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Wednesday 25 January 2017

CONTENTS

	Col.
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	1
HEALTH AND SPORT	1
Alzheimer's Disease (Link with Air Pollution)	1
Health Inequalities (Pregnancy and Postnatal Period)	2
Rural General Hospitals (Recruitment of Physicians and Surgeons)	5
NHS Fife (Funding)	7
Badminton (Participation of Young People)	8
Health Advice (Accessibility to People with Hearing Loss and Deafness)	9
General Practitioner Practices (Resourcing)	11
Sport (Participation)	13
Ninewells Hospital (Electrical Wiring)	13
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Meetings)	15
SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT (ARTICLE 50)	17
<i>Statement—[Michael Russell].</i>	
The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell)	17
DRAFT BUDGET 2017-18	31
<i>Motion moved—[Alex Rowley].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Derek Mackay].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Murdo Fraser].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Patrick Harvie].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Willie Rennie].</i>	
Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	31
The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay)	35
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	39
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)	42
Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD)	45
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)	47
Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)	49
Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)	51
James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab)	53
Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)	55
Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con)	56
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	58
John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)	60
Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con)	62
Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	63
Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab)	65
Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)	67
Willie Rennie	68
Patrick Harvie	70
Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	72
The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart)	75
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab)	77
BUSINESS MOTION	81
<i>Motion moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	83
<i>Motion moved—[Joe FitzPatrick].</i>	
DECISION TIME	84
CELEBRATING BURNS AND THE SCOTS LANGUAGE	95
<i>Motion debated—[Emma Harper].</i>	
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)	95
John Scott (Ayr) (Con)	98
Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)	99
Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab)	101

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)	103
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	104
Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)	105
Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)	107
Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)	108
Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)	109
Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	112
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)	113
Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	114
The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan)	115

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 25 January 2017

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

Portfolio Question Time

Health and Sport

Alzheimer's Disease (Link with Air Pollution)

1. Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to research suggesting that there is a possible link between Alzheimer's disease and air pollution. (S5O-00579)

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): The Scottish Government is aware of the recently published research that suggested a possible link between air pollution and Alzheimer's disease. The Scottish Government receives advice on such issues from public health experts, including Health Protection Scotland and Public Health England, who keep the evidence on public health risks under constant review. The approach ensures that policy interventions are based on all the available, relevant evidence.

Claudia Beamish: The study, which was led by Public Health Ontario and published in *The Lancet* recently, found that, among people who lived within 50m of a major road, one in 10 cases of dementia could—I stress “could”—be attributed to traffic exposure. In light of that new and concerning research, can the minister reassure members that she will work across portfolios to limit air pollution from traffic?

I understand that risks from noise might also be associated, particularly in relation to people who live and work close to heavy traffic.

Maureen Watt: I am aware of the Ontario study, which was widely publicised—it is just one piece of research. As the member knows—she has her environmental hat on—we are committed to improving air quality across the country. There have been significant reductions in pollutant emissions over the decades, through tighter industrial regulation, improved fuel quality, cleaner vehicles and an increased focus on sustainable transport. We know that there are hotspots, in relation to which local authorities have a key role in ensuring that air quality is up to standard.

I was not aware of the noise aspect but I am happy to look into the matter. If I find anything, I will let the member know.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Does the Scottish Government have details of the estimated costs to the national health service and wider society as a result of air pollution? If the information is not available, will the Scottish Government commit to a study in the area?

Maureen Watt: All local authorities have plans on air quality management. The Government provides £2 million in funding annually to local authorities, to assist them in ensuring that air quality is up to standard. I assure the member that the Government works across portfolios to ensure that the risks are minimised.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I declare an interest, as a councillor on Stirling Council.

Is the minister concerned, as I am, that increasing numbers of councils are making decisions on developments that will worsen air quality, often despite recommendations from directors of public health to reject the developments? In Perth, the Scone development of 700 houses was objected to by the head of public health at NHS Tayside but has been approved, although it will make air quality around Bridgend, in Perth, substantially worse. What will the minister do to ensure that we join up health and planning?

Maureen Watt: I think that the member's question is more for the planning minister, who has announced a review of planning, into which it would be wise of the member to feed his concerns. There is a debate on planning tomorrow.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): According to recent figures on dementia post-diagnostic support, only 17 per cent of people who live in the most deprived areas are referred for support, compared with 24 per cent of people in the more affluent areas. I am sure that the minister agrees that both figures are shockingly low. What action is the Government taking to ensure that everyone who has a diagnosis of dementia receives the care that they require?

Maureen Watt: I was glad to see the figures published yesterday that give us a true picture of those who are in need of dementia care. Scotland is the first country in the United Kingdom to have one-year post-diagnosis support. The dementia strategy is being reviewed and members can look forward to a new strategy shortly that will take those figures into account.

Health Inequalities (Pregnancy and Postnatal Period)

2. Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce health inequalities during

pregnancy and in the postnatal period. (S50-00580)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Action from the Scottish Government and the national health service boards has meant that women are now accessing maternity care earlier in their pregnancies, with more than 80 per cent having their antenatal booking appointment by 12 weeks gestation; that is across all Scottish index of multiple deprivation quintiles. Last week we published a review of all maternity and neonatal services, developed around what women and families tell us that they want, which made a number of recommendations focusing on inequalities. In spring, we will roll out free vitamins to all pregnant women—no other country in the United Kingdom has committed to doing that—and from the summer every child born in Scotland will receive a baby box with essential items to help level the playing field for every family.

We have invested more than £11.2 million from 2011 to help boards to promote breastfeeding and to support women to breastfeed for as long as they wish. Scotland is the first country in the UK to have 100 per cent of our maternity units accredited by the United Nations children's fund baby-friendly initiative. We are providing funding for an additional 500 health visitors and have introduced a new enhanced universal service with key child health reviews, in addition to offering the family nurse partnership programme to all eligible teenage mothers by the end of 2018. Those measures are examples of our ambition to give children the very best start in life, regardless of income.

Ash Denham: Reducing health inequalities is obviously one of the biggest challenges that we face. Creating a culture in which healthy behaviours become the norm should start in the very earliest years. What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that health outcomes for children are improved and inequalities are reduced?

Aileen Campbell: Reducing inequalities, including those around health, is a key part of the Government's aims. With our partners, we support a wide range of activities to address that; I have mentioned the family nurse partnership, the universal pathway for health visiting, increased numbers of health visitors, support for breastfeeding, free vitamins for pregnant women—those are just a few. We also address wider issues that impact health, including child poverty and our aspirations for raising attainment. I agree that the early years are crucial, as is early intervention and prevention, and we continue to strive to achieve our aim of getting it right for every child. The roll-

out of early learning and childcare will also play a part in the ambitions that we have for our children.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): One of the best possible ways to achieve better outcomes for babies who are born premature or sick is to ensure that parents are able to spend time with their baby for long, uninterrupted periods and take the lead in the delivery of their care. The "Bliss Scotland baby report 2017" has quite shocking findings that only three out of 12 units have dedicated accommodation for parents of critically ill babies. I know that the cabinet secretary attended the reception last night; after she left the reception, we heard from Coady, whose baby was delivered at 29 weeks. In her local hospital, there was only one room for parents to stay overnight. What specific action will the Government take to prevent the trauma of separation between mother and baby and to reduce the pressure on neonatal units?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Monica Lennon for her supplementary question. As I mentioned in my response to Ash Denham, we have published a review of all maternity and neonatal services, which has been developed around what women and families have told us that they want. Some of the things that the member has pointed out will have been part of that engagement progress. The review sets out a comprehensive package of things that we can do to improve the services that we have across the country.

It is important to remember that we will be building on a position of strength and on the great work that is happening across our NHS. There are a number of recommendations about what we should do on neonatal services and we are working hard now to implement those recommendations to bring even greater improvements to services.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I welcome the Government's positive response to the Scottish Greens' calls for a roll-out of the healthier, wealthier children scheme, which is effective in terms of addressing the health inequalities that we are discussing. Can the Government give Parliament some information regarding the implementation of and the timescale for that roll-out?

Aileen Campbell: I will commit to updating Alison Johnstone and will write to her with some of the details that she seeks. However, I again point out the work on the early years collaborative, which I have had cause to mention in many discussions and debates in the Parliament. It is not just about the work that is being done in Glasgow; it involves the work that is being done across the country with local authorities and others to ensure that income maximisation is part of the

holistic support that is offered to children and families in those crucial early years.

Rural General Hospitals (Recruitment of Physicians and Surgeons)

3. Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to recruit physicians and surgeons for rural general hospitals. (S5O-00581)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): NHS Scotland boards are required to have the correct staff in place to meet the needs of the service and to ensure high-quality patient care. The Scottish Government works closely with boards to support their efforts in staff recruitment.

A range of actions are already being taken to support boards to recruit in remote and rural areas. Those actions concern potential recruitment from abroad and the encouragement of people who previously trained or worked in NHS Scotland to return and work in the health service. We will continue to look at how we can build on that.

Gail Ross: The cabinet secretary will be aware that, as I have been told by NHS Highland on many occasions, the nature of rural general hospitals means that general surgeons are required. That goes against the trend in recent years for surgeons to specialise in a particular field. What can be done to encourage trainee surgeons not to specialise and to gain a broader range of experience and training?

Shona Robison: Gail Ross makes an important point. The longer-term solution lies in implementing the recommendations in the report of the shape of training review in order to achieve a better balance between general and specialist medical skills. Proposals that have been worked on with the surgical colleges are well advanced for a revised training curriculum that will equip trainees with the competencies that are required to deliver elective and emergency general surgery in a district general hospital setting. Trainees who complete the programme successfully will become consultant general surgeons.

As changes impact across the United Kingdom, health ministers from across the nations will soon be invited to approve the implementation of those proposals. They will help to enable our district and rural general hospitals to recruit and retain the staff that they need in order to deliver services.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will no doubt have heard the interview with Dr Peter Bennie of the British Medical Association in which he spoke quite candidly about being fed up with the Government mantra that there are more doctors than ever before, when the actual question should be whether there

are enough doctors, enough nurses and enough staff.

Given the challenges that exist in all areas, but particularly in rural areas, what impact does the cabinet secretary believe that the offering of 9:1 contracts to consultants rather than 8:2 contracts is having in terms of attracting consultants to come to Scotland?

Shona Robison: We work closely with the BMA—indeed, we will have a meeting with the BMA next week. One of the issues that we will discuss concerns the balance of the consultant contract, which varies within boards and across boards. I will continue to discuss with the BMA how we take that issue forward.

On the point about how we can ensure that we continue to secure enough doctors to deliver the quality service that we have in Scotland, I can say that not only have we taken action to expand the number of undergraduate medical places and to improve access to those medical places so that we can have a more diverse medical workforce, but we will be opening Scotland's first new graduate medical school in due course, which will help to ensure an even greater supply of doctors for the service.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Does the cabinet secretary agree that the huge cuts in NHS Highland's budget, which were highlighted on the front page of today's *Press and Journal*, will lead to the health board continuing its centralisation of services to Raigmore hospital, which will lead to the absolute detriment and destruction of our rural hospitals?

Shona Robison: In contrast to that, the national health service revenue budget will increase by £500 million above inflation over this parliamentary session. Of course, in 2017-18, funding for our core NHS budgets will increase by more than £320 million, which is more than the Barnett consequential for health of £304 million. We are investing £128 million in service delivery in territorial boards over the next year, and NHS Highland will benefit from that investment. It will get an uplift of 1.5 per cent and, importantly, a share of the £50 million NHS Scotland resource allocation committee funding.

I assure Edward Mountain that more investment is going into our NHS but, as always, efficiency savings will be required to deliver some of the changes that are required. All that money is invested back into front-line services.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Further to Gail Ross's point about specific general practitioners and consultants for rural general hospitals, will the cabinet secretary go back to the idea—which, in fairness, was posed in the past—of considering how key staff could be retained for

such hospitals post-graduation, given the significant investment with which Parliament and Government support them through their training?

