Is he aware that his colleagues who run Dumfries and Galloway Council have this year moved the threshold for care charges down to £132 per week, even though they were given additional funding by the Scottish Government? That is under a Labour administration.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I cannot take another speech. Mr Rowley, you are in your last minute—you need to finish in the next 30 seconds.

Alex Rowley: I will do so. Having been proud to serve as a Labour councillor over many years, I just say to Joan McAlpine that the fact is that this year local councils across Scotland are facing a £500 million cut in their budgets. They will not be able to deal with that without looking right across services, and social care will take its share of that.

If we are serious about delivering the policy, we need to fund local services properly. My message is that Labour stands alongside the SNP Government and we want to work with it on the issue, but we need to fund local services.

15:25

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I welcome the publication of "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Our Delivery Plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"—to give it its full title. The plan will bring positive change for disabled people. The Scottish Government's goal—that every disabled person has choice, control, dignity and freedom—reflects the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which I raised with Adam Tomkins during his speech.

The plan marks the culmination of two and a half years of intensive engagement with disabled people and their organisations to establish their views and priorities. The work, which was led by the independent living in Scotland project, which is now part of Inclusion Scotland, worked with disabled people's organisations, and through them engaged directly with disabled people to identify

their priorities for action when it comes to making their human rights a reality.

We did that—the Scottish Government engaged with people, listened to them and took forward their thoughts in the consultation process, which culminated in "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People". Unlike the UK Tory Government, the SNP Government is taking action to enhance disabled people's lives. The Tories are violating their rights by punishing them with disproportionate welfare cuts. The Scottish Government's ambitions around the five themes and 93 actions will support the ultimate aim of disabled people gaining their human rights.

I will make a couple of points that have been raised by other members. The Tories talk about sticking up for disabled people, but I would like to ask them how cutting £30 a week from ESA will help disabled people to get into work. With PIP replacing DLA—

Adam Tomkins: Will Sandra White take an intervention on that point?

Sandra White: I will—if the member will first let me finish my point, please. How will taking £30 a week from disabled people who are moving from DLA to PIP help them?

Adam Tomkins: Would Sandra White care to reflect on there being 360,000 disabled people in work in the United Kingdom who were not in work two years ago? Is that an achievement of the Conservative Government or is it something else that Sandra White would like to condemn?

Sandra White: Mr Tomkins used the word "condemn". He should speak to disabled people, because then he will see exactly who is being condemned by the UK Government. I will go on to explain my point. [*Interruption.*] Maybe Adam Tomkins does not get such people at his constituency office, but I certainly do. I see young people and older people who cannot work and have long-term disabilities being moved from DLA to PIP and getting a £30 cut.

Adam Tomkins mentioned Damian Green's green paper. Let us remind ourselves that paragraph 114 of the consultation paper says that people who are long-term disabled and who are in a certain category can be mandatorily assessed for work. Let us think about that. That is not something that Mr Tomkins tends to talk about, is it? It is about time that disabled people—and everyone else in the country—knew exactly what the Tories are up to in this and the UK Parliaments.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does Sandra White agree that cutting three of the four jobcentres in the east end of Glasgow is not going to help disabled people?

Sandra White: John Mason is absolutely correct. How will those people afford transport? We have raised that issue before. That is the—supposedly—caring Tory UK Government, for you, and members here are doing its work for it by promoting those cuts.

I want to talk about a performance in Parliament that I sponsored last week. A number of people were there—11 MSPs from all parties, including Annie Wells, and the minister turned up. It was absolutely fantastic. The performances by Purple Poncho Players were outstanding; they were hard-hitting, but truthful. The Purple Poncho Players, from Glasgow Disability Alliance, was born out of an experience at a march and rally in 2011. The GDA listened to disabled people's experiences and it got together and created the Purple Poncho Players. As I said, the performance was hard-hitting. As I speak, I am reminding myself what happened.

The scenarios that were enacted were not figments of the players' imagination—I am sure that Annie Wells can reflect on that because she was there and we spoke about it later on—but were real-life experiences. They were a damning indictment of how the UK Government has systematically treated disabled people. The performances were absolutely fantastic and were about the individual experiences of those people in the players. They were asked whether they could walk: some cannot walk properly even with walking sticks. They were asked how they got to the assessment. If they answered that they had got the bus they were told that they were all right and could work, and that was it—they were taken off DLA.

Jeremy Balfour: How far does Sandra White think someone should be able to walk before they do not get the benefit? Where would she set the limit? What line would she draw?

Sandra White: Perhaps Jeremy Balfour should have been there to see the performance. I know that a number of Conservatives were there. The assessment should not ask people how far they can walk.

One of the performances was about people with mental health problems who may feel all right one day but not the next, but because they felt all right on the day of the assessment, they were taken off DLA. There is another example of the caring Tories.

I whole-heartedly support the approach of the Scottish Government of involving disabled people and disability organisations in promoting and planning the strategy and listening to them. The big problem with the Tories is that they listen to nobody. We need to listen to the disabled people who go through this day in and day out. The

Tories should look at the number of people who have been forced back to work—I do not like to talk about people who have died, so I will not raise that, although I can send the Tories figures on that. Thousands, not hundreds, of people have died since they were taken off DLA and told that they were fit to work. The Tories should get out in the real world and stop pontificating from their seats.

15:31

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I very much welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and I broadly welcome the Government's "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People" plan, which lays out an ambitious approach to achieving disability equality.

In the short time that I have, I would like to address some of the very positive recommendations that will help disabled people to achieve economic security through employment and the benefits system, and I will highlight how some might be taken further.

With non-disabled people being almost twice as likely as disabled people to be in work, and given that that figure has barely changed in more than a decade, the Government's aim to halve the disability employment gap is welcome and could not be more urgently needed.

As a supporter of the one in five campaign, which seeks to promote the involvement in public life of the 20 per cent of Scots who experience a disability or health condition, I very much welcome the pledge to support new job opportunities for disabled people in politics and in the third and public sectors. So many of the actions that are listed in the plan will come to fruition only when disabled people are properly represented at all levels of policy making, so that is a positive step. I ask ministers to consider whether 120 posts over four years will be sufficient or whether we can be more ambitious. Perhaps the debate will serve to encourage interest.

Having stood on a manifesto pledge to increase opportunities for disabled people to access modern apprenticeships, I was really pleased to see action 36, to widen access to modern apprenticeships for disabled people, and action 37, to pay them

"the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship funding ... until the age of 30."

Helping people with disabilities and health challenges to stay in work once they have found it is important too, so I am glad that that is recognised by the plan.

As much as work can be a positive force in our lives, too many Scots work in jobs that do not

promote healthy working practices or an appropriate work-life balance, so we are faced with a significantly increasing number of people who leave work for health reasons—in particular, because of poor mental health. Integration of health, disability and employment support to ensure that people can stay in work is laudable, and I look forward to working with the Government to achieve it when the full devolved employability schemes begin to operate in 2018.

I ask Conservative colleagues who focus on keeping people in work to speak to their UK colleagues about cuts to the Motability scheme, which have had a devastating impact on many people's ability to attend work.

However, I question whether the disability plan takes into account the broader economic transformation that Scotland needs for all Scots—disabled and non-disabled. We have an economy in which too many jobs are low-paid, with highly variable hours, and which do not protect people from poverty. Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to work in those jobs. Halving the disability employment gap will not be the achievement that we all wish it to be if it is achieved by encouraging disabled people into work that does not offer the economic security that we want work to offer. The quality of all jobs must improve.

After years of slow but steady progress, the move towards equality for disabled people has gone into reverse in the past few years, in particular as a result of disability benefit cuts. Those cuts have—as the motion notes—been criticised by the United Nations as “grave and systematic violations” of disabled people's human rights.

I accept that the Scottish Government recognises the terrible impact of the cuts and has made some positive first moves in response to them. Stepping in to save the independent living fund when it was axed by the UK Government has helped more than 2,000 people, and the proposed expansion will help many more. Implementing the Green manifesto pledge for a national healthier and wealthier children project could, based on evidence from the original scheme in Glasgow, help disabled parents and children to access disability living allowance and personal independence payments. However, I am concerned that the disability plan does not demonstrate a clear strategy for responding to those cuts and to the many more cuts that are still to come. By 2020, for example, 70,000 Scots will lose up to £900 a year through cuts to employment and support allowance, and another 70,000 will lose as much as £2,600 each in the move from DLA to PIP.