Shona Robison: A number of recruitment and retention measures are available to boards to recruit and retain staff, particularly staff in key specialties, who are more difficult to recruit. We are keen to work with boards to consider what more can be done. The training changes will make an important change to the role of staff. Having a general surgeon will be very important for our district and rural general hospitals, but so will the concept of doctors working across a network of hospitals so that they may spend part of their time working in a teaching hospital and part of it working in a rural general or district general hospital. That makes a post far more attractive.

Tavish Scott will also be aware of the range of activity that we are undertaking to address some of the gaps in general practice, particularly in rural areas.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Is the cabinet secretary aware of the situation in the Belford hospital in Fort William, which has lost three rural general surgeons through a series of unfortunate events that has left the hospital struggling for general surgeons? Will she work with NHS Highland to ensure that replacements are available?

Shona Robison: Yes, I am aware of those challenges. Our health and social care delivery plan, which was published in December, recognises that we need services that have the capacity, focus and workforce to continue to address the pressures of a changing society and an ageing population. Those key priorities are set out in the delivery plan.

A key driver for that will be our national health and social care workforce plan, which will be published in the spring of this year. NHS Highland is already considering ways to make better use of the available workforce and to work across traditional site boundaries—I referred to that in my response to Tavish Scott.

All those measures will be important in bringing stability and helping some of our rural general hospitals to recruit and retain staff.

NHS Fife (Funding)

4. David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the funding uplift will be for NHS Fife in 2017-18. (S5O-00582)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): NHS Fife will receive a baseline uplift of 1.5 per cent, which will take resource funding for 2017-18 to £616.2 million. That follows the Scottish Government's draft

budget for 2017-18, as set out in Parliament on 15 December 2016. The draft budget does not include the board's share of £50 million of additional NHS Scotland resource allocation committee funding, which will be confirmed as part of the 2017-18 budget bill, subject to parliamentary approval.

David Torrance: What proportion of NHS Fife's budget will be used to support the integration of health and social care in 2017-18?

Shona Robison: Health boards are setting their budgets for 2017-18, and NHS Fife has yet to finalise its figures for next year. However, we estimate that its recurrent budget in 2017-18 will be £616 million, as I said in my initial answer. The Scottish Government requirement is that the allocation to integration authorities from health boards must be at least equal to their 2016-17 recurrent budget allocation. For NHS Fife, that figure was £338 million, so we estimate that around 55 per cent of NHS Fife's 2017-18 budget will be delegated to the Fife health and social care partnership to support the integration of health and social care.

Badminton (Participation of Young People)

5. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage young people's participation in badminton. (S5O-00583)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Since the success of Scottish badminton players at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth games, we have seen a steady increase in people playing the sport. For instance, since the games, the active schools programme has seen an increase of more than 2 per cent in participant sessions, with a total of over 292,000 sessions in 2015-16.

SportScotland, which is the national agency for sport, is investing up to £2.9 million in Badminton Scotland for the 2015 to 2019 investment cycle, which is a 2.7 per cent increase from the 2011 to 2015 funding cycle. In addition, through VisitScotland's events directorate, the Scottish Government is supporting the badminton world championships, which will be staged at Glasgow's Emirates arena in August this year. Badminton Scotland plans to get 30,000 more schoolchildren playing the game through its big hit festivals as part of the legacy programme that is built around the championships.

Christina McKelvie: I thank the minister for that detail. Does she have any thoughts on the recent announcement that badminton is to be one of the five sports to lose all UK Sport funding for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo? As the minister will

know, Hamilton sports council has supported many young people to take up and become champions in sport, not least our own very successful badminton star, Kirsty Gilmour, who recently raised concerns about the UK funding cut. What support does sportscotland give to our current sports stars and possible sports stars of the future to ensure that we do not lose that talent?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Christina McKelvie for raising the issue and giving us the chance to again congratulate Kirsty Gilmour on all her achievements in her career. Sportscotland has developed a world-class sporting system at all levels that connects sport in schools and education, in clubs and in the community with performance sport. For instance, sportscotland is investing £50 million over the period 2015 to 2019 in its active schools programme, which provides opportunities for children to try sports and begin on the path towards becoming sport stars of the future. I will continue to engage with Christina McKelvie on any issues that she would like to raise on badminton, particularly given her local interest in Kirsty Gilmour's career.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I find it rather hypocritical for Christina McKelvie to raise the issue when her Government proposes to slash the sports budget by £4 million, which sportscotland has indicated to the Health and Sport Committee will have significant repercussions for the number of sports that it can support and the value of that support. How does the Scottish Government propose to mitigate the effect of its own slashing cuts?

Aileen Campbell: I do not doubt Brian Whittle's commitment to sport. I do not think that any member across the chamber can compete with his first-hand knowledge and experience of sport, no matter how much they enjoy and experience sport. However, I think that added to his gold medal should be a brass neck, given the devastating blows that his party has dealt to our poorest communities through welfare reforms and austerity. My party and this Government have to soften those blows. Alongside that, we remain absolutely committed to sport and activity and to building on the legacy of our 2014 games, empowering our communities and maximising the significant investment that we have made in improving facilities the length and breadth of the country.

Health Advice (Accessibility to People with Hearing Loss and Deafness)

6. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it takes to ensure that the health advice it produces is

accessible to people with hearing loss and deafness. (S5O-00584)

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): The patient charter clearly sets out what patients can expect when they use NHS Scotland services and receive care. That includes the right to be given the information that they need in a format or language that they can understand. Under the Equality Act 2010, NHS Scotland is required to provide translation and interpreting services and written material whenever that is possible and reasonable. All NHS boards have a published accessibility policy and arrangements in place to support such needs. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can access Scotland's national health and information service, NHS inform, by using the contactSCOTLAND-BSL service, by textphone or by web chat, which is available on the NHS inform website.

Emma Harper: Does the minister agree that taking steps such as subtitling Government videos is important to ensure that people with deafness benefit fully from health advice?

Maureen Watt: I fully agree with Emma Harper and I assure her that the Scottish Government is committed to providing health information in formats that are accessible to people with hearing loss and deafness. All Scottish Government campaign websites are tested for accessibility as standard, and subtitles are added to videos that are posted on YouTube.

In addition, all reasonable efforts are made to ensure that top level and main contact pages on the Scottish Government website comply with World Wide Web Consortium standards that cover a range of disabilities, including auditory disabilities. NHS 24 is working with partners to ensure that videos that are displayed on the new NHS inform website have language options, including British Sign Language and subtitles, as seen on the Care Information Scotland website.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): The British Deaf Association Scotland 2016 health review said that people with hearing loss found that communication was easiest in local primary care services that they were familiar with and was more difficult in secondary care settings. What plans do ministers have to improve healthcare for deaf people, specifically in secondary care settings?

Maureen Watt: As I said in my previous answer, people with impairments should be able to have access. It is a case of ensuring that, before a patient goes to receive secondary care, the letter that is sent to ask for an appointment for them makes it clear that the person has hearing loss or another impairment. Such issues are being worked on as a result of the BSL legislation that the Parliament passed.

General Practitioner Practices (Resourcing)

7. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on GP practices in the most deprived areas receiving more resources per patient than those in less deprived areas. (S5O-00585)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Tackling health inequalities is one of our primary care outcomes, as recently published in a joint memorandum with the British Medical Association. Adjusting the Scottish allocation formula, which weights general practice funding by various factors that affect workload—not least deprivation—is one way that could deliver that outcome.

We also need to look beyond the general practitioner contract to other interventions and ways of supporting general practice in areas of high deprivation. That is why the Government has committed to increasing the number of link workers who support general practice.

John Mason: The BMA is in a difficult situation, because it supports GPs in rich areas and in poor areas. I wonder whether we should put more emphasis on deep-end practices in poorer areas, because they deal with much greater health needs and multimorbidity. GPs in such practices need to spend a lot more time with individual patients.

Shona Robison: John Mason makes a fair point, but I am confident that we can get agreement with the BMA to ensure that there is solid recognition of deprivation in the allocation of resources to the practices that operate in our most deprived communities. Deprivation is one factor that increases demand on GP resources, so the Scottish allocation formula is weighted to help practices in deprived areas.

We are investing in projects such as the deep-end pioneer scheme to support GPs who work in very deprived areas. That is in addition to our investment in primary care more generally. An additional £500 million will be invested over the parliamentary session, which means that there will be a big shift in national health service front-line spending to our community and primary healthcare services.

The Scottish allocation formula has been reviewed and is under review, and we are commissioning a further review of GP pay and expenses. Alongside the renegotiation of the GP contract, that will help to address some of John Mason's concerns.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I emphasise to the cabinet secretary the concern that the current formula for GPs in deprived areas has the unintended consequence that they have less time to meet, talk and work with needy patients.

Doctors have said to me that, although link workers might be part of the process, they are concerned that the current funding approach means that, while GPs can give people drugs, they have less time to spend with people. In fact, such patients do not need tablets; they need somebody who properly understands their condition. Will the cabinet secretary make a commitment to look again at how that is taken forward? It is a genuinely bizarre situation when the doctors who are under most pressure are less well funded.

Shona Robison: Johann Lamont has raised the issue a number of times in the chamber. I reassure her that, as part of our negotiations with the BMA, the Scottish allocation formula has been reviewed. We are commissioning a further review of GP pay and expenses because we need to understand more of the detail in order to look at the contractual agreements.

In addition, there is more general work that is geared towards addressing workload issues, which will help GPs who work in deprived communities, as well as GPs overall. As that will mean that GPs will be able to spend more time with patients who have complex issues, there will be a benefit for those who work in deprived communities, given that many of their patients have complex multimorbidity issues on which more time needs to be spent.

I recently met a link worker who is attached to a GP practice in East Ayrshire. They made clear the importance of ensuring that GPs are able, through link workers, to connect patients to local services, whether those are mental health or other services. I am convinced that the link worker role will make a tremendous difference in helping to ensure that patients get to the right place.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The cabinet secretary mentioned the financial commitments to primary care, but a lack of clarity remains about where that resource will be targeted. The chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland, Dr Miles Mack, said that it presents an

“opportunity to ... lessen the effects of the inverse care law, under which those most in need of healthcare have least access to it.”

Will the cabinet secretary today give details of where those sums of money will be targeted?

Shona Robison: I reiterate that, in the next financial year, we will invest £72 million in improvements to primary care and GP services, against the backdrop of our commitment to invest an additional £500 million over the current session of Parliament. That is a huge shift in investment, which I hope that Donald Cameron welcomes.

As for where that money will be spent, we have set out our priorities, which include reducing workload, improving recruitment and retention, and building multidisciplinary teams that can work together to see and help patients, with a GP as the clinical expert who supports each team. That model has support from the BMA and, I believe, from the RCGP.

I am happy to continue to provide detail as we take the issues forward. Our work represents a big transformation in the way in which primary care is delivered, but it will very much benefit patients.

Sport (Participation)

8. Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage more participation in sporting activities. (S5O-00586)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government is committed to increasing rates of physical activity, and participation in sport is a key element of that. The active Scotland outcomes framework sets out our ambitions for a more active Scotland and is underpinned by a commitment to equality and the need to ensure that, regardless of gender, age, sexuality or income, there are opportunities and support to encourage people to be active.

Richard Lyle: I welcome the work that is being done. In 2017, we are three years on from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth games from which we sought to create a legacy. What action has the Scottish Government been taking, and what action will it continue to take, to deliver community sport hubs across Scotland to continue to build on that legacy?

Aileen Campbell: I am delighted to say that, through investment by sportscotland, there are already 157 community sport hubs up and running across Scotland, and that number will increase to 200 by 2020 to provide more and better opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get active. Sportscotland is currently focusing on seven community sport hubs across five local authorities in the 5 per cent most deprived areas, providing additional support to help to enhance the local offer, develop existing and new opportunities, grow membership and explore barriers to school and club participation.

Ninewells Hospital (Electrical Wiring)

9. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide the £90 million required to bring the electrical wiring at Ninewells hospital up to safe and modern standards. (S5O-00587)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): NHS Tayside is currently

developing a long-term investment plan for Ninewells hospital, which includes work to ensure the resilience of the electrical infrastructure of the site. The board is in the process of developing the business case for the project, which will be submitted to the NHS capital investment group for consideration in the coming weeks. A decision on the funding will be made once the business case has been reviewed.

While the plan is being developed, there is continual maintenance across the Ninewells site, and there is on-going investment in the site's infrastructure to ensure that NHS Tayside can continue to deliver a high-quality, sustainable and safe service for its patients.

Jenny Marra: The cabinet secretary will know as well as I do that NHS Tayside is running a projected deficit this year of £18 million and has millions of pounds of debt to the Government with no obvious way to repay it. In light of that and of Audit Scotland's warnings about NHS Tayside's finances, will she pledge to fully fund the £90 million bill, so that we can ensure that the electrical wiring at Ninewells hospital is safe for patients?

Shona Robison: On the issue of the NHS Tayside deficit, which has been subject to a lot of public scrutiny, not least from the committee that Jenny Marra convenes, the Scottish Government will continue to work with NHS Tayside in helping it to deliver a sustainable plan to recover its financial position.

If Jenny Marra had listened to my initial answer, she would have heard clearly that a decision on the funding will be made following the review of the business case. That is how we do things—we get a proper business case from a board, we review it and we then take it forward. It would not be appropriate to make any decision before that review is complete. That is the proper way to make investment decisions.

We recognise the importance of Ninewells having a reliable and safe electrical infrastructure, and Scottish Government officials have been working with NHS Tayside as the board develops its case. I said that that would happen in the next few weeks and I would have thought that Jenny Marra might welcome that.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Ten days ago, NHS Tayside took a decision to close the dedicated mental health unit, the Mulberry unit, at Stracathro hospital, which is the only adult psychiatric admissions ward in Angus, because only 18 whole-time junior doctors are available to NHS Tayside out of a requirement of 31. What is the Government actively doing to recruit more mental health doctors, and when will NHS Tayside

have enough resource to reopen the Mulberry unit?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): In this case, although the question is valid, it is not a supplementary to a question about electrical wiring at Ninewells. We will take question 10.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Meetings)

10. **Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when the health secretary will next meet NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. (S5O-00588)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Ministers and Scottish Government officials regularly meet representatives of all health boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Mary Fee: As the health secretary will know, a campaign group of strong and committed parents has been set up to oppose the closure of ward 15 at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley. We heard last week that a young boy from Paisley, Alex Gray, had to be diverted to Edinburgh because of the lack of beds at the new children's hospital in Glasgow. Does the health secretary think that the closure of ward 15 should go ahead, given that the new children's hospital could not take that one child, never mind the estimated 18,000 additional cases that are to be transferred from the RAH to Glasgow? Can the health secretary tell us whether she intends to visit Paisley at any point to listen to the views of local parents?

Shona Robison: It is important that we understand what the paediatric intensive care service is. It has operated as a single national service, delivered from two units in Edinburgh and Glasgow, since 2007. It has specialised facilities, with highly skilled clinical teams. It is clearly important that the beds are managed on a Scotland-wide basis and that children will get to the right place when they require a bed. That sometimes means that if there are no beds available in Glasgow, children will go to Edinburgh, or vice versa. They are very specialist beds, and they are managed on a national basis.

It is important not to conflate that issue with the matter of ward 15 at the RAH, which does not have any paediatric intensive care beds. Children could not be treated in those beds if they had that level of need. The two issues are very different.

As Mary Fee knows full well, the closure of ward 15 at the RAH was designated by the board as a major change and the proposal is currently out to formal public consultation until 6 February. I encourage all stakeholders to register their views. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this point except to say that the final

proposals will be subject to ministerial approval and I will consider carefully all the available information and representations before coming to a final decision.

Supreme Court Judgment (Article 50)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Michael Russell on the United Kingdom Supreme Court judgment on the triggering of article 50. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there will be no interventions while he is speaking.

14:40

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell): At the outset of this statement, I make it clear that the Scottish Government welcomes yesterday's ruling by the Supreme Court that article 50 cannot be triggered without an act of the Westminster Parliament. That ruling comes as a stinging rebuke to the UK Government on its stubborn refusal to accept the previous, unanimous court ruling that an act of Parliament is required before formal notification of the decision to leave the European Union. Instead, it tried to plough on regardless towards a hard Brexit, hoping to bypass parliamentary scrutiny.

Effective UK parliamentary scrutiny is now enabled, but parties and members at Westminster will have to rise to that challenge. The Scottish National Party is more than ready to do that. Once the UK Government publishes its article 50 bill, the 50 SNP MPs in the House of Commons—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry to understate the number. There are, of course, more than that—far more than the one Tory from Scotland who sits in the House of Commons. The SNP MPs in the House of Commons will lodge a range of amendments to clarify the UK Government's approach to triggering article 50. Some of those amendments will seek to amend the bill so that the UK Government must first secure unanimous agreement from the joint ministerial committee—the UK's equal partners—on the triggering of article 50.

In July last year, the Prime Minister assured the First Minister that article 50 will not be triggered

“until ... we have a UK approach and objectives for negotiations”.

That was in line with Theresa May's clear and unambiguous view of how the United Kingdom should operate. The UK, she said, should be a country

“in which Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England continue to flourish side-by-side as equal partners.”

Of course, that sentiment was expressed by all the better together partners during the 2014 referendum. Taking the Prime Minister at her word, we will seek to enforce that via the

Westminster bill when it is brought forward. I am sure that that will be welcomed with equal cheers from the Tory benches.

There was another aspect to the judgment that has made one thing crystal clear: this whole process, and the determination of the UK Government to pursue a disastrous hard Brexit, is revealing much about the way in which power is exercised in the United Kingdom and who exercises that power. Yesterday, the Supreme Court considered the arguments that were put forward in interventions by the Lord Advocate and the Counsel General for Wales on the devolution implications of triggering article 50. We are obviously disappointed with the Supreme Court's ruling on the legal enforceability of the Sewel convention, but let us be clear about what the judgment actually said. Notifying the intention to leave the EU will have significant consequences for devolved matters and the powers of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish ministers. The court explicitly accepted that. In so doing, it made it obvious that the Sewel convention is triggered by a UK bill authorising the article 50 notice. The court has ruled that the operation of the convention is a political, not a legal, matter, and is therefore outside the court's remit. That position was urged on the court by the UK Government, which also resisted any and all efforts to give real teeth to the Scotland Act 2016 provisions on the Sewel convention. The UK Government has at least been consistent in its position that under no circumstances should its action be questioned by judicial authority.

The Tories may wish to reflect on the wisdom of gloating on that point. Rather than a defeat for the Scottish Government, yesterday's ruling exposed the inadequacy of the Smith commission process—*[Interruption.]*—and the belief that writing Sewel into law would represent a new status for the Scottish Parliament.

It is a defeat for the Tory architects—that includes the Tory constitutional spokesman—of the Scotland Act 2016. The defeat goes wider than that. As one commentator—Kenny Farquharson of *The Times*, who I am sure will be surprised that I am citing his tweets—noted, yesterday's ruling

“on rights of Holyrood are a deep disappointment. There was an opportunity ... to recognise new reality of a changed UK.”

He also wrote:

“this is a depressing moment for those of us who've consistently backed home rule for Scotland within a reformed UK.”

Yesterday's ruling demonstrates how empty were the assurances that we are a partnership of equals and that the Scotland Act 2016 would represent a new UK settlement. The UK

Government merely reinforces the old view—the supremacy of Westminster and its immunity from constraint by law or courts or respect for this Parliament. We can expect to see more of that as Brexit proceeds; we already see that attitude in proposals for UK-wide regimes, overriding existing devolved competence.

Last year, the Tory Secretary of State for Scotland boasted in a speech about what he called “new realities” that the Sewel convention was “now written in law”. However, in its submission to the Supreme Court, the UK Government left that position far behind and made it clear that its law—Mundell’s law, Tomkins’s law—was not worth the paper that it was written on.

Instead of crowing on Twitter, the Conservatives, led by their constitutional spokesperson, should abjectly apologise to the people of Scotland and to those who believed that their promises in 2014 would lead to a genuine change in the status of Scotland’s Parliament and Scotland within the UK.

The reality is that, up until now, the UK Government has in practice always accepted that a change to devolved competence requires the consent of the Parliament. The UK Government’s guidance and this Parliament’s standing orders are clear that the Sewel convention applies where a bill

“contains provisions applying to Scotland and which are for devolved purposes, or which alter the legislative competence of the Parliament or the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers.”

Attempts to argue the opposite would overturn—indeed, they are in danger of overturning—nearly 20 years of accepted practice under different political Administrations both north and south of the border. That fatally undermines the protections—perhaps on Burns day I should say “the boasted advantages”—given to the Scottish Parliament and Government in the devolution settlement.

It is clear that the Sewel convention will be engaged by a bill that changes the law on devolved matters or the competence of the devolved institutions. Therefore, once the UK Government Bill is published, and in line with this Parliament’s standing orders, the Scottish Government will publish a memorandum setting out the implications for devolved matters and the powers of the Parliament and Scottish ministers. As things stand, in that memorandum we will be unable to recommend that the Parliament give its consent to a bill giving the UK Government the power to trigger article 50.

We will use next week’s joint ministerial committee meeting to continue to press for the

sensible compromise outcomes that are set out in the paper that we published in December 2016. However, it is becoming clearer by the day that Scotland’s voice is simply not being heard or listened to in the UK. The claims about Scotland being an equal partner are being exposed as empty, diversionary rhetoric by the facts.

Last week, the Prime Minister unilaterally announced, without any notification or negotiation, that she intends to take the UK out of not just the EU but the single market and, indeed, the customs union. That announcement pre-empted a meeting of the joint ministerial committee at which the possibility of the whole of the UK remaining in the single market was due to be discussed as one of the options in the Scottish Government’s Europe paper.

Indeed, the Prime Minister also made her announcement before one of the UK’s negotiating partners—the Welsh Government—had even published its proposals for the way forward. How can a unified UK approach be agreed when the Prime Minister does not even bother to wait to hear the position of one of the constituent parts of the UK before pronouncing? Now the very foundations of the devolution settlement that are supposed to protect our interests, such as the statutory embedding of the Sewel convention, are being shown to be worthless.

The Scottish Government has done all that it can to seek compromise and reach accommodation with the UK Government on the terms—*[Interruption.]* They are still not listening, Presiding Officer. The Scottish Government has done all that it can to seek compromise and reach accommodation with the UK Government on the terms of the UK leaving the EU. We have recognised that there is a mandate for England and Wales to leave the EU, but there is no such mandate in Scotland.

We were the first Administration anywhere in the UK to produce detailed and pragmatic proposals on how to respond to the challenge of Brexit. It is for the UK Government to show similar pragmatism. It is time for it to compromise, and it is time for it to listen and to respect the views of others.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the UK Government’s approach to Brexit is not just about the question of EU membership but about the kind of country that we want to live in. Do we want to have our future direction determined by an increasingly right-wing, reckless, hard-Brexit Tory party that is determined to turn its back on Europe despite the threats to jobs, prosperity, rights and freedoms, or is it better to take the future into our own hands? Is it better that we determine the kind of Scotland, the kind of Europe and the kind of world that we want to live in?

Those are the questions that all of us should start asking ourselves today. The actions of the UK Government are making those the key questions of this whole process. It is closing down the options for Scotland instead of working with us to find the right way forward for everyone.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. Members who wish to ask questions should press their request-to-speak buttons. There will be about 20 minutes for questions.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the minister for early sight of his statement. If it is to be believed, I have made more law for Scotland than the whole of this Parliament, given that it has been 10 months since Parliament last debated a bill. When the Government plays the man and not the ball, that is always a sure sign that it knows that it has lost the argument.