I would welcome the Scottish Government's taking a clear position on whether it is willing to use fully the new devolved benefits and tax powers to mitigate the impacts of welfare cuts on disabled people. A fairer disability benefits system, which I have no doubt the Scottish Government seriously wishes to establish, must recognise that some users of the system will have lost thousands of pounds, which will have had negative impacts on their health and wellbeing and on the likelihood of their accessing employment. If the system does not do that, the Scottish Government will be tacitly accepting the cuts.

After years of cuts that have eroded the human rights of disabled people, “A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People” puts those rights at the heart of the strategy to create a more inclusive society. The plan to achieve that is appropriately ambitious, but the Scottish Government must recognise the weight of expectation among disabled people because of that ambition, and it must recognise the dreadful extent to which some disabled people have suffered in recent years as a result of Westminster's welfare cuts. They will be looking for bold and radical change. If the Scottish Government is willing to pursue the plan that it has laid out to the radical extent that is needed to achieve equality for disabled people, it can be assured of Scottish Green Party support.

15:38

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Although I take many opportunities to offer the Scottish Government robust criticism and honest scrutiny, I believe that to try to score points in this debate would be to do a disservice to the tens of thousands of children, men, women and families who look to us as legislators to work across the chamber to bring about a better quality of life and greater inclusion for people who are affected by disability in our society.

In that spirit, I take this opportunity to thank the Government for this debate and for its excellent motion; for its work in the previous session of Parliament to reverse the iniquitous DLA takeaway, which involved suspension of DLA payments to families whose children went into hospital for 84 days or more; for its work to support carers through the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016; and for its nascent moves to define Scotland's new social security system, which is gathering deserved cross-party support. I also welcome the publication of “A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People”, and its five recommendations, which the Liberal Democrats are proud to support actively.

I will use my time today to offer some reflections on every stage of life's journey for families, children and adults who are affected by disability

in our society. That process begins with diagnosis. Many physical disabilities are self-evident or clearly apparent at birth, but many others may take months, years and sometimes even decades to identify.

I have raised a couple of times the case of Islay McKenzie, the schoolgirl in my constituency for whom it took nearly a year to get a diagnosis that she is on the autistic spectrum. Yesterday, it was my great pleasure to finally meet Islay in Parliament at the meeting of the cross-party group on children and young people. She is not alone. Last week, I met three families who are at various stages in the diagnostic journey and are struggling and waiting for support and a definitive answer as to what they can expect from the state. Last year, Enable Scotland published evidence that it can take up to three years to obtain a diagnosis. Not even getting to the starting line means that families and children are deprived of access to support.

One would think that once support is being given, the various sectors of society in whose gift it is to offer statutory support would helicopter up a suite of options and packages of help, but it is sometimes not that easy, and some health boards are better than others. We all know families who, stunned and devastated by a diagnosis and wondering what life might hold for them, have been left in the wind, and only by chance have stumbled upon state support. I know one family who attended an appointment for treatment two and a half years after their daughter was diagnosed with a complex condition. Only after a chance encounter with a family who had a child with the same condition did they realise that they were entitled to any form of support. We as a country are doing such families a profound disservice if they are unaware of the support that could be available to them.

Even after diagnosis, families can face a brick wall regarding availability if they are in rural locations. Depending on their living circumstances, many may find it difficult to access respite care, or struggle to obtain the care package that they deserve, if they have to travel great distances to access support.

All those things can be captured in what I hope will be a profound movement towards realising a strategy for families who are affected by disability, which has been a long time coming. In 2007, a consequential of nearly £40 million came north as a result of the UK strategy, "Aiming high for disabled children". However, because of the presumption against ring fencing, that money did not make it to disabled children in Scotland but went on local authority expenditure. I am grateful that, nearly 10 years later, we are on the verge of the strategy and I hope that it will encompass

diagnosis, provision, transitions into adult services and, most important, inclusion, which includes inclusion in work and learning.

I am grateful for the minister's confirmation that the strategy will not be restricted to families but will cover children who are looked after or who are on supervision orders and who do not fit the normal definition of family support.

In the previous session, we passed the laudable Social Care (Self-directed Support) Scotland Act 2013. My party supported that and we still do. It is a very liberal and empowering agenda to give people and families choice over the care that is directed for them. However, the 2013 act has faced challenges. We still see some local authorities not applying its provisions in the way that Parliament intended and families being unaware that they have four choices available to them. Indeed, in some areas where provision is patchy, the families to whom the 2013 act's provisions were extended do not have the choice that we would have expected or hoped for.

We have heard a lot about access to employment in the debate. It remains one of the abiding challenges to Parliament and society that disabled people still face so many hurdles before they enter the workplace. In 2011, a major metropolitan local authority in this country published an outcome in its single outcome agreement that said that it wanted 200 16 and 17-year-olds who had a disability to be in the workplace a year later. When, a year later, it reported on that, it had achieved only 11. Such is the crushing gap between rhetoric and reality in this agenda. We cannot rest on our laurels; we must work harder together.

On end-of-life provision and families who are affected by life-limiting conditions, we want to see parity between child and adult hospice care and, as the Scottish Government takes over administration of the DS1500 form, we want to ensure that there is no arbitrary cut-off as to when patients with terminal conditions can access disability benefits.

Our disabled citizens are our friends, neighbours, family members and colleagues. They are part of the rich diversity that makes Scotland great. They have so much to offer, so we must work together in Parliament to make sure that there is nothing in their way to stop them doing so.

15:44

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I welcome and commend the Scottish Government's delivery plan for creating a fairer Scotland for disabled people. I believe that it provides a comprehensive blueprint for the work that has to be undertaken over the next five years to remove the barriers that

can often exclude disabled people from living as independently as possible. The plan contains many commendable points, and I particularly welcome the undertakings that are set out in the section on decent incomes and fairer working lives.

Although the right to work is as important to people with a disability as it is to people who are not disabled, only about half of those of working age are in work compared with 80 per cent of non-disabled people of working age. There are still too many barriers to employment for people with a disability, and I am pleased to see that there will be targets to increase the number of people with a disability who are employed in public sector workplaces.

Moreover, alongside a work experience scheme to help young disabled people to adjust when they find work, there will be employability programmes to help people into jobs and a social enterprise strategy to help disabled people to set up their own businesses. We must do all we can to remove the barriers that are in the path of those who can and who want to work.

But what of those who cannot work? How should we treat our fellow citizens who are unable to work, either for prolonged periods or not at all? The motion notes that the welfare cuts of the UK Government have led the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to conclude that there have been “grave and systematic violations” of disabled people’s human rights. If we design our social security system to ensure that it supports rather than condemns, that will define the kind of society that we aspire to be.

I can give the chamber an example of the kind of social security system that we do not want. I was recently asked by a constituent and friend to accompany her to a PIP review meeting that she had been unexpectedly asked to attend in Glasgow. My constituent is a lady with a degenerative condition; she has multiple health problems, is on numerous medications, is under the care of several hospital consultants, receives physiotherapy and podiatry treatment and has regular contact with general practitioners. She is also awaiting surgery.

Although my constituent was not due for a PIP review until September 2017, she had received a text message asking her to call the DWP. She was asked questions about her illnesses and whether her conditions had deteriorated or improved. Following that telephone call, she was asked to attend a review. She is currently 12 months into a two-year award, but no reason was given for why she was being reviewed early.

We arrived at the office 25 minutes early, as my constituent was very worried that she would be sanctioned if she was late. Her appointment was at 1 pm, but by 1.15 she had still not been called. The receptionist’s manner in response to my polite inquiry about the delay was brisk, cold and verging on hostile, and it became very apparent that I should not have made it. I was informed that the reviewer would be reading my constituent’s notes and that that could take some time, depending on the complexity of the condition. That raises the question: if notes need to be read prior to appointments, why not schedule appointments for later? If those who are called for review spent less time waiting in reception, some of the anxiety that they experience might be alleviated.

At 1.20, we were collected at reception by the reviewer. There was little explanation of the process, and the reviewer had no idea why my constituent had been called in early. Her attitude was definitely, “Prove to me that you’re unfit.” However, as the interview progressed, and the complexity of the disability that my constituent lives with became more apparent, the reviewer’s attitude changed dramatically. She became more empathetic in her questioning and her body language and tone of voice changed.