It was always going to be the case that the UK Parliament would be fully involved in the Brexit process. The question in yesterday's case was much narrower: do UK ministers have the legal power to trigger article 50, or is fresh legislation needed to confer that power upon them? It is a complex question of law that split the 11 justices of the Supreme Court.

Where the court was unanimous, of course, was in throwing out the entirety of the Scottish Government's argument that this Parliament has a legal right to be consulted on a matter that is plainly reserved to Westminster. The UK, not Scotland, is the member state of the European Union and it was the UK as a whole, not its nations severally, that took the decision, by referendum, to withdraw from the European Union. That matter is not devolved, and nothing in the vow, the Smith commission or the Scotland Act 2016—in any of them—has ever suggested that it should be.

The Sewel convention, to which the minister referred, provides that the Westminster Parliament will not normally legislate on devolved matters without our consent. That convention can surely have no application to a bill that does nothing more than to confer on UK ministers the legal power to give effect to June's referendum result by triggering article 50, for the simple—and, I should have thought, really rather obvious—reason that the UK's membership of the EU is not, and never has been, devolved to this Parliament.

The SNP has spent the past seven months trying and failing to stoke grievance about Brexit; now it seems that its ambition has been reduced to stoking new grievance about the Sewel convention. Last week, the Prime Minister explained how she wants “the freest possible trade” with the European Union and “the greatest possible access” to the European single market.

Instead of complaining about a court judgment that has gone against it, when will the Scottish Government get on board and help to make Brexit a success for all of us?

Michael Russell: It is regrettable that the Tory constitutional spokesperson did not address the issues that were raised either in the statement or in the judgment, so let me address them yet again.

I am sure that Professor Tomkins is perfectly capable of making bad law; however, he does not understand how bad the law that he made is. He was a key Tory adviser on the matter and on the Scotland Bill, and he was involved in the Smith commission process. The commitment was clearly given—*[Interruption.]* I know that Tory members do not like the reality of what is happening in Scotland, but they will have to face that reality. Their policy has been dictated by Westminster; it has not been made in Scotland for their constituents, whom they are letting down every shout that they give out in this chamber.

The Smith commission made an agreement and made it clear in the heads of agreement that

“The Sewel Convention will be put on a statutory footing.”

It is clear that, in the circumstances that we are now in, the Smith commission proposal is not worth the paper that it is printed on. The reality is not just that it is not effective, but that the UK Government argued against its being put on a statutory footing in the court case.

There is no doubt that, at the end of the day, that is a matter for the Presiding Officer and Parliament, but Parliament's standing orders are clear that the Sewel convention applies where a bill contains provisions “applying to Scotland” and which are for devolved purposes,

“or which alter that legislative competence of the Parliament or ... the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers”.

Paragraph 130 of yesterday's judgment confirms that the legislative competence of the Parliament will be altered. In those circumstances—*[Interruption.]* Shouting from the sidelines is an odd way to argue a legal case—it is very strange—but that is what we are hearing from Professor Tomkins. It is a fact that

“Facts are chieils that winna ding.”

Even at this very late day, I hope that the Tories will get on board with Scotland rather than trying to stay on board with Theresa May.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am grateful to Mr Russell for advance sight of his statement.

Mr Russell was right in his peroration to decry a reckless Government that is committed to turning its back on our neighbours despite, as he put it,

“the threats to jobs, prosperity, rights and freedoms”.

He will know that the people of Scotland have voted against abandoning our neighbours precisely because we understand the threats that come from isolationism and turning our backs on our closest friends and trading partners. The Scottish people do not want to turn our backs on Europe or the rest of the UK. [*Laughter.*] I am sorry that SNP members do not find that to be a serious point; it certainly is serious.

When Mr Russell talks of “closing ... down options”, is he abandoning his Government’s commitment to work together across parties and across the UK, despite the recklessness of the Tory party? Will he reject isolationism in all its forms?

In the spirit of the joint working that we saw in Wales and, indeed, in Parliament last week, and in recognition of the clear need for change, will the Scottish ministers now support Scottish Labour’s calls for a constitutional convention across the UK, and put the national interest and the public interest ahead of party interests?

Michael Russell: For the record, I reject isolationism in its entirety, but that is not what we are discussing.

To use the words of the slogans that used to be shouted on marches, I say as positively as I can to Lewis Macdonald, because I want to work with the Labour Party on the matter: what do you want and when do you want it? The reality is that people cannot sit for ever saying that they want everything out of the situation and that they are not prepared to make a decision. Unfortunately, that is where the Labour Party finds itself.

I do not wish to see any barriers to trade within these islands. I stand with the person who said:

“We want to buy your goods and services, sell you ours, trade with you as freely as possible”.

I stand, on this rare occasion, with Theresa May, because that would happen with independence and if we remained in the single market. All our proposals are predicated on working and trading with both the UK and the EU. I am sure that Lewis Macdonald has read in great detail several times the proposals in our paper. That is precisely what it says.

If the Labour Party will work with us to achieve the best solution, I will be happy to work with it, but unfortunately—I know that the Labour Party hates this—it will have to make a decision. It will have to decide whether it really wants to see Scotland as part of both the customs union and the single market, working and trading freely with the 27 EU member states, and part of the UK single market. Our paper says that that is entirely acceptable. Therefore, trying to make a difference between us

on the matter is wrong, and it is untrue that there is a difference. Please work with us and support us to get our paper implemented, rather than splitting with us on it.

The Presiding Officer: It would be good to have slightly tighter questions and answers.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): The UK Government suggested during the Smith commission process that putting the Sewel convention into statute was a huge breakthrough, but in court it argued that it did not change anything. Does the minister agree that that means that the UK Government’s claim that the Scotland Act 2016 made the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood

“the most powerful devolved Parliament in the world” was a deception?

Michael Russell: In the cause of brief answers: absolutely.

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): Is it not manifestly opportunist—having demanded week after week for months on end that the Prime Minister make clear her intentions on the single market—to protest, when she does exactly that, that it is a disgrace, on the facile basis that every last person in the UK had yet to express their view? The “stinging rebuke” yesterday by the vote of 11 to zero was to the Scottish Government. Surely the stinging rebuke that will follow will be in response to the SNP’s determination to create further uncertainty and constitutional division with its paranoid thrice-daily threats of another independence referendum, while ministers repeatedly ignore the business of Scotland for which this devolved Parliament and Government actually have a responsibility.

Michael Russell: It appears to me that the “business of Scotland” is in very safe and competent hands. [*Laughter.*] Ah! Well, it is interesting that that is what the people of Scotland believe, too, if elections and opinion polls are anything to go by. Tory self-delusion is not unknown; it continues to this day.

Can I just make it clear that the remarkable terms of Jackson Carlaw’s question need to be thought about? What he was apparently arguing for was that his constituents and this Parliament should be at the back of the queue, were it to be the case that “every last person” was consulted. I do not think that the Scottish Parliament is “every last person”. The Prime Minister said on the record that she would engage with the devolved Administrations. Engagement does not mean publishing her position and going on to say what it is 48 hours before the negotiating committee that she has set up has even had a chance to meet. That is not the right way to proceed. However, if

the attitude of the Tories to this Parliament and to Scotland is that we are “every last person”, it is little wonder that people look at them and think, “They’re not really for us.”

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The minister quoted in his statement the Prime Minister’s statement that article 50 would not be triggered

“until ... we have a UK approach and objectives for negotiations”.

In addition, the Scottish Conservatives made it very clear previously that, after the EU referendum, the overriding priority was to stay in the single market. Can the minister tell me whether the Scottish Conservatives have offered him any suggestions about keeping Scotland in the single market? Have they now abandoned that position in favour of their Westminster Tory bosses’ hard-right, hard-Brexit position, despite the obvious disastrous economic consequences?

Michael Russell: It is very obvious from the Prime Minister’s speech last week and from the actions of the UK Government that they are determined to have the hardest of Brexits. Fortunately, the position in the Scottish paper remains, after a great deal of work by the devolved Administrations, that there will be continued discussion among officials. Clearly, that paper’s first option—that the UK should remain in the single market—was knocked out of the water by the Prime Minister’s refusal to consult the joint ministerial committee. However, the other parts of that paper remain in play and are strengthened by the very good Welsh paper that was published on Monday. It is absolutely remarkable that the Prime Minister made her decision not just 48 hours before the JMC meeting but even before the Welsh paper had been published, despite the UK Government’s knowing that it was about to be published. Incidentally, it is a joint paper developed between Labour and Plaid Cymru. I have to say that it is a very good paper—and that it is all the better for being a joint paper.

Given all those circumstances, it is quite clear that the UK Government is determined to have a hard Brexit. I am equally determined, along with colleagues in the other devolved Administrations, to maintain membership of the single market. That view is held widely, if not unanimously, across the devolved Administrations, and we will continue arguing and fighting for that.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I seek assurances from the minister that he will continue to focus on arguing Scotland’s case with the UK Government, difficult though that is. Will the minister give his assurance that he will continue to use his offices and his time to influence the opportunities that arise for Scotland to have more

say on policies in the UK on immigration, fisheries and the economy, which the majority of people demand from their ministers?

Michael Russell: I continue to use my good offices and every ounce of energy that I have to try to influence the position of the UK Government on the matter. I am happy to give that assurance to Pauline McNeill because it happens to be the absolute truth. The difficulty in so doing should not be underestimated—especially the difficulty in so doing with the rhetoric that is coming from the UK Government and because of its actions.

I will continue to do my very best, but it is absolutely right that I tell this Parliament the facts of the matter, and the reality of the way in which the UK Government is responding. I am fulfilling that obligation, as well.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Like colleagues, I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement.

The Greens, like the Scottish Government, are disappointed in the outcome of the Supreme Court ruling. We were promised during the independence referendum that Scotland would be an equal partner in this union and that our voice would be listened to, yet it is clear that the Scotland Act 2016 did not live up to those promises. The permanence of this Parliament is meaningless if it can be overridden at will.

It is increasingly clear that the Scottish Government’s significant compromise proposals have been dismissed out of hand by a Westminster Government that did not even wait for equivalent proposals—[*Interruption.*] You know, Presiding Officer, if my party had led this country into the mess that it is in, I would be a little bit more sheepish in this chamber than certain members have been today.

The minister has pointed out that options are fast closing for Scotland. Can he confirm the timetable on which an independence referendum bill will be introduced? It is becoming increasingly clear that we must put Scotland’s future in Scotland’s hands.

Michael Russell: I thank the member for that. His remarks about those who are responsible for the mess that we find ourselves in are very accurate indeed. Unfortunately, being sheepish is not a Tory trait.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Arrogance.

Michael Russell: Arrogance, as my colleague says, is much more like it. [*Interruption.*] That arrogance continues with the laughter from the Tory front bench.

I cannot give the member that timetable. He will not be surprised about that, but let me put it in this way: the options that we have placed on the table are being closed down not because of any actions by the Scottish Government but by the Westminster Government, so in a sense the timetable for what goes ahead now lies with that Government. If it is prepared to operate in the way that it has promised, and if it is prepared to debate and discuss and to look seriously at where we are going, that will dictate one timetable; if it is not prepared to do so, that will dictate another.

The Presiding Officer: I ask for brief questions and brief answers, please.

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): I understand that our SNP colleagues at Westminster will table 50 amendments. What assurances has the minister had that they will avoid a race to the bottom, with the UK Government trying to attract business to the UK by offering lower taxes, lower wages, less regulation and reduced workers' rights? *[Interruption.]*

Michael Russell: The cackling laughter from some members on the Tory benches probably says it all. It is quite clear that that is entirely what it is intent on achieving.

The SNP group at Westminster, along with others I am sure, will work hard to avoid that—as this Parliament must, because the obligation to defend Scotland in those terms will lie with this Parliament. It should be willing to pick up that challenge and to work to ensure that that does not happen.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I gently suggest that he is missing the opportunity from yesterday's judgment. The Westminster Parliament can now influence the Brexit process in a way that the Conservative Government was previously hotly contesting it could. That means that we can build the case for a Brexit deal referendum, so that the British people can reject the Brexit deal that the Conservatives compile if it would be damaging to our country. The minister said that his MPs will table 50 amendments. Will he support a Liberal Democrat amendment for a Brexit deal referendum?

Michael Russell: Last time that was mentioned in the chamber, two weeks ago, a very good point was put to—I think—Tavish Scott, who was asked whether the Liberal Democrats would recognise in any such referendum a Scottish vote that opposed leaving the UK, and the answer appeared to be no. That does not appear to be very liberal or very democratic, and it is certainly not responsive to Scotland. I do not really think that the way in which

the Liberal Democrats are approaching this smacks of any seriousness at all.

I would be happy to sit down with Willie Rennie again to discuss how we take the issue forward. However, on the basis that forcing the issue would not win the support of the House of Commons as far as we can see—it would not be likely to win any support apart from that of the Liberal Democrats—it is important to try to go with the flow and to find effective actions rather than ineffective ones.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Figures published earlier today show that almost two thirds of Scotland's trade is with the rest of the UK—that is four times more important than our relationship with the rest of the EU single market. Contrary to what the minister has said today, the SNP's proposed differentiated approach would result in a trade barrier between Scotland and the rest of the UK, and the terms of that trade barrier would be negotiated in Brussels, not here. Can the minister explain how the SNP's prioritisation of the EU single market at the expense of our domestic market is in the best interests of Scotland; or does he agree with the former leader of his party, Gordon Wilson, when he said:

“Demanding a European settlement for Scotland ... is simply pointless posturing”?

Michael Russell: Well, I had anticipated that question, because it seemed the most obvious one. I have to say that it is not a very sensible question at all. The reality of the situation is that during the entire 2014 referendum campaign, and on every occasion in this chamber since then, we have made it clear that it is not a matter of either/or, and we would wish to trade with the rest of the UK as the rest of the UK wishes to trade with us. If Mr Lockhart had read the proposals—and clearly, from his question, he does not appear to have done so—he would have seen that they envisage a customs union of this island; there would be no new barriers.

Perhaps the Tories should focus more closely on the unravelling of some of the statements that they have made about what would happen in Ireland. A very serious situation is developing there, in which it is now obvious—according, for example, to a very senior EU official yesterday—that the issue of customs barriers remains.

It is perfectly possible to envisage a situation in which there is flourishing trade north and south of the border, but the question also shows a misunderstanding of what that trade is. If Mr Lockhart looks at today's figures, he will see that a substantial part of it is in electricity. In those circumstances, are we suggesting that the wires come down across the border? That is simply nonsense. It is time that the Tories grew up and

started to ask questions that mean something, as opposed to questions that mean nothing. [Applause.]

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I speak as one of the 1 million Scots who voted for Brexit for progressive reasons. [Interruption.] Like, I hope, everyone else in this chamber, I am very keen to ensure that the Brexit negotiations are handled well, with a successful outcome.

In order for that to happen, there has to be recognition and acceptance in the UK Government that although we are, at the moment, one member state, we are four nations and there are four legislatures in the UK. Therefore, if the UK Government wants a successful outcome—as regards the acceptability of the deal to the whole of the UK—it will have to take cognisance of the views of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as of England.

Has the time not now come—because the important point is about where we go from here—for the Scottish Government, along with the Welsh Government and whoever is representing Northern Ireland, to demand of the UK Government that all four nations and their legislatures should have an inside track in the negotiations? Unlike what Mr Tomkins said, many of the subjects—

The Presiding Officer: Please finish, Mr Neil.

Alex Neil: I am just finishing. Many of the subjects under discussion, such as agriculture, fishing and many others, are as devolved as they are partially reserved. Therefore, there is a deep vested interest for every nation in being on the inside track and represented in those negotiations.

Michael Russell: Presiding Officer, it was very interesting to note the cheers from the Tory benches when that question started; there were no cheers when it ended. [Interruption.] Of course my friend, Alex Neil, is absolutely right: if those negotiations were to proceed without the deep involvement of the devolved Administrations, that would be yet another failure by the UK Government, so I take the point on board. I hope that it was not only I who was listening, but that the Tories here were listening, the Tories at Westminster were listening—much more importantly, because the Tories here do not influence what is happening—and the UK Government was listening. They might do everything that they can to try to divide us in Scotland, but there is a unity of purpose about what we need to have, as Alex Neil has just expressed.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. I am afraid that time is too tight this afternoon to take any

more questions. My apologies to those members I could not call.

Draft Budget 2017-18

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-03576, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the Scottish budget.

15:15

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): In bringing this debate to the chamber, we want to encourage wider discussion in the Parliament and across the country, and to build a consensus about the kind of public services that we want in Scotland and how they are to be paid for.

We will make the case for using the powers of this Parliament to invest in public services. We will also make the case for using the resources that we have in the most effective and efficient way, to tackle the big challenges of deep-rooted poverty and deprivation that are faced in communities, through a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy for Scotland. We will make the case for more direct Government action to grow our economy and increase the resources that are available for investment.

At a time when too many of our public services are struggling to cope and some are veering towards crisis, Government should increase the tax take by asking people who can pay a bit more to do so. Alongside that, we must be more ambitious in driving our economy and increasing the tax take in the medium term by supporting more and more people into decent jobs.

As it stands, the budget does not and will not achieve those aims. Let me begin with local government. If we are to succeed in tackling poverty, closing the attainment gap, developing high-quality local services and growing the economy across Scotland, we need to do government differently. The fact is that Scotland is one of the most centralised countries in the western world, and the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 did not lead to the continued devolution of power closer to the people. Instead, politicians in Holyrood have tried to control more and more and take power and decision making away from the local level. That centralist approach has led to a much weaker relationship between local government and central Government in Scotland, and all too often to a lower quality of service being delivered.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does the member accept that the relationship between central and local government was extremely poor under the Labour-Lib Dem Administration, because of ring fencing?

Alex Rowley: It is a fact that the relationship between central and local government right now is extremely broken.

The failure to build on the relationship has resulted in a failure to bring together the key people and organisations who are needed to plan and drive our economy at local, regional and national level.

One-size-fits-all central control is not best for Scotland. We want a new approach of government of equals, accountable to and driven by local communities in a wider partnership, which recognises the role of the third sector, business and industry, trade unions, civic society and local communities in facing up to the big challenges of 21st century Scotland.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention? [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we have the member's microphone on, please?

Bruce Crawford: Sorry, Presiding Officer, it is my fault—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Crawford, did you forget to put your card in the console? Start again.

Bruce Crawford: I apologise to you and to Alex Rowley.

I think that Alex Rowley knows that I generally respect the way in which he does politics. However, does he understand that by forcing a decision on the budget at this time, Labour is undermining the role of the Finance and Constitution Committee in scrutinising the draft budget? That might not have been Labour's intention, but if the Parliament takes a decision on the budget before the committee reports, what is the point of the committee having any deliberations at all on the matter?

Alex Rowley: I take on board Bruce Crawford's point. I would hope that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution will listen to the parties in this Parliament and will be open to looking at our concerns so that we can find agreement on the best way forward. However, we will not face up to the big challenges in Scotland by cutting the budget for local public services by £327 million, as proposed by Derek Mackay in his draft budget. That cut of £327 million is confirmed by the independent Scottish Parliament information centre; the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has made a similar calculation in arguing that the finance secretary should think again.

Since 2010, 27,000 jobs have disappeared from local councils across Scotland. The £327 million cut in this year's budget will mean that more jobs

will go and will lead to even greater pressure on staff and services that are already struggling to cope. Today, Labour wants to put forward an alternative. We are asking Derek Mackay to amend his draft budget and put 1p on the basic rate of taxation in order to raise an additional amount of nearly £500 million to invest directly into local public services.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I am very grateful to the member for giving way. I think that he knows that we share a lot of intent about the need to raise revenue to invest in public services and protect them from the cuts. However, why should that be focused on the basic rate? Can the Labour Party explain why low and middle-income earners should be asked to pay more tax rather than those who can genuinely afford to pay?

Alex Rowley: I will come on to that point—I had better make progress first.

Derek Mackay's answer on taxation to date is that he will not increase tax for lower-paid workers. Let us therefore be open and honest about what our proposal would mean for people on different salaries. If someone earns below £21,000, they would not pay more. If someone is on the median salary of £28,000, they would be asked to pay just over £1 more a week—an extra £65 a year. A police sergeant on £41,000 would be asked to pay an extra £203 a year. An MSP in this place on £61,000 would pay an extra £526 a year. The First Minister, who is on a salary of £151,000, would be asked to pay an extra £1,786 a year. On Patrick Harvie's point, it would be the collective power of all those individuals paying a little bit more—according to their means—that would pay for the much-needed investment in education, in home care, and in the future of our country.

Mr Mackay has attempted to hide behind a 3 per cent increase in council tax. He seems to think that he can blame councils for any increase in the unfair Scottish National Party council tax that he himself has factored into the calculation of the funding that councils are due to receive. You could not make it up—but Derek Mackay has.

Remember what Nicola Sturgeon said before the Scottish National Party came to power in 2007. She said:

“The fact of the matter is that council tax is unfair and cannot be improved by tinkering around the edges.”

She pledged:

“We'll scrap the unfair council tax”.

Ten years later, the SNP is not going to abolish the council tax—it is tinkering around the edges and it is telling councils to put up the tax by 3 per cent. Let this Parliament be clear: the council tax was unfair in 2007 and it is just as unfair today. I believe that after 10 years of the SNP promising to

get rid of the council tax and failing to do so, it is now fair for ownership of this unfair, failed tax to be put squarely at the door of the SNP.

Derek Mackay says that he is willing to talk to other parties about alternative local taxation; we say that the starting point of any talks must now be an agreement that the SNP council tax has to go and that a timetable needs to be agreed on for its abolition. Nothing else will do.

When it comes to funding local public services, in the short term, we must agree additional new money—nothing else will do. The draft budget would have us believe that the answer is wider public service reform. As I said at the beginning of my speech, it is Government reform that we need—we must reform the way that we do government. However, we should be clear that no amount of tinkering with structures will make up for the fact that we need more investment in our local public services. Take, for example, the debate on raising educational standards. John Swinney seems oblivious to what is staring him in the face. We need more financial resources going into education to support our children's learning.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Alex Rowley: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

John Swinney can mess around with the structures till doomsday and can pour out rhetoric about empowering headteachers and patients, but the fact remains that we need more money going into classrooms to support teaching and learning.

I know that Mr Swinney visits schools. I do not know what teachers tell him but, when I visit schools and ask teachers what their priorities are, they consistently tell me that they need more classroom assistants and more support in the classroom to support teaching and learning. We need a Government that will listen a bit more, and it can start that process by listening to what teachers have to say. The money that is being promised for schools in the budget is simply not enough. Today, we call on the finance secretary to reintroduce the 50p top rate of income tax for the richest 1 per cent in our society, and to put that money into the education of our nation's young people.

In his introduction to the draft budget, Derek Mackay states:

“This budget renews the Scottish Government's commitment to public service reform, guided by the recommendations of the Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services”.

At their heart, the Christie commission's recommendations were about tackling poverty, deprivation and inequality and shifting the priority

to a more preventative approach. The Christie report said:

“A cycle of deprivation and low aspiration has been allowed to persist because preventative measures have not been prioritised.”

It went on to say:

“It is estimated that as much as 40 per cent of all spending on public services is accounted for by interventions that could have been avoided by prioritising a preventative approach.”

We cannot invest in preventative measures and bring about the transformation in the way that Government delivers public services if we continue to cut the budgets that are being cut.

The confusion at the heart of the Scottish National Party Government is summed up by its proposal to reduce access to the free bus travel that gives mobility to older people all over Scotland while, at the same time, offering a tax cut to those who are getting on aeroplanes. You really could not make that up.