I was quite taken aback by such a discernible change. Given that my constituent’s conditions are well documented and given that the reports of the consultants and healthcare professionals are held by the DWP and had apparently just been read by the reviewer, why were those comprehensive notes and assessments evidently not believed? Why did my constituent have to demonstrate her disability? Why did she have to disclose very personal and intimate details about her conditions to a stranger when the medical evidence had already been submitted to the DWP? Does the DWP think that healthcare professionals lie or exaggerate in their reports and letters? Does it not trust their clinical judgement?

Throughout the interview, the reviewer typed information into a form on the computer, but my constituent had no way of checking whether the information being recorded was accurate. She was not shown what was being recorded and it was not read back to her for verification. We must remember that that information decides whether she continues to receive her benefit or not, and it can be the difference between her having some quality of life or merely existing. Mistakes in recording information can be made, information can be misheard or misunderstood, and the wrong box can be inadvertently ticked. Her experience would not occur in any other situation—if, for example, I was to make a statement to the police, I would be able to check and sign that the information had been recorded accurately.

My constituent is a very forthright and assertive lady, but she was cowed and disempowered by that process. She felt unable to speak up for herself as the balance of power was definitely against her. Her fear was that, by questioning or challenging anything during the review, she would be treated less favourably, and she cannot afford to lose her PIP payments.

When I fed back to her my experience and concerns after the review, she became tearful. She was so relieved that I had witnessed what she had and that her perception of what had happened was validated. It was of more concern that she informed me that the review had been much better than the last one, which she had attended alone. At that review, she had felt that the reviewer was openly hostile and treated her with a complete lack of respect.

It was one of the most eye-opening experiences I have had for quite some time. We in Scotland can do so much better than that. Whether ensuring that people can enjoy fairer working lives or—where working is not an option—providing fair and appropriate support to enable them to live as independently as possible, we must ensure that dignity, respect and inclusion are at the heart of what we deliver through the plan. By continuing to engage with disabled people, we can better understand the challenges and barriers that they continue to face. The Government's plan for creating a fairer Scotland for disabled people seeks to tear down those barriers and to deliver a society where every citizen is valued and where their rights are fully recognised.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Briggs, you will be the penultimate speaker in the open debate. I say that in hope.

15:51

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I am pleased to take part in today's debate. We can all agree with the Scottish Government's key aim of ensuring that disabled people have equality with and the same rights as non-disabled people. The challenge for the Government and for us as elected representatives is to remove the practical barriers that can often be in place for disabled people, and to allow them to have the same opportunities to realise their potential as other citizens in Scotland. I also agree with the minister that, as the Scottish Government takes forward its delivery plan, the direct involvement of disabled people is essential. Their views and input must be sought every step of the way.

Accessibility is, rightly, a key theme in the delivery plan and the accessibility of transport for disabled people has been an issue that I have been campaigning and working on with Lothian

constituents since my election—especially in relation to access to Edinburgh Waverley station. I commend the Edinburgh access panel for the efforts that it has made in campaigning to improve the current inadequate pick-up and drop-off arrangements at Waverley station. For the two years since taxis were banned from the station, disabled people in Edinburgh have felt that, in effect, they have been made second-class citizens when it comes to access to Waverley station. That is unacceptable and must be addressed at the earliest opportunity. I believe that operators might have broken disability discrimination legislation in that regard and I hope that, in responding, the minister will tell us whether the Scottish Government will agree to look into that.

I recently had a members' business debate on the issue and I look forward to meeting constituents and the transport minister, Humza Yousaf, at the station in the new year. From the headlines that I have read this week, he might also be using Waverley station more often in the near future. I will continue to do all that I can to support constituents to achieve a more accessible station for blind and disabled people.

Reducing barriers to employment is critically important, which has been mentioned by members including my Lothian region colleague, Jeremy Balfour, from whom we heard a first-class speech. Hopefully, the plan will work to smash any glass ceiling that disabled people might face in accessing employment in Scotland today. Disabled people have so much to offer if employers are able to make the reasonable adjustments that are required to allow them to join the workforce.

We have to address the fact that the disability employment rate in Scotland is lower than that in the rest of the UK, although I welcome the comments that the minister made on apprenticeships and business start-up schemes.

Good work is already being done in my region by a number of local and national third sector organisations, including the all in Edinburgh service and Remploy. Their efforts are to be commended and there are some real success stories as a result of support being provided to help disabled people to find employment and to give them continued guidance and assistance while in employment.

More widely, I pay tribute to the many voluntary organisations in my region that work with and on behalf of disabled people. Their work is immensely important to people. The volunteers who help those organisations do so much to improve people's quality of life and are to be commended.

Kate Forbes is not in the chamber at the moment, but she made a very good contribution. I

hope that the delivery plan will also look at access to sport for disabled people, both to watch it and to take part in it.

My colleague Adam Tomkins talked about mental health and, as my party's spokesman on that issue, I back up the comments that he made. Next week, Scottish Conservatives will publish a new mental health policy statement with a broad range of detailed policy proposals that can help people with mental health challenges and inform the Scottish Government's forthcoming mental health strategy. It is important that the Government's disability delivery plan aims to support those whose lives are affected by mental health disabilities as well as those who have physical challenges.

It is disappointing that the Scottish Government's motion, which after all is about its own delivery plan, includes the now obligatory attack on the UK Government. I suggest to the Government that it might be better if it focused on the areas where it has direct responsibility and could make a difference to people's lives. If SNP ministers are trying to build consensus on the issue in Parliament, they seem to be going about it in the wrong way.

Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned palliative care. I am pleased that Scottish Conservative pressure on that issue has meant that the Scottish Government has agreed to deliver parity between children and adults on palliative care.

Earlier this week, I met a number of young constituents with severe physical disabilities who have to pay for their social care and who want the Scottish Government to consider how it can better support them. On Tuesday evening, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport agreed to my request to widen the feasibility study into extending free social care to dementia sufferers under 65 so that it includes consideration of those under 65 who have terminal illnesses. Young disabled people who have life-limiting health conditions rather than terminal conditions would also like to have a debate about how they could benefit. I hope that we can have those discussions as the Government looks to improve care packages and set up its independent living fund.

I again welcome today's debate and look forward to the Government delivering the practical improvements that disabled people want. I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Adam Tomkins.

15:57

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I am delighted to support the motion. There are 1 million people with disabilities living in Scotland, and the delivery plan recognises that the human

rights of disabled people should underpin all our activity across a range of policy and legislation. I endorse the points that Alex Rowley and others made about the UK benefits changes under the Conservative Government. We should not avoid pointing out the problems that those have caused for disabled people. Welfare reforms touch on our direct experience as MSPs. If those on the Tory benches do not recognise that, that is perhaps because people whose disability benefits have been cut altogether do not go to their Tory MSP as a first port of call.

Tory members could perhaps learn a little by turning to a blog that is run by one of my constituents, Mark Frankland, who operates the First Base Agency food bank in Dumfries. His blog tells the story of a man who he called Donald—that is not his real name—who came to First Base looking for a food parcel because he had received an 86-day benefit sanction. Donald has learning difficulties. He asked for a non-cooking parcel because he had no money to pay his electricity bill and therefore could not cook. He had no heat and light in the middle of winter. Mark Frankland was so worried about Donald that he started a crowdfunder to pay his £160 electricity bill. Within a few hours, Mark had raised much more than £160, and the fund has reached £6,000 at the last count. Donald will have his electricity bill paid and Mark says that the extra money will help other Donalds. Sadly, there are too many other Donalds.

In the previous session of Parliament, the Welfare Reform Committee, in producing a report on sanctions, took considerable evidence on sanctions against disabled people. I sat on that committee and we went on to take evidence on the shape of the future social security system, which will have a huge effect on people receiving disability benefits. To address Mark Griffin's point, shortly after the Smith commission, the minister at the time, Alex Neil, asked for PIP not to be rolled out in Scotland. The committee questioned the Secretary of State for Scotland and asked for PIP not to be rolled out because such benefits were being devolved to the Scottish Parliament. However, he refused point-blank to consider that, as the UK Government is doing now.