Our NHS and community care is in crisis and the SNP Government wants to do nothing. It says that the situation is not as bad as that in England—that seems to be the extent of this Government’s ambition for our country. We have record levels of older people who are well enough to go home from hospital but who cannot get the care package that would enable them to do so. Labour supports community care, but we are clear that community care was never meant to be care on the cheap. None of us knows what the future holds or what support we or our families will need in the years to come. This generation has a chance to shape the future provision of care services. We have the chance to give young people a better future.

A lack of educational achievement, care services and investment for the future—is that really the price that we are all willing to pay in order to avoid a small increase in income tax? Let us have that discussion. Let us have that debate. Let us talk about the kind of society that we want, the kind of public services that we want and the kind of Scotland that we all want to live in.

I move,

That the Parliament does not support the Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2017-18 in its current form.

15:29

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): On 15 December, I presented the Scottish Government’s draft budget for 2017-18 to the Scottish Parliament. At the outset, I recognise that this is a Parliament of minorities, where compromise and finding consensus are a necessity. The Government,

short of a majority, is still formed from what is by far the largest party in the Parliament. In looking to find agreement in the on-going talks, we should all be mindful of the mandate that the electorate gave the Parliament.

This will be a historic budget. For the first time, we use the powers that were devolved through the Scotland Act 2016, set against a backdrop of demanding political and economic conditions. As we know, the discretionary budget that the Scottish Government has available to spend on day-to-day public services will decline by about 9 per cent in real terms between 2010-11 and 2019-20.

Last week’s blog from the Fraser of Allander institute set out its views on the long-term trajectory of the Scottish Government’s discretionary budget. Using the institute’s definition of the Scottish Government’s discretionary spend between 2010-11 and 2017-18, it confirmed that there will have been a real-terms cut of 3.8 per cent. That is clear evidence that, no matter which definition of the Scottish Government’s discretionary budget is used, there will have been a real-terms reduction. That is before we take into account the impact of the United Kingdom chancellor’s planned £3.5 billion of further cuts to budgets in 2019-20.

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

Will the cabinet secretary confirm that Fraser of Allander also found that, if we take as the base year 2007-08—the year that the SNP came to power—there has been no reduction in real terms in the Scottish Government’s discretionary spending over the 10 years to 2017-18?

Derek Mackay: Murdo Fraser cannot get away from the fact that the Government has faced a reduction in our discretionary spend. He repeatedly cites the use of annually managed expenditure. The Fraser of Allander institute, especially when citing Audit Scotland’s figures, has shown that AME is not real money that can be spent on goods and services. That is the kind of source that Murdo Fraser chooses to ignore—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Fraser, would you please keep your voice down when you are shouting from a sedentary position? If you must shout, could you please shout in whispers?

Derek Mackay: To be fair, Presiding Officer, Murdo Fraser is doing his day job of standing up for the Tory Government in Westminster while shouting at the Scottish Government for trying to protect public services.

Despite the challenging financial circumstances, the Scottish Government is proposing to invest significant additional resources in public services—additional resources that would be

under threat should the budget not be passed. Let me be clear that the Government proposes an additional £700 million of investment in our public services for next year.

Our tax proposals are fair and balanced, and our budget proposes record investment in the NHS, including a £304 million uplift, as well as £120 million for the pupil equity scheme to tackle the attainment gap and more than £140 million to invest in energy efficiency. The budget will target £47 million to mitigate the effect of the bedroom tax, provide about £470 million of capital funding for housing, invest in health and social care to deliver the living wage for social care staff and expand the small business bonus scheme to lift 100,000 properties out of rates altogether. It will also provide for transport and digital infrastructure expansion; support for higher and further education; the delivery of our commitment on police funding; and the beginning of the expansion of free early learning and childcare.

I know that many of those commitments are shared by other parties. While producing a budget and delivering on our programme for government, we have listened to other parties, and I will continue to listen to good ideas.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): That sounds like a list of Donald Trump's alternative facts. The reality is that the cabinet secretary is going to make £327 million of cuts. When the cabinet secretary looks at his life, his salary and the community that he represents, does he really think that he pays enough tax, when he is making the cuts that he is faced with making?

Derek Mackay: The problem for the Labour Party is that it is not proposing tax rises just for people such as me; it proposes to increase the basic rate for everyone who pays tax in this country. That is passing on austerity to the households of Scotland.

The £327 million figure is not a like-for-like comparison, as it ignores a number of funding streams to local government. That is a fact on the local government settlement.

The Opposition parties might be able to unite to provide a critique, but it seems impossible that they will be able to unite to agree credible alternatives. From left to right, there might well be a better together comeback for the budget, but there is no way that the Opposition can unite on a credible alternative. It will be down to the Government to find the necessary consensus to deliver a budget for Scotland. Through that budget, local government and local services will have increased spending power of some £240 million. It is no wonder that none of the local authorities has rejected the offer that I put to them.

The Labour Party proposes to vote with the Tories against the Scottish budget. In that budget, we propose to allocate hundreds of millions of pounds more to our public services—to the NHS, education and our local services. It is Labour that proposes to pass on austerity to the households of Scotland with its basic rate tax rise. It cares not for the impact on the households of Scotland and sees no connection between its proposed rise in the basic rate of tax and the general health of the Scottish economy.

I accept my responsibility to find agreement in the Parliament, and I hope that those in the Opposition have a sense of responsibility, too.

Alex Rowley: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Derek Mackay: I would like to make more progress.

I have held constructive discussions with Opposition parties about alternative budget proposals. I hold those talks in good faith and I plan for them to continue. As members are aware, the budget that I introduced in December was a draft budget. It marks the beginning of a process and not the end. The budget bill will be subject to the established three-stage parliamentary scrutiny process, which allows for two debates on the budget in the chamber as well as a scrutiny session with the Finance and Constitution Committee.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is in his last minute, Ms Lamont.

Derek Mackay: At any point, the Government can propose amendments. As Bruce Crawford pointed out, we have not even heard from the Finance and Constitution Committee on the Parliament's views.

I will continue to undertake the talks in good faith, but members must recognise the significance of not supporting a Scottish Government draft budget. That is not just about disagreeing on the margins; it puts all our public services at threat. It threatens crucial public spending that pays for our teachers, doctors, nurses, local government employees and emergency service workers.

I therefore call on all members to adopt a productive approach to the budget, to engage in meaningful discussions and to offer credible alternatives that reflect the mandate in the Parliament and the common ground that I am sure that we can find. We have a parliamentary process and we should respect it. Rather than play games, we should work together for the people of Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-03576.4, to leave out from “does” to end and insert:

“notes that the Budget Bill will be introduced to the Parliament on 26 January 2017 and that it will then be subject to a three-stage Parliamentary scrutiny process; accepts that government amendments to the budget reflecting the outcome of discussions with other parties can be made at any time during that scrutiny process, and agrees that constructive discussions on the 2017-18 budget are continuing between the Scottish Government and other political parties with the objective of securing Parliamentary support for it.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Murdo Fraser to speak to and move amendment S5M-03576.1. You have up to seven minutes of shouting, Mr Fraser.

15:38

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome this Labour Party debate on the Scottish Government’s budget, and I agree with the sentiments of the Labour motion, although I might have different reasons from the Labour Party for taking that view.

On the finance secretary’s final point, I look forward to meeting him tomorrow to continue our budget discussions. The meeting might be short, but we approach it in good faith.

To put the budget in context, despite all the moaning that we have heard from SNP members about Tory cuts and Westminster austerity, the finance secretary has accepted that the Scottish Government has about £501 million more to spend in real terms in next year’s budget compared with this year’s. That is a cool £0.5 billion of extra spending power, and it is against the background, as set out in the Scottish Government’s budget documentation and helpfully confirmed last week by the Fraser of Allander institute, that the Scottish Government’s total budget—its total managed expenditure—is up in real terms against the high point of 2010-11. Throughout the period of a Conservative Government at Westminster, overall resource has increased in real terms.

If we take discretionary spend—the Scottish Government’s preferred measure—the Fraser of Allander institute has confirmed that, over the 10 years since the SNP came to power, there has been no real-terms cut in discretionary spend. Debates would be helped if SNP members accepted those basic points.

Our primary concern about the draft budget relates to tax. The budget would deliver a situation in which Scotland became the most highly taxed part of the United Kingdom. There would be a differential for income tax, which would be on top of higher rates of land and buildings transaction tax for many house purchasers and the continuation of the large business supplement on

non-domestic rates being double the applicable tax elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The SNP does not want to listen to us raising those concerns, but it should at least listen to the voices of the business community. In response to the draft budget, Liz Cameron of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce said:

“Creating a differential between tax bandings north and south of the border will set a dangerous precedent.”

The Institute of Directors in Scotland said that the income tax plans would “send the wrong messages” and have a negative impact on the Scottish economy. It also said:

“a taxation disparity between Scotland and the rest of the UK is not good news for business when competing for talent. It can send the wrong messages to those we want to attract to Scotland to fill the top jobs, and create others.”

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does the member accept that businesses are attracted by a well-educated and healthy workforce and that such a workforce might come into being through slightly higher taxation?

Murdo Fraser: I remember Mr Mason, in election after election, standing on a manifesto that argued for cutting corporation tax in Scotland to 3 per cent below the rate for the rest of the UK. It seems that he and his party have completely changed their tune.

As a chartered accountant, Mr Mason will recognise the following comments from Johnston Carmichael, which warned that higher taxes in Scotland might mean that businesses move elsewhere—it said that the

“cost will be significant and may give rise to business relocating”.

Closer to home, the SNP should listen to some voices that are currently, or were previously, connected with that party. Andrew Wilson, the former SNP economy spokesman in the Parliament and the chair of the SNP’s growth commission, has argued that the SNP needs to learn from the introduction of LBTT, which he said had lost revenue after the tax charge for the purchase of larger homes was hiked.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: I would like to make some progress, if I can.

At the weekend, *The Sunday Times Scotland* reported that SNP donor Bill Samuel—a former chairman of Motherwell Football Club—said that

“he had lost faith in the SNP for doggedly pursuing income tax and stamp duty reforms that target high-earners.”

In what was described as

“a withering attack on the party he has backed for a decade, Samuel said the SNP had given ‘fresh meaning’ to mediocrity and that ... the ‘great hopes of a nation will now fatally flounder in the mud of moaning and complaint’.”

He added that LBTT reforms

“said in resounding tones that ‘Scotland is now closed for business’.”

That is on the back of another former SNP donor and enthusiastic supporter of Yes Scotland, Peter de Vink, the independent councillor in Midlothian—*[Interruption.]* SNP members were not laughing when he gave them all that money in support of the Yes Scotland campaign. Last weekend, in language about the finance secretary that was so unparliamentary and uncomplimentary that even I could not use it in the chamber, Peter de Vink announced that his support for the SNP was at an end.

The SNP might have a point if it was raising more money to spend on vital public services and could demonstrate that that was the case. However, the reality is that hundreds of thousands of householders around Scotland will see their council tax bills hiked in April—some by £500 or more—at the same time as their local services are slashed.

In my area, the SNP-run Perth and Kinross Council is considering a range of cuts to front-line services, including scrapping 24 maths and English teaching posts, reducing the opening hours of community campuses, scrapping the community warden scheme, increasing the cost of school meals from £2.10 to £2.70 a day and cutting 94 care home places. There will be many, many other examples from around the country of similar cuts being proposed by local authorities at the same time as taxes go up.

Derek Mackay: The Tory position is to reduce taxes further, so where does the member propose to make cuts to pay for those tax cuts?

Murdo Fraser: I am delighted that the finance secretary has asked me that question, because the Government should be growing the economy and the tax revenue. That was precisely the point that Liz Cameron from the Scottish Chambers of Commerce made. She said:

“growing our economy rather than increasing taxes will provide the most sustainable route towards boosting tax revenues and thus public sector spending.”

Our calculations show that, if Scotland were to match the UK average for higher-rate and additional-rate taxpayers rather than lagging behind, an additional £600 million a year would be generated for vital services without a single tax rate being raised. However, we will not get there as long as we send out the message that Scotland is the most highly taxed part of the United Kingdom.