Another, perhaps more controversial point was raised with the committee by disability groups when we were talking about designing the new social security system. Those groups were absolutely opposed to the devolution of that new system to local authorities, which is what some politicians wanted. I remember vividly that the groups said that it would equate to the parish system—the old parochial system—that preceded the welfare state. They warmly welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to set up a national system, which is what the minister is doing. It is excellent that she is taking the time to

consult carefully the people who will be using the system, so that she gets it right.

The reason why those disability groups were so opposed to local authorities having control of the new social security system was because of their current experience with local authorities in the provision of services. They had had too many negative experiences to trust councils to protect them. I am sure that there are lots of good examples of councils that are doing things right. However, having dealt with constituents with disabilities and listened to those groups, I believe that there is a problem at local authority level with the way in which some disability services are delivered.

Alex Rowley raised the issue of charges. I cannot see how those charges are compatible with human rights. Alex Rowley said that it is a financial issue. As he knows, these cuts are coming from the UK Government, and local authorities are receiving the same level of cuts as the Scottish Government is receiving from London. However, I do not think that this is just a financial issue, because that does not explain why charges for home care vary across local authorities and, as Mr Rowley said, from administration to administration.

Alex Rowley: On the cuts from Westminster, the fact is that, as well as having social security powers in this Parliament, we have other powers. Does Joan McAlpine agree that many people are asking what this Parliament—despite the failed austerity Tories here—will do? Should we use our powers to invest in those services?

Joan McAlpine: As I mentioned to Mr Rowley's colleague Colin Smyth—who is on Dumfries and Galloway Council, which has hiked up the charges the most in Scotland—during the debate on social care charging this week, there are choices within local authorities about the way they do things. For example, councils are creating a whole new layer of bureaucracy called ward support workers, who are not front-line staff and who are there to support councillors.

To get back to the point, in some cases the charges start at £132 per week, which is COSLA's minimum threshold. Income tax is not levelled on people at £132 a week, so I do not see why disabled people should be penalised in that way. I am pleased that the Government is reviewing the charges and extending its review to look at people under 65 who suffer from dementia. I agree with Miles Briggs that it should not just be people with terminal illnesses; all disabled people should be included in the review, because many of the people affected are the most vulnerable people in society.

I want to reflect on the points that have been raised about self-directed support. The way some

local authorities are administering it is very worrying. For example, in Dumfries and Galloway, people are given cards and their accounts are closely monitored by council officers. They are not allowed to build up too much of a balance, which means that they cannot plan ahead to pay for respite and family holidays, and I do not think that that was the intention of self-directed support when the Parliament passed the legislation. The idea was to empower people. I believe that the Scottish Parliament information centre is doing a bit of work on how self-directed support has been rolled out across local authorities, and I look forward to reading that when it comes out.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We move to the closing speeches. I call Pauline McNeill.

16:05

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): One million people in Scotland live with a disability, and because of that they often also live with prejudice, discrimination and attitudes that serve to marginalise them, making their lives more difficult than they need to be. Of course, as we all agree, they are people first.

It is time to make serious and long-lasting inroads into changing attitudes and creating equality for that 1 million-plus group. I welcome the fact that we are discussing the delivery plan today. In my opinion, it is the area of equality in which the Parliament has most to do this session. As others have said, the UK welfare reforms that have affected hundreds and thousands of disabled people across Scotland were a serious setback for the agenda. Clare Haughey spoke eloquently about how disempowered her constituent felt as a result of her experience, and about the hostility and, ultimately, the lack of respect that she felt. Sadly, I do not think that that case sits on its own.

The UK has been a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities since 2007, and there are many things for which the UK Government is to be commended in relation to disabled people. However, it is important to document in today's debate some of the detail of the UN report, which was based on an 11-day inquiry in 2015 that found that austerity policies introduced into the welfare and social care system amounted to

“systematic violations of the rights of persons with disabilities.”

The report is also withering about the manner in which ministers conducted the reforms. According to the report, the worst aspect of the actions contained therein was that the UK Government pushed ahead even though it knew that that would have an adverse impact on disabled people.

Page 26 of the report states:

“The impact assessments conducted by the State party”—

that is, the UK Government—

“prior to the implementation of several measures of its welfare reform expressly foresaw an adverse impact on persons with disabilities ... The core elements of the rights to independent living and being included in the community, an adequate standard of living and social protection and their right to employment have been affected ... by policy changes”.

It further states those changes have resulted in the restriction of disabled people’s

“freedom of choice and control over their daily activities”.

If ministers make a 20 per cent cut to welfare expenditure, they must have some idea that that will have an impact on the group who rely on those benefits. The extra cost of disability has been ignored and income protection has been curtailed as a result of benefit cuts, while the expected goal of achieving decent and stable employment is far from being attained. The bedroom tax, cuts to personal independence payments and the notorious fit-for-work tests, which we have discussed in this Parliament many times, all create high levels of anxiety and stress. I believe that that is a huge backward step in the times that we live in, when we should have been able to build on the progress that had been made since the 2007 convention and the 1995 legislation on discrimination against people with disabilities.

In setting out our commitment to eradicating barriers to employment, Miles Briggs and others made important points about travel and public transport.

We know that we have a job to do to fundamentally change attitudes to people with disabilities, because the organisations that we have heard from and which regularly brief us are fighting too many rearguard actions, fighting for the most basic rights—the right to live and to be supported by the welfare state.

Many members, including Alex Cole-Hamilton, talked about the disability delivery plan’s focus on young people, and I believe that that is an extremely important area for the delivery plan. At the age of 16, disabled people have similar career aspirations to those of their wider peer group. It should make us optimistic that, at that stage in life, young people with disabilities have the same aspirations as other young people; sadly, by the time they reach 26—according to Disability Agenda Scotland—they are nearly four times more likely to be unemployed. As Jeane Freeman said, that is when dreams are dashed. The delivery plan must focus on ensuring that those young people’s dreams become a reality.

In 2005, the earnings of young disabled people in employment were 11 per cent lower than those of their non-disabled counterparts with the same level of educational qualifications, so there is undoubtedly a high level of discrimination against that group. As young disabled people reach their 20s, the impact of their frustrated ambition becomes clear in the effect that it has on their confidence, their subjective wellbeing and their belief in their ability to shape their own future.

According to Inclusion Scotland, the plan’s 93 actions remain to be clearly defined as regards who is to do what and when. It says that the plan is helpful, but that more remains to be done to turn it into something that can be implemented and monitored.

I know that we all agree that there is a much broader context for our work on disability discrimination. I whole-heartedly support the minister’s statement that she will ensure that the Government conducts a public information campaign. In many ways, that is the most important aspect of the plan. The fundamental purpose of a public information campaign is to tackle attitudes. If we do not change attitudes, we will not have done our job. People with disabilities face stigma and discrimination from ordinary members of the general public and from those at every level of public service, including—as we have read in our briefings—health professionals. We must do better at every level of service and in every aspect of public transport. We must take decisive and progressive action in the current session of Parliament, because we owe it to the 1 million-plus people who look to us for action.

16:12

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): My voice might be a bit croaky, so I ask members to bear with me. I thank those who have spoken in the debate and I thank everyone who participated in the social security consultation. It is in the interests of the 1 million-plus disabled people who live in Scotland and contribute to Scottish life that we deliver on the issue and reach some consensus on how best to do so.

Although I recognise that slamming the Opposition is part and parcel of debate, the Scottish Government’s motion misses the point. It might be an inconvenience for those who want to take every opportunity to damn and berate Westminster, but such rhetoric is slowly becoming redundant. New welfare powers are coming to Scotland under the Scotland Act 2016. The Scottish Parliament will have full control over the benefits that are associated with the extra costs of living with a disability and it will have the ability to top up any reserved benefit, including employment and support allowance, when it deems that

necessary. Maybe the motion should at least acknowledge that.

Clare Haughey: Will the member take an intervention?

Annie Wells: I would like to make some progress.

Adam Tomkins was right to stress the achievements in the UK Government's response to the UN report. The UK Government spends £50 billion a year on benefits specifically to support those with disabilities and health conditions.

Sandra White: Will Annie Wells take an intervention?

Annie Wells: If the member lets me make progress, I will do so.

That figure has risen by £6 billion since 2010, which is an increase of nearly 14 per cent. That is by no means insignificant.

Sandra White: The member mentioned the UN report, which Mr Tomkins does not believe was correct. Does she agree with him?

Annie Wells: We can see that the UK Government puts in £6 billion more in spending a year than in 2010, which is a 14 per cent increase. We need to see that the UK Government takes seriously people with disabilities and health conditions. [*Laughter.*] Laughing is probably not the right thing to do.

The UK Government spends £50 billion a year on benefits for those with disabilities and health conditions, but promoting the best opportunities in life for those who live with disabilities should not focus solely on welfare.

George Adam: Will the member take an intervention?

Annie Wells: I want to make some progress—thank you.

Welfare, health services, education and employment all have important roles to play for those who live with disabilities. The best opportunities for anyone, whether or not they live with a disability, start with good health or at least with having confidence that they are on the path to achieving it. One in four Scots experience mental health issues, and Miles Briggs was right to point out that we need to tackle that. I am proud that we have recognised the importance of mental health and I look forward to the publication next week of our policy on the issue, which will flesh it out.

The best opportunities for anyone, whether or not they live with a disability, also start with education. It is concerning that only 64 per cent of young people aged 16 to 19 with a disability participate in education, compared with the nearly

73 per cent of able-bodied people in Scotland who do so. We should do our utmost to ensure that those with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities, are supported through primary, secondary and higher education.

The Scottish Conservatives have always supported providing additional funding that will follow pupils with additional support needs. That is why I sound a note of caution about the Scottish Government's flagship policy for pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, which an Enable Scotland report this week showed is causing concern among parents, teachers and carers. I recognise that the Scottish Government has those pupils' interests at heart, but I urge it to look specifically at the reported lack of specialist support teachers and training for mainstream teachers and at the feelings of isolation among ASN pupils.

The best opportunities for anyone, whether or not they live with a disability, also start with employment for those who can and want to work. It is right that we try to eradicate the myths about the UK Government's work choice programme. People who receive employment and support allowance are never sanctioned for not finding work or not applying for jobs.

Adam Tomkins was right to emphasise the relationship between health and work, as stated in the UK Government's "Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper". Work is as important to health as health is to work. That is why I commend the Scottish Government for mimicking our policy to halve the disability employment gap and for announcing £14 million for the work first Scotland programme. As Jeremy Balfour pointed out, the current rate of disability employment in Scotland is 42 per cent, which is lower than when the SNP first came to power and lower than the UK average by nearly 6 per cent. I am pleased to see initiatives such as the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, which equips disabled people with the skills that are needed to break down barriers and seek employment.

Looking ahead, I urge the Scottish Government to consider regional differences. In Glasgow, the disability employment rate is less than 25 per cent, which contrasts starkly with the position in Shetland, for example, which has a rate of 88 per cent—that is over 250 per cent higher than Glasgow's rate. That underlines the need to look into having further devolution of employment services and the range of disability benefits to the local level, whether that involves health boards, local authorities or new partnerships. Will the Scottish Government look further at that so that individuals can receive tailored packages that suit their needs?

I stress again the need to move the debate away from the magnifying glass-type of scrutiny that we currently see of the UK Government's welfare benefits. The rhetoric on sanctions and cuts is becoming redundant, as the Scottish Government will have the powers that it needs to make the changes that it wants. I know that some of my friends with disabilities who are watching the debate on television at home want to know the ins and outs of the legislation that will come forward in the coming years and not just what is off the cards but what will be on the table.

16:20

Jeane Freeman: As I did earlier, I start by thanking the individuals and organisations that have joined us in the public gallery to listen to the debate, particularly Inclusion Scotland and Dr Sally Witcher, who I quoted in my opening speech; Glasgow Disability Alliance; Disability Agenda Scotland; and Jim Elder-Woodward, who wrote the foreword to the disability delivery plan.

I also thank colleagues throughout the chamber for their contributions. Although it is true that we may disagree—I will come on to that—on some matters and in our assessments of the impact of the UK Government's policies and actions, I will focus on the determination that I believe we share to increase the pace and the depth of our efforts to win the transformational change that Scotland's 1 million disabled people deserve.

We heard a number of interesting and important speeches. George Adam made the points that disability is not always visible and that we are founding our delivery plan on the social model of disability. That is critical to our approach.

I could not agree more with Jeremy Balfour about the importance of addressing stigma. I want us to focus on raising awareness of the potential that disabled people have and of the fact that we lose that when we ignore them, as we have done in terms of their rights. On his point about modern apprenticeships, although there is a great deal more to do, the number of disabled people on that programme rose by 4.1 per cent to 7.6 per cent in the first six months of this year. There is absolutely more to do and fine words are not enough, but we should recognise progress when it is made.

Kate Forbes made an important point about communities and our responsibility, as leaders of the national community that is Scotland, to remove barriers. She also made a telling point about what an adequate income actually means, what happens when it is withdrawn and the degree of social isolation and loneliness that can then be imposed on individuals.

I am grateful to Alex Rowley and other Labour members for their approach to the debate and

their support. The cuts to local government expenditure that he referred to are of the same proportion as the cuts to our Scottish Government budget, and I add that there has been a 29 per cent increase in expenditure on adult and social care since 2007-08.

We absolutely agree about the need for joined-up health and social care, which we support. That is why we have allocated substantial funds—£3 billion over the current session of Parliament—precisely to achieve that, and we will work with COSLA to make the improvements that are outlined in the disability plan, which will focus social care towards independent living and include the steps that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has taken on care charges.

There are of course difficulties, and there are differences between us and Labour, but I think that we both accept that there are political choices to make. Although we might not agree on the final choices, I think that we are as one on the need to make them and the intention behind what we want to do.

I am grateful to Alison Johnstone and the Greens for their support and would have welcomed their amendment had it been selected for debate. She makes an important point about the 120 internships that we propose—indeed, there could be more. I make the point to every member throughout the chamber that each and every one of us has a responsibility to be a champion for the disability delivery plan, so if any member can assist in increasing the number of internships that we can deliver, I will very much welcome that assistance.

Alison Johnstone also made an important point about working to help disabled people who are in work to stay in work. I have to say that the Scottish Government already spends £100 million on mitigating the worst effects of the Conservative Government's welfare cuts and I do not accept that the fact that we cannot address every unfairness that is caused by the imposition of UK Government policies means that we are indicating a tacit acceptance of those policies. That is an unfair charge.

Alison Johnstone: Does the minister agree that, with the new powers that are coming to the Scottish Parliament, we will be in a position to top up existing benefits and create new benefits in devolved areas?

Jeane Freeman: That is a factual statement. However, we have those powers in the overall context of a Scottish budget—I am conscious that the finance minister is sitting right beside me—that has been decreased by just under 10 per cent in the past period. The choices that we have to make as a Government over all the areas of and

demands on our expenditure are difficult. I assure the member that we will make the best possible choices that we can for the people of Scotland.

I thank Alex Cole-Hamilton for his support and recognition of the steps that the Scottish Government has taken. I also thank him for the important contribution that he made to the development of the national framework for families of disabled children. I look forward to his continued engagement as we develop that framework.

I am grateful to Clare Haughey for bringing real-life experience to this afternoon's debate. She described not only the impact on her constituent of going through the assessment process but the impact that it had on her as a member of the Scottish Parliament in understanding how that unnecessary process demeans and diminishes people.

Jeremy Balfour: Will the minister give way?

Jeane Freeman: No—I need to keep going. I have to power through everybody and I do not want to miss anyone out.

The points that Miles Briggs made about transport are important. Given that he is meeting the Minister for Transport and the Islands at Waverley station, he can be assured that we are taking the issue of that station seriously. I am grateful to him for the important points that he made about mental health.

Joan McAlpine and Sandra White made important contributions to the debate. We need to address self-directed support at a local level because there are differences and discrepancies that need to be ironed out. I am grateful to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport for the commitment that she has made to working with us on tackling them.

I turn to Mark Griffin and Adam Tomkins. Before I go any further, I recognise the pivotal role that Mr Griffin played in seeing the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 through the Parliament. I agree with him—and indeed with Mr Tomkins—that we hope to see a great deal more signing in the Scottish Parliament.