With Labour and the Conservatives set to oppose the Scottish Government budget, it only remains to be seen which of the two remaining suitors at the court of Queen Nicola are likely to win her favour. Will it be Patsy Harvie, the man who is always there to do the SNP’s bidding, or Willing Willie, who may risk sacrificing the electoral prospects of Liberal Democrat councillors up and down the land to gain a few moments of glory as the saviour of the SNP budget? We will know soon enough. For our part, we are clear: this is not a budget that we can currently support.

I move amendment S5M-03576.1, to insert at end:

“, and considers that families and businesses in Scotland should not be taxed more than those elsewhere in the UK.”

15:45

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I will do my level best to resist returning the rather pathetic name-calling that we just heard.

I welcome the fact that we are debating the budget today. Although it seems from Bruce Crawford’s comments that some might reasonably see the debate as cutting across the Finance and Constitution Committee’s process, we have—to be fair—had a relatively short and constrained budget scrutiny process. If this debate effectively ends up being stage zero, I hope that it will not, at the very least, do any harm.

As for the Labour Party’s motion, if that is the version that we end up voting on at the end of the day, I will vote in favour of it. The motion’s basic proposition is that the draft budget requires change in order to achieve what not only the Labour Party, but several of us across the chamber, have set out: that investment in public services is needed to protect those services that even Murdo Fraser has cited as being under threat from cuts in the coming months. I support that position.

I have been a little disappointed by the apparent ruling out of any constructive ideas that have come forward in recent weeks and months. In a period of minority government, all Opposition parties have a responsibility not just to Parliament and to the country, but to our own voters to try to maximise the impact of opposition against the minority Government. We should all be trying to do that in the most constructive way possible.

Johann Lamont: Would Patrick Harvie agree that, in the interests of being constructive and recognising the process, the cabinet secretary ought not to threaten local government with taking more money off it if it does not settle now? Surely that should be part of the process of respect in the budget.

Patrick Harvie: I would agree with that, and I will come on to local government in a moment.

The Green response to the draft budget covers a wide range of concerns. It is unreasonable to be surprised that a small political party that gained six seats in the election this year on a manifesto of bold action to invest in the priorities for Scotland might be critical of what the largest party—the party in government—is doing.

We called for an anti-poverty budget, which means being open to radical ideas such as topping up child benefit and being bolder on the living wage plus to go beyond the living wage for vitally important and historically undervalued work such as care work. We need to make a long-overdue step change on energy efficiency; if the current proposal covers both residential and non-residential properties, as it appears to, it is not a significant increase and is possibly only a real-terms freeze. We need investment in GP funding, and a commitment to 70 per cent of capital spend going towards low-carbon infrastructure in areas such as active travel; we are very far from reaching that level at present.

During the election campaign, we set out clear ways of achieving that investment and taking a bold approach to the income tax powers that are now finally within this Parliament's remit. We are not just obsessed with the additional rate, which is the very top rate. An increase in that rate—not just to 50p in the pound but beyond—is justified, but the proportion of the population who pay tax at that level is relatively small, so we need to be bolder still.

We are not just obsessed with the basic rate either. I find it frustrating that so little attention is paid to the higher rate—the rate at which we MSPs, as high earners, pay a proportion of our income.

It is clear that there is a wide range of ways—concerning either the rate or the thresholds—in which the Scottish Government could raise the revenue that is necessary to protect investment in our public services, and in a way that is fair and does not increase the income tax to be paid by low and average-income earners.

Historically, there has been an extraordinary concentration of wealth among fewer and fewer people in our society. That is true in many western countries, not just in this country. If we want to begin to reverse that trend and that tendency, we must begin to take action. We have presented the Scottish Government with options, not just on income tax rates but on thresholds, too, to give it the opportunity to show that that is possible.

The impact on services, in particular on local government services, will be profound. I acknowledge that there is a range of different

interpretations of what is in the Scottish budget. I do not take everything back 10 years but, even back in the old days of the Labour-Lib Dem coalition—ever since devolution began—there has been a debate between the Government and the Opposition about how transparent the budget is. There is always a range of different interpretations of what the figures mean. It seems beyond doubt, and probably beyond debate, that there will be severe impacts on services, which our colleagues in local government will have to implement. They are already having to set or draft their budgets on the basis of the cuts that they expect to come to their un-ring-fenced resource allocations. We must find ways of reversing that, and I think that we can.

That comes at a time when the context is one not just of centralised control but of rate capping of the council tax without legislation to justify it, with the contradiction that the Scottish Government is willing to place an expectation on councils to use the most unfair tax that is available to us—the council tax—while refusing to use a more progressive tax power.

I will briefly touch on the other parties' positions. I find the logic of the Conservative amendment very odd indeed. It suggests that there is a principled reason why people or businesses in Scotland should not be taxed any higher than those in any other part of the UK. If that is a principled position, there is an equally powerful equivalent principle that people in other parts of the UK should not be taxed higher than those in Scotland, either. The Conservatives are effectively arguing against the devolution of taxation powers on principle, and I have to reject that.

The Liberal Democrat proposition includes a range of spending ideas that most of us would welcome. I do not think that any of us would die in a ditch saying that they are terrible ideas for what we might spend money on. Like Labour members, however, I find it astonishing and puzzling that the proposition for funding those measures should be focused on the basic rate, so that the revenue would come from low and middle-income earners. We do not have to do that.

There remain big differences between the Green position and the SNP position, but we are open to discussion. We will take the issues seriously and constructively, but I reinforce the point to the SNP that many of its own supporters expect and want it to do the right thing and move us in the direction of progressive taxation to fund the public services that we all rely on.

I move amendment S5M-03576.2, to insert at end:

“, and believes that changes to income tax policy must be made, both in order to raise revenue to protect public services, and to reduce income inequality in Scotland.”

15:53

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I gently return the favour to Murdo Fraser—or, as Mike Rumbles suggested, Machete Murdo. He promises to cut taxes for higher earners while cutting public services for everyone else. That is true to form, as the Conservatives are not squaring the circle and explaining how they will raise the extra money that they propose to cut from taxes.

Today's debate is a helpful precursor to the stage 1 debate next week. From today's speeches so far, it is pretty clear that there is no majority for the budget among members. My party understands that a budget will need to be agreed between the parties if it is to be passed. We have been working hard to do exactly that. We have been putting forward the credible alternative that the finance secretary has been suggesting we should propose. We have been measured, we have been reasonable, and we have been open with our budget requests.

We understand that we cannot dictate the whole of the budget; all that we are asking for is the ability to influence a fraction of it. In view of the consistently poor economic and education data that have been published in recent weeks, since the draft budget was announced, I think that we are right to put the economy first through the measures that we have been proposing. With the challenge of Brexit and the threat to our economy, I think that the case is even stronger now.

Our £400 million of measures would cost just over 1 per cent of the total Scottish Government budget, so our requests are not unreasonable. We are not demanding that the entirety of our manifesto be delivered in this first budget, either. We have set out the priorities that we believe are urgent and that the whole Parliament should unite around. As Patrick Harvie has just said, it is difficult to disagree with the proposals. We believe that the argument should be that they are for the good of our long-term economy.

I have met the finance secretary formally on three occasions and I am planning to meet him again this week. We have had numerous informal conversations as well. Because I am keen to be open, I will tell members what we have discussed. Our education system is under strain and needs investment so that our colleges and schools can train our workforce to face the challenges of Brexit and an ever more competitive global market. We want extra money to go into schools. The pupil premium that we pioneered in England has helped to close the attainment gap there, but current Scottish plans do not match that—although I believe that they should. We also want to invest in colleges to restore the part-time courses that helped women and older people to retrain. Audit

Scotland highlighted the damage that has been done to those groups. We have estimated that £160 million is required to get Scottish education back up to the best in the world after it has slipped in recent years.

Patrick Harvie: Will Willie Rennie give way?

Willie Rennie: I will make a bit more progress.

Everyone in this Parliament tells me that mental health services are a priority for everyone. Well, this budget is a chance to show that. We have set out a package of measures, from tier 1 and 2 counselling through to emergency support from the police and accident and emergency units. We need to take the total mental health budget up to £1.2 billion to pay for that.

We all know that Police Scotland has been put through the mill. The centralisation programme has not worked, despite all the assurances of the previous First Minister and the previous justice secretary that it would deliver savings. Police Scotland needs an extra £20 million over and above the SNP's plans.

We also want a better deal for ferry and air transport links to the northern isles, and I have highlighted to the Scottish Government where its policies have left a gap in funding for alcohol and drug partnerships.

Patrick Harvie: I restate the question that I put in my speech. I do not think that any of us would look unkindly at that list of goodies, but, at the moment, that is all that it is. How does Willie Rennie propose to fund it—by cutting other services or by raising taxation? What is his tax proposition that would protect low and middle-income earners?

Willie Rennie: I set out in considerable detail during the election campaign our promise of a modest increase in income tax for a big return. Patrick Harvie knows that. Because we managed to raise the tax thresholds at Westminster, those who are on low and middle incomes are more protected, which allows us to increase income tax by a modest 1p. We must get the balance right between increases in taxation and investment in public services. We believe that we have got that balance right, and we believe that making that modest increase is the right way to go.

Derek Mackay has a problem with part of his rhetoric. He started off by setting out that there has been a 9 per cent reduction in the Scottish Government's budget in the past few years, and, until 2019-20, a £3.5 billion reduction is coming, yet he claims that councils, colleges, schools, the NHS, social services and almost every part of the public sector will not get a better deal than he is offering, which is a big, generous response. He cannot have it both ways. I believe that we need to

invest in public services through a modest increase in taxation.

Every member of this Parliament has a responsibility. There is no majority, as things currently stand. We have set out what our priorities should be. If anyone in the Parliament thinks that it is just a matter of time before the Liberal Democrats agree on a budget with the SNP, they are mistaken. Everyone has a responsibility to try to reach agreement. If they do not live up to that responsibility and an election follows, those who have not lifted their shovels and made an attempt will bear the responsibility for the failure to reach an agreement.

The people of this country do not want an election. Members need to wake up and realise that we are heading down that path. My warning to everyone in the chamber today is that they have a responsibility to work with the finance secretary to reach an agreement. So far, we have worked with him; it is now up to others on the Parliament to do exactly the same.

I move amendment S5M-03576.3, to insert at end:

“, and believes that the budget requires changes to support the long-term Scottish economy through additional investment in school education and colleges, new mental health services and transport links to the northern isles, and additional investment in Police Scotland to mitigate the failure of the centralisation programme.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open speeches. The debate is oversubscribed for the time that we have left, so unless members' speeches are well under five minutes, later speeches will have to be cut quite dramatically.

16:00

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): This is a Labour Party debate, but I first want to say something about the Tories and taxation as detailed in their amendment. The Tories claim to be the party of low taxation, but that is deeply misleading. If it was up to the Tories, there would be a tax on education and Scottish students would be paying millions of pounds more in tuition fees, as they do in England; there would be a tax on ill health and sick people in Scotland would be paying for their prescriptions, including some with long-term conditions; and there would be a tax on poverty and, in many cases, disability, with vulnerable Scots paying the hated bedroom tax.

All those Tory taxes are levied on people in England but, in Scotland, we have chosen not to impose them. They are the cruellest taxes of all. They hit the just about managings—the JAMs—who Theresa May and her Tory team in this chamber pretend to care about. It is the JAMs who suffer most from the sickness tax; in England,

people who earn more than £16,000 a year pay £8.44 for each prescription item.

Also, because the SNP has found £50 million to mitigate it through discretionary housing payments, vulnerable families in Scotland do not pay the Tory bedroom tax.

Unfortunately, there are some Tory taxes that we cannot avoid because we do not have the power to adjust them, such as value added tax. Under the Tories, VAT has hit a record 20 per cent. It is one of the most regressive taxes of all. It means that, for every £5 spent, the individual pays £1, regardless of income. The Office for National Statistics has calculated that the poorest fifth of UK households lose nearly 10 per cent of their disposable income in VAT compared with 5 per cent for the richest households. Consequently, I contend that the Tories are not the party of low tax for most people; rather, they are the party of low tax for the very rich.