I remind Mark Griffin that the Scottish Government called on the UK Government on many occasions to halt the PIP transfer in Scotland. I am happy to keep on repeating that message to the UK Government and we will take the opportunity to do so again at our next meeting. Unfortunately, in this matter, as in others, the UK Government is not listening to us. We share Mr Griffin's view that the PIP transfer should not have been carried out in Scotland and should be halted if that is at all possible at this stage.

I recognise Mr Griffin's point about the expectation that is on the Scottish Government

and the Scottish Parliament in relation to our social security system. We may have points of difference, but I am sure that we can work together to build a rights-based social security system for Scotland.

I turn finally to Mr Tomkins's speech. I welcome the significant areas of agreement that he outlined. However, I gently suggest to him and his colleagues that our concerns about and criticisms of UK Government policy, and particularly the welfare reforms, are not unfounded or redundant. Those concerns are shared by many people—particularly disabled people—across the country. I gently suggest that the credibility of my colleagues in the Scottish Parliament in the Conservative Party would be greatly enhanced if they recognised that reality for many people across Scotland.

Mr Tomkins is very fond of quoting the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, so he should also recognise its finding—Labour colleagues have also pointed this out—that 26 per cent of people who are in poverty in Scotland are disabled. That comes directly from the UK Government's welfare reforms, which were, in their own terms, deliberately intended to save money. They include the ESA cuts, which are part of a £450 million cut in the UK Government's spend on welfare.

It will not do to dismiss the UN's report, which accurately said that the UK Government is guilty of "grave or systematic violations" of the rights of disabled people. It will not do to say simply that we do not like the authors and we do not like how they wrote the report. We need to recognise the realities and not pick and choose.

I commend to the Parliament the disability delivery plan for the transformational change that we require, and I say to every member in the chamber that I look forward to their active engagement with me in the delivery of the rights that disabled people need and should have and which make the rights of us all much more meaningful.

Intergovernmental Relations

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-02937, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Finance and Constitution Committee, on a written agreement between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

16:31

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): It is a pleasure to open the debate on behalf of the Finance and Constitution Committee. This short debate might not be the most exciting but, nevertheless, it is important.

The origins of the agreement that we are considering lie in the work of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, of which I was convener in the previous parliamentary session. The committee undertook a wide range of work on intergovernmental relations—I will say IGR from now on—drawing on the comments in the Smith commission report. It is worth recalling what Lord Smith had to say:

“Throughout the course of the Commission, the issue of weak inter-governmental working was repeatedly raised as a problem. That current situation coupled with what will be a stronger Scottish Parliament and a more complex devolution settlement means the problem needs to be fixed. Both Governments need to work together to create a more productive, robust, visible and transparent relationship.”

The Devolution (Further Powers) Committee’s report made a range of recommendations, including that a new written agreement between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, on the parliamentary oversight of IGR, should be developed. The committee particularly recommended that the information that is provided by the Scottish Government with regard to IGR

“must enable parliamentary scrutiny of formal, inter-ministerial meetings before and after such meetings.”

In March 2016, the Deputy First Minister, on behalf of the Scottish Government, agreed with the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee the text of the written agreement on IGR. However, because of the proximity of dissolution, there was unfortunately not time for the Parliament as a whole to consider the agreement.

In a nutshell, the written agreement establishes three principles for governing the relationships between Parliament and the Government: transparency, accountability and the respect of confidentiality of discussions between Governments. The agreement particularly requires the Scottish Government to provide the Scottish

Parliament with information about the Scottish Government’s participation in formal, ministerial-level intergovernmental meetings, as well as any concordats, agreements and memorandums of understanding that the Scottish Government enters into.

In addition, the agreement requires the Scottish Government to prepare an annual report on IGR and to provide it to the relevant committee of the Parliament. The intention is that the report will summarise the IGR activity that the Scottish Government has undertaken in the previous year and provide information on issues that are likely to emerge in the forthcoming year.

On the extension of the Finance Committee’s remit earlier this year to include constitutional issues, the Finance and Constitution Committee, as the successor committee to the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee in this parliamentary session, considered the agreement and agreed to its contents. However, the scope of the Scottish Government’s IGR activity is clearly wider than the remit of the Finance and Constitution Committee. As a result, the committee agreed to seek a debate, as had been the intention of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, whereby the Parliament would be able to consider the agreement, given its broader scope.

The House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee this morning published a report, “The Future of the Union, part two: Inter-institutional relations in the UK”—it is hard to get your tongue round that—and commented on the agreement that we are considering. It is interesting to note that that committee welcomed the agreement as a model of good practice, from which other jurisdictions can learn, and recommended that the United Kingdom Government provide the House of Commons and the House of Lords with transparency that is similar to what we intend in Scotland.

That is the background. The intention behind the agreement is to improve the Parliament’s ability to scrutinise the formal intergovernmental relations of the Scottish Government. In the new era of devolution into which we are entering, with an increasing range of powers being shared between the Scottish and UK Governments—as well as the on-going negotiations on Brexit—it is imperative that this Parliament can effectively scrutinise intergovernmental relations.

The agreement is intended to provide a mechanism via which scrutiny of intergovernmental relations can be undertaken more effectively. I would not go as far as to suggest that the agreement is in any way historic. Nevertheless, it is an important statement of intent.

On behalf of the Finance and Constitution Committee, I move,

That the Parliament, in light of the Smith Commission agreement recommendation that inter-governmental arrangements to support the devolution of further powers be “underpinned by much stronger and more transparent parliamentary scrutiny”, agrees to the written agreement with the Scottish Government on inter-governmental relations, which is set out in the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee’s 4th Report, 2016 (Session 4): *Annual Report 2015-16* (SP Paper 980), as recommended by the Finance and Constitution Committee.

16:37

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): I am not sure that I can add to the excitement of this debate. I thank the Finance and Constitution Committee for bringing to the Parliament this afternoon a debate on the written agreement on parliamentary oversight of intergovernmental relations.

I thank the convener for his thoughtful opening remarks. Mr Crawford, with his experience of serving as cabinet secretary with responsibility for intergovernmental relations, and as convener of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, brings valuable insight to the debate.

Following the Smith commission, the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee’s report, “Changing Relationships: Parliamentary Scrutiny of Intergovernmental Relations”, which I have read with renewed interest since taking on overall portfolio responsibility in the Scottish Government, led directly to the production, in March, of the written agreement that we consider today. The report highlighted the importance of establishing clear and effective processes and formal intergovernmental mechanisms to ensure that parliamentary scrutiny is facilitated.

The written agreement, which was developed jointly between Government and Parliament officials, demonstrates the value of our working together effectively to achieve common goals. It sets a clear framework, which signals the Scottish Government’s willingness to respond to the Scottish Parliament’s valid demands for stronger and more transparent scrutiny of our formal engagement with the UK Government and the other devolved Administrations.

As the Smith commission recognised, the successful devolution of further powers to this Parliament requires the intergovernmental machinery between the Scottish and UK Governments, including the joint ministerial committee structure, to be significantly reformed and scaled up. As members know, at the October meeting of the JMC plenary a new memorandum of understanding was not signed off as planned, given the overriding need to focus on developing a

UK approach and objectives for negotiations before article 50 is invoked, in line with Prime Minister Theresa May’s commitment to the First Minister at their meeting in July.

The strength of the current intergovernmental mechanisms will be demonstrated by the effectiveness or otherwise of the JMC on Europe, which has been established to take the work forward. As the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland’s Place in Europe said during our evidence session on 16 November:

“We have entered the discussions in good faith ... and we will endeavour to make good progress.”—[*Official Report, Finance and Constitution Committee*, 16 November 2016; c 40.]

We expect the terms of reference for the JMC(EN) to be honoured and we will see in time whether we believe that that is happening, although progress to date has been slower than we would have wished. Mr Tomkins sometimes says that this Scottish Government does not have full diplomatic capability. That is all the diplomacy that I can bring to that statement on progress on our intergovernmental relations on that subject, which is, of course, being discussed elsewhere.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Derek Mackay: Of course, very briefly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Very briefly, please.

Adam Tomkins: I am sure that the cabinet secretary is intimately familiar with the report of the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs committee published today, in which evidence from both Leslie Evans, the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government and John Swinney, the Deputy First Minister, records that the Scottish Government is positive about the United Kingdom’s intergovernmental machinery.