Turning to the Labour motion, I note that the cabinet secretary has made it clear that the Scottish Government is open to amendments to the draft budget. There is much to commend in the budget given that, as Derek Mackay said, Scotland's discretionary budget will decline significantly in real terms between 2010 and 2020. The budget protects low-income households from tax hikes, while supporting jobs and delivering increased investment in education. There will be £120 million paid direct to schools and record investment in the health service.

Neil Findlay: The member has rightly attacked the Conservative Party. Will she list all the progressive measures taken by the Scottish Government that take money from the wealthiest and give it to those who are at the bottom end of the scale?

Joan McAlpine: I have just listed many of the SNP Government's progressive policies, including the steps to mitigate the bedroom tax, having no tuition fees, and abolishing prescription charges, which the Labour Party opposed.

I was about to talk about the resources for health in the draft budget. The proposal is to pass on £304 million of resource consequentials, taking spending on health to a record £12.7 billion. That is what people voted for last May. They rejected Neil Findlay's party and voted for the SNP manifesto that committed to provide record above-inflation increases in health funding.

Perhaps it is a desperate ploy in advance of this year's council elections, but there has been a great deal of dishonesty, with Labour consistently ignoring the overall increase in funding for local services, the attainment fund for schools and health and social care integration funding, which has risen by another £107 million this year in

addition to the £250 million that was given last year. That is for local services, even if they do not fall under the local government budget lines. Not all local services are delivered by councils; some are delivered by integration joint boards, whose formation was supported by Labour, and some are delivered directly by schools, which know what is best for the children that they teach. [*Interruption.*] Excuse my cough, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have half a minute left.

Joan McAlpine: I want to finish by returning to the Tories who, as others have said, have no credibility. Today and every day, they stand up to demand lower taxes for the better-off while at the same time making numerous spending demands. Murdo Fraser said that he expected his meeting with the cabinet secretary to be very short indeed; I am not surprised by that, because he has nothing constructive to say.

16:05

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I am pleased to speak in today's debate.

The impact of the Scottish Government's draft budget on local authority budgets across the country has understandably already been a significant theme of today's debate. As Joan McAlpine has just mentioned, through her coughing, the council elections are an important part of this debate and, as we approach them, it is especially important for my constituents in Edinburgh to remember what the SNP Government tried to do with their hard-earned money through the proposed central educational attainment fund. Until just a few short weeks ago, SNP ministers were determined to take millions of pounds of council tax raised here in Edinburgh away from the city and spend it in other parts of Scotland.

Kate Forbes: Does the member welcome the news in the budget that £120 million of the Government's money will be going towards closing the attainment gap?

Miles Briggs: We have still to find out the figures and where that money is going to go in councils. We will not be clear about this until we find out how the money will be spread.

That deeply flawed policy was going to cost City of Edinburgh Council almost £9.5 million in the next financial year, with £38 million being taken away from the city over the next five years. I am sorry to say that Edinburgh SNP councillors, MPs and MSPs were mute on the issue of city residents facing having millions of pounds of their money hived off to other councils. The policy was not only centralising and anti-localist but totally at odds with

the Scottish Government's supposed support for community empowerment.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Will the member give way?

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): Will the member give way?

Miles Briggs: No. As the members will know, I am very short of time.

Of course, it was only thanks to the Scottish Conservative campaign against the proposals not only in Edinburgh but in other council areas that would have been hit and which would have had money diverted away from their school spending that the policy was rethought last year.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Miles Briggs: No. I do not have time—I have only two minutes. As the minister knows, the debate is oversubscribed.

Despite the finance secretary's U-turn on the way in which the money for the fund is to be raised and allocated, Edinburgh council tax payers still face losing out more than any other area as a result of council tax banding multiplier changes. The move means that council tax will rise for the more than 37 per cent of city households who live in band E to H homes, compared with a national average of just 26 per cent of households. Many of those council tax payers, especially those in bands E and F, are not particularly wealthy, but they find themselves in those bands because of the city's comparatively high property values. They will be hit hard, even before the Labour and SNP coalition that runs the council considers putting council tax up by an additional 3 per cent.

An issue that I want to raise and which I hope will be considered in future budgets is the capital city supplement that Edinburgh receives in recognition of its capital city status and the extra burden that that status places on the council and its services. I pay tribute to the determined and successful work that was undertaken by my friend the late Margo MacDonald, supported by city MSPs of all parties, to secure the supplement back in 2007. In future budgets we need to consider whether the supplement is sufficient, given our capital city's international status and draw, the increasing number of official functions that it has to support, the extra policing responsibilities and the need to ensure that our infrastructure can compete with other capital cities.

It is a sad economic reality that, after 10 years of this SNP Scottish Government, the only part of the Scottish economy that is growing is Edinburgh and the south-east region. It is therefore vital that the investment that is needed to sustain that and the region is made. Priority should be given to

transport projects to support jobs and growth in the region, and the additional housing that there will be across Edinburgh and the Lothians should be taken into account.

Traffic on the Edinburgh city bypass has already reached capacity levels. We need forward thinking and planning to meet future needs across the region—for example, by making the A720 a smart motorway that allows the hard shoulders to be used for running traffic at peak times to address the ever-growing congestion. I welcome the debate on that and hope that MSPs across the city will back me on it.

I agree with my colleague Murdo Fraser on the dangers to the Scottish economy if the SNP Government's high-tax instincts result in tax rates being increased further. Ministers need to listen to businesses and job creators across the city as well as hard-pressed Edinburgh council tax payers. If we are to attract more companies to invest and the high-skilled workers and entrepreneurs who are key to the future economic success and growth of Scotland, we cannot be less competitive on tax and less attractive than the other nations of the United Kingdom.

I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Murdo Fraser.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that we are very tight for time and that their colleagues might well be disadvantaged unless they cut down their speaking times.

16:11

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I recognise the thought in and the content of Mr Rowley's remarks, but it is a shame that Labour did not decide to put what he said in its motion and have the confidence to put that to a vote. In its paucity and vacuity, Labour's motion is commensurate with its puerile approach to politics. Given the opportunity to put forward and put to a vote an alternative prospectus, Labour has instead chosen to sacrifice what is left of its credibility with a craven motion that is more about its pursuit of its fanatical obsession with denigrating the Scottish Government.

After Labour's decade of denial—at a cost of 40 MPs, 25 points in the polls and 26 seats in this chamber—it has now successfully distilled its loathing of the SNP into a laconic motion. However, I applaud it on its new-found efficiency of messaging. I regret only that Labour members' colleagues in local government seem to be anything but efficient in their handling of public services and public finances.

Last year, Labour-controlled Renfrewshire Council downgraded recycling centres across the

authority, including in Johnstone and Linwood in my Renfrewshire South constituency. Despite huge local opposition, Labour pressed ahead only to reverse the decision three months later at a cost of over £280,000. [*Interruption.*] They do not like it.

If that fiasco in Renfrewshire was an isolated incident, it would be bad enough but, sadly, it is part of a bigger picture. Some £100,000 was wasted on the aborted revamp of George Square, up to £100 million was wasted in North Lanarkshire as a result of Labour's mishandling of equal pay, and let us not forget Labour's multibillion-pound toxic private finance initiative legacy. That kind of reckless approach and needless waste of taxpayers' money typifies Labour's approach to public spending.

In its proposals for raising revenue, Labour's incompetence is matched only by its incoherence.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

Tom Arthur: Out of respect for colleagues who want an opportunity to speak, I will not take interventions.

After years of calling for the council tax freeze to be lifted, Labour in South Lanarkshire has indicated that it will continue the freeze because, in its words,

"residents are struggling with their budgets",

while Labour members in the chamber demand that income tax is increased for the lowest paid in society. While Labour members call for an increase in the additional rate, even if it leads to less money for public services, their shadow chancellor has said that Labour will support Tory plans for an inflation-busting tax cut for those on the upper rate. John McDonnell admits that that is a tax giveaway for the wealthiest in society.

That is a shambolic approach to public policy. It is no wonder that people do not take the Labour Party seriously on public services and finances. It is clear from its record of incompetence in local government that it could not run a ménage, never mind a Government.

The Tories' amendment is but their latest attempt to undermine the principle of differentiation that underpins the devolution settlement. After their unconstrained ecstasy at yesterday's confirmation of the legal irrelevance of the Sewel convention, which they legislated for, they now demand that we do not use the tax powers that they argued should be devolved. Coupled with their intransigence on a differentiated solution for Scotland on Brexit, it is clear that what the Tories mean by strong opposition is what it has always meant for them: strong opposition to devolution and to the will of the Scottish people.

Regarding the specifics of the Tories' amendment, not content with using parliamentary time to ask self-serving questions while several of their members swan off to work in second and third jobs, the Tories now want to give high earners such as themselves a tax cut. That could be regarded as showing a comedic level of chutzpah, were it not for the fact that tens of thousands of people have suffered as a consequence of the Tory party's draconian and inhumane welfare reforms. To demand a tax cut for the wealthiest in society while implementing policies that are driving our most vulnerable into debt and reliance on food banks shows that the Tories—the party of the rape clause—are as heartless, callous and cynical as ever.

To add insult to injury, the Tory claim to be offering lower taxes is utterly disingenuous; the Tories' position is that, rather than involve HM Revenue and Customs, they would have pharmacists implement their prescription sickness tax and students pay their £9,000 a year education tax.

The Tories and Labour have used this debate—and will continue to do so in their motions—to engage in the politics of the playground, but I want to close—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I am afraid that you are closing right now.

Tom Arthur: —by acknowledging the amendments that were lodged by the Greens and Liberal Democrats, who have recognised that this is a Parliament of minorities and are seeking to put forward their views.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You know that time is tight. No matter how vigorous you feel on your feet, everybody gets the same whack.

16:16

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): It is correct to have this debate this afternoon, because it allows the parliamentary parties to set out their positions on the budget and it allows Mr Mackay to hear an alternative prospectus. Until now in the budget process, he has been very resistant to alternative ideas. The decision on the budget is one of the biggest decisions that Parliament makes in any year, and the debate will give Mr Mackay the chance to hear from representatives of constituencies and regions throughout Scotland what is really happening, as opposed to listening only to his civil servants.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

James Kelly: I will not, at this time.

Since Mr Mackay announced the budget in December it has been unravelling, in terms of the spin of that day set against the reality. I will concentrate on three tests for the budget: outcomes, local councils and tax. Looking at some of the outcomes on the Scottish Government's Scotland performs website, it is clear that the budget falls down on some of the budget lines. The Scottish Government tells us that its budget is set out to promote economic growth, but we have seen a 40 per cent cut in enterprise budgets since 2009. What does that do for economic growth?

Kate Forbes: Will the member give way?

James Kelly: I will not, at this time.

The Government tells us that it is in favour of fairness and widening access in education, but we have a 25 per cent cut in the educational maintenance allowance budget. We heard John Mason speak earlier about the importance of education, but what will that cut do for gaining access?

Derek Mackay: It is important that there is no scaremongering when we are discussing the budget. The educational maintenance allowance does not exist south of the border, but continues to exist in Scotland at demand-led level. I make that point because the UK Government has scrapped it. It will continue to be delivered in Scotland, so I do not think that it is fair or accurate for people who receive the allowance to be told that they will no longer receive it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but interventions will also have to be crisp as well.

James Kelly: In all those words from Derek Mackay, I did not hear anything that said that there will not be a cut of 25 per cent to the educational maintenance allowance budget. Students up and down the country will have their educational access restricted because of that decision.

On health and sport, the Government quite rightly trumpets Scotland's sporting successes, but it has cut the budget for sport. What will that do for extending working-class communities' access to sport? Despite all the hype, the budget is not delivering on the outcomes that the Government is looking for.

One of the most retrograde parts of the budget is how councils are being hammered: £327 million of cuts are being passed on to local government. We even hear