Derek Mackay: That is very timely, because I was going to go on to welcome some of the commentary around that, but also to reflect on the fact that the UK Government and the Westminster Parliament also need to fully respect the agreements that have been reached in that regard.

As the First Minister has made clear, the Scottish Government recognises that proper parliamentary scrutiny is a key element of the Brexit process. I am aware that the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland’s Place in Europe has been keeping relevant committees informed of those meetings. I have been doing the same, as finance minister, to ensure that relevant committees are informed of all relevant joint

exchequer committee meetings, quadrilaterals and trilaterals.

We are not complacent; so much so that our officials are working with the Parliament's clerks to develop guidance material to raise awareness across the Scottish Government of the need to comply with the written agreement, and to encourage Scottish Government officials to consider any implications of their day-to-day work. We look forward to continuing our work with Parliament.

16:41

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

The background to the debate, as was set out by Bruce Crawford a few moments ago, is the written agreement that has been established between the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government on intergovernmental relations.

Intergovernmental relations between the UK Government and the Scottish Government are now more important than ever. Further devolution has created what is, in effect, a quasi-federal state within the UK. Scotland has two Governments: the Government here in Edinburgh and the Government in London, each of which has different competencies at different levels. There will be a wide range of issues on which it will be important that both Scotland's Governments work closely together, so there needs to be high-quality engagement between them.

In addition, there needs to be effective scrutiny of intergovernmental relations at parliamentary level, both at Westminster and here in the Scottish Parliament. That point was recognised by the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, which produced a very helpful report on the issues in October last year. In taking evidence for its report the committee heard from a number of experts about the weakness of parliamentary scrutiny of intergovernmental relations. For example, Professor Michael Keating of the University of Edinburgh's centre for constitutional change said:

"We have very poor parliamentary scrutiny of intergovernmental relations" —[*Official Report, Devolution (Further Powers) Committee*, 19 March 2015; c 12.]

Research that was carried out for the committee showed that in a range of other federal, or quasi-federal, states the role of Parliaments in scrutinising intergovernmental relations was greater than it is in the UK.

The House of Lords Constitution Committee, which also considered the issues, stated in its report "Inter-governmental relations in the United Kingdom", that

"Effective scrutiny of inter-governmental relations requires both greater transparency than currently exists, and the

necessary structures and desire in Parliament and the devolved legislatures to scrutinise those relationships."

The written agreement between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government was entered into in response to those concerns.

The agreement requires the Scottish Government to provide, in so far as doing so is practicable, to the relevant committee of Parliament advance written notice of at least one month prior to scheduled meetings. That will enable the relevant committee to express a view on the topic and, if appropriate, to invite the responsible minister to attend a committee meeting to address the issue and answer questions. That reflects the conclusion of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, that the view of the Scottish Parliament needs to be taken into account before any intergovernmental agreement is entered into by the Scottish Government.

The key is transparency. In the Finance and Constitution Committee's engagement with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution we have so far established what I think is a positive working relationship, in which the cabinet secretary is prepared to engage with the committee on intergovernmental dealings with Westminster. I hope that that is the case for all cabinet secretaries, although it is worth noting in passing that concern has been raised in other quarters about the lack of information that has been provided about the transfer of welfare powers to this Parliament—an issue that surely falls under the definition of intergovernmental relations.

We know that Scottish Government ministers often use intergovernmental meetings to raise concerns that they have about UK Government policy in reserved matters. I asked the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution at a recent committee meeting whether that process ever happens in reverse. That does not seem to have been the case with either the current or previous UK Governments, although Michael Russell has told me that Jim Murphy, when he was the Secretary of State for Scotland in the previous Labour Government, was not shy about using such meetings to berate the SNP Administration at Holyrood for what he saw as its policy failures. Clearly, Conservatives in Government are more courteous. [*Laughter.*]

I want to make one other point before closing. The Devolution (Further Powers) Committee recommended that greater interparliamentary co-operation in scrutinising intergovernmental relations would be beneficial, so I look forward to seeing a work stream develop in which committees of this Parliament can work more

closely with committees at Westminster and elsewhere than has been the case in the past.

I suspect that this debate will not make tomorrow's front pages, but it has been a useful opportunity to air important points about the machinery of government. I am pleased to support the motion in the Bruce Crawford's name.

16:46

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this short but important debate on intergovernmental relations and the written agreement between the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government. Although it may seem to be quite a dry debate, I reiterate that the subject matter is important.

If we look at the journey of devolution and this Parliament and how it has matured and how more powers have been transferred from Westminster to Holyrood, we see that we have taken on greater responsibility. At the heart of the transfer of powers—some of the powers are shared or, at least, the interests are shared—is the key importance of relationships between the UK and Scottish Governments and between the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.

It can be a challenge when the two Governments are different political parties. We could even say that it was a challenge when the Labour Party was in power both at Holyrood and Westminster. It is important that there can be constructive relations. Intergovernmental relations and the agreement are fundamental to achieving that.

As outlined in the agreement, the key principles of constructive relations are transparency and scrutiny. From that point of view, it is important that the meetings that our cabinet secretaries hold with their UK counterparts are fully documented and—the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution has been good at this—that cabinet secretaries are available to come to relevant committees and before Parliament to give updates on on-going issues. That is important because of the importance of some of the issues that are considered between Governments. We need look only at the number of debates on Brexit in the chamber since the June vote. There is a lot of contention on the topic, but there is also a lot of interest in this Parliament and the UK Parliament.

The Finance and Constitution Committee has in recent weeks had no shortage of analysts before it to give us their take on the potential implications of Brexit. It is clear—whatever a person's view on Brexit—that there are serious implications for Scotland and the UK. Given that, the discussions that take place are important.

Next week will see publication of the draft budget, which will cover more financial powers than have ever been devolved before. As part of the work on the budget, we will get to view the block grant adjustment—when it is eventually published—which is crucial. There are forecasting elements to that, so there has been prior negotiation between the UK and Scottish Governments. It will be one of the true first tests of the intergovernmental relations and the written agreement.

The agreement is important for Parliament and for parliamentarians because, ultimately, the decisions that are taken on transfer of powers are not just about the laws that Parliament can pass or the money that Parliament has, but are about the impact that they will have on the people in the constituencies and regions that we represent. It is important that there is proper accountability for discussions and agreements that impact on people, so I welcome the agreement that has been put in place by the Finance and Constitution Committee.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Open speeches should be no more than three minutes, please. John Mason is first.

16:50

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleton) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for the opportunity to take part in this brief debate.

The three principles in paragraph 8 of the agreement—transparency, accountability and confidentiality—are inherently fine, but I think that they can be difficult to reconcile in practice. That probably applies in all walks of life; for example, all committees in the Parliament want to meet in public but take some items in private.

Previously, when I was a member of the Finance Committee, the block grant adjustment was a major issue around the time that Scotland took over control of stamp duty and landfill tax. The negotiations dragged on and John Swinney was very limited in what he could say to the committee. Eventually, we understood that the cabinet secretary and the Treasury split the difference of their disagreement during a phone call.

Another negotiation between the two Governments concerned the Scottish Fiscal Commission and who would make the forecasts. That is a subject that we had debated in the chamber and the committee many times and there was clear disagreement between the two Governments. On that occasion, the Scottish Government conceded the point in order to get a wider, more beneficial agreement on the range of issues under discussion. The Finance Committee

got hints about how negotiations were going along the way, but we got no detail, despite our questioning. Of course, I would not have expected John Swinney to advertise ahead that he was willing to concede a particular point in the negotiations.

One of the key aims in all this is to allow committees to express a view before the intergovernmental meeting takes place. To go back to the example of the Scottish Fiscal Commission, the committee in fact expressed two different views, so the Government certainly knew what reaction it would be getting from the committee in that case.

On that point, I was interested that, for the meeting of the JMC yesterday, 7 December, the letter from Mike Russell to Bruce Crawford, the committee convener, was dated 5 December—just two days ahead. That may have been because Mike Russell did not know about the meeting, but that clearly would not be enough time for a committee to express a view on a subject if it had not previously considered it. In his letter about yesterday's JMC meeting, Mike Russell says:

"Although I am unable to provide a detailed agenda for this meeting, I expect the agenda to include substantive discussion on Justice Security and Home Affairs issues."

I hope that that will not be typical of the amount of detail on the agenda.

There are many caveats in the agreement about disclosing details; it uses words such as

"where appropriate ... the need for a shared, private space ... respect for ... confidentiality",

and it points out that other Governments can refuse to release information. We will have to see how this develops. For example, if agendas and minutes are not forthcoming, that issue would have to be looked at again.

Overall, any formalisation of the process has to be welcomed; it is a step forward, which is a lot better than no step at all. Those of us on the back benches expect as much transparency and accountability as possible and those two principles should be the assumed starting point.

16:53

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The first line of the agreement says:

"The Smith Commission agreement considered the issue of inter-governmental relations in some detail."

"In some detail"—whoever wrote that could give Sir Humphrey Appleby lessons in constructive ambiguity. As Linda Fabiani is happily neutral in the chair and as Professor Tomkins is closing on behalf of the committee, perhaps I am the only person who feels free to say that the Smith

commission did not have the time to consider any issues in adequate detail.

That was at a time when we were constructing a more complex relationship between the two Governments and between the two Parliaments than there had ever been before. Since then, we have seen additional levels and dimensions of complexity being added. If I thought that the Smith commission was a chaotic mess, I did not know the meaning of that phrase until I saw Brexit. We now have to try to understand how intergovernmental scrutiny will take place in the context of this profoundly new world.

James Kelly is right to say that, fundamentally, the challenge is not new, as it has evolved since the beginning of the Parliament. When a single party was in charge of—or at least the dominant party in—the Government in both Scotland and London, the intergovernmental relationships were more constructive but perhaps less transparent to the rest of us and to wider society. At a time when relationships might go through some rocky patches, merely to add more transparency will not necessarily make matters more constructive. Those challenges are very difficult to overcome. It is important that Parliament and Government, in reaching this agreement, remember that the relationship between them is not a relationship of equals, and that the Government is always accountable to Parliament in everything that it does.

The commitment to engage actively with parliamentary committees is important and is certainly the minimum that we would expect. I am sure that we all agree that we would hope to see the same level of engagement with committees from UK ministers that we expect from Scottish ministers. It is not only Scottish National Party members who I hope will agree with that. When only the Scottish Government ministers put their case in front of committees, we may not, as we should do, get the full picture. I hope that the Conservative Party will also argue that ministers in the UK Government should engage actively—more so than they have done in the past—with Scottish Parliament committees.

Finally, I make a plea that, when we make further changes in future—for example, reviewing the framework when it is due for review—we do so in a more calm, reflective, open and detailed manner than the way in which we have made changes to date.

16:56

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I rise to make this short speech with reluctance and a heavy heart, not because I think that the subject matter is unimportant—quite the contrary—but

because it should not be me making the speech. I am the deputy convener of the Finance and Constitution Committee only because my friend and mentor Alex Johnstone is no longer with us. There will be time in due course for much fuller reflection on his unique contribution to Scottish politics, but I could not make this speech today without first paying tribute to him.

I turn now to business, as AJ surely would have wanted.

Intergovernmental machinery is a phrase that is designed to put even the most dedicated politics student to sleep. However, even if our short debate this evening somehow escapes the attention of tomorrow's front pages, that is more a reflection of the peculiar priorities of the press than it is of the merits of the matter. The truth is that intergovernmental machinery is now core to the success of devolution itself. Hitherto in the devolved era, we have acted as if a power is either reserved to Westminster or devolved to us—it is one or the other. However, even if we did not quite realise it at the time, in those heady days of the Smith commission two years ago—to which Patrick Harvie just referred—we created something new: devolution 2.0. There are still reserved powers and devolved powers, but there are also shared powers—areas of government that are the joint responsibility in Scotland of both the UK Government and the Scottish Government. Welfare and some elements of taxation are only the two best-known examples.

In a parliamentary democracy such as the UK or Scotland, Parliaments have two jobs to do. They make laws—yes, from time to time they are supposed to make laws—and they hold the Government of the day to account by scrutinising its policies, decisions and actions. In a parliamentary democracy, we do not elect the Government directly—we elect a Parliament out of which a Government emerges and to which the Government is accountable. That is the essential constitutional framework within which the written agreement must be understood. It is an agreement—a written component of our famously unwritten constitution—that sets out the framework under which this Parliament can hold the Scottish ministers accountable for the policies, decisions and actions that they develop jointly with UK ministers in Britain's intergovernmental machinery. Sometimes that machinery is bilateral, as in the joint ministerial working group on welfare, and sometimes it is quadrilateral as in the joint ministerial committee.

Regardless, it is essential that this Parliament is able effectively and robustly to hold the Scottish ministers to account for what they get up to, and indeed what they propose to get up to, in those meetings. There can be no hiding behind the veil

of executive secrecy—that is the very opposite of the openness and accountability that we rightly demand.

The Smith commission generally and our chairman Lord Smith in particular were acutely conscious that all the UK's legislatures needed to do better in this regard. I commend the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee for taking that forward, and I commend the Scottish Government for agreeing to the committee's proposals as to how to ensure that we in this Parliament are able to do our job properly and hold ministers to account. It is enlightened of the Scottish ministers to have understood that the written agreement is not only in the Parliament's best interests but also in their own interests. Ministers who are open with the Parliament and its committees are likely to find it easier to explain themselves than ministers who are not. As Murdo Fraser mentioned, the row that we had a few weeks ago about shared competence in the welfare field could have been avoided had ministers been more up front in complying with the requirements of the written agreement.

The written agreement is an excellent piece of work. It is fitting that Alex Johnstone was a member of the committee that developed it in the previous session, and it is fitting that the convener of that committee is in this session the convener of the Finance and Constitution Committee. It is a privilege to serve with him, and a particular pleasure to support him, and indeed the entire committee, in formally commending the written agreement to the Parliament.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): That concludes the debate on a written agreement between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government. I thank our British Sign Language signers for signing this afternoon's proceedings.

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-03019, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for next week.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for—

(a) Tuesday 13 December 2016—

after

followed by Topical Questions

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: The Scottish Government's Improvement Plan for Education

(b) Thursday 15 December 2016—

after

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Delivering Scotland's Food Waste Target

insert

followed by Appointment of Scottish Land Commissioners and the Tenant Farm Commissioner—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-02948.2, in the name of Adam Tomkins, which seeks to amend motion S5M-02948, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on creating a fairer Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

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)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (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)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 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)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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 30, Against 88, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-02948.1, in the name of Mark Griffin, which seeks to amend motion S5M-02948, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on creating a fairer Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 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)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (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)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 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)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-02948, in the name of Jeane Freeman, on creating a fairer Scotland, 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, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 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)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (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)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 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)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 88, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities in drawing

attention to the human rights of disabled people around the world; acknowledges that there is a need for a transformational change to achieve disability equality and therefore welcomes the publication of the report, *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Our Delivery Plan to 2021 for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*; expresses its thanks to all the individuals and organisations who responded and contributed to the consultation on this plan and agrees that the Scottish Government should continue to engage with disabled people as the experts in the continued actions that need to be taken to ensure that rights and independent living can be enjoyed and that as a society the long-term ambitions set out in the plan can be achieved; agrees that the Scottish Government should be firmly committed to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in full so that disabled people in Scotland can realise all of their human rights, and condemns the actions and welfare cuts of the UK Government, which have led the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to conclude that there have been “grave and systematic violations” of disabled people’s human rights; recognises that the new Scottish social security system will be a vital tool to ensure that disabled people have independence, decent incomes and fairer working lives; further recognises that two fifths of people in poverty live in a household with at least one disabled person and that the costs associated with a disability can average £550 per month, and agrees that new disability benefits powers will give the Parliament and the Scottish Government both the substantial responsibility and opportunity to support Scotland’s disabled people by halting and reversing the worst effects of Tory social security cuts, under a system that is based on the principles of dignity and respect.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-02937, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Finance and Constitution Committee, on a written agreement between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament, in light of the Smith Commission agreement recommendation that inter-governmental arrangements to support the devolution of further powers be “underpinned by much stronger and more transparent parliamentary scrutiny”, agrees to the written agreement with the Scottish Government on inter-governmental relations, which is set out in the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee’s 4th Report, 2016 (Session 4): *Annual Report 2015-16* (SP Paper 980), as recommended by the Finance and Constitution Committee.

Meeting closed at 17:04.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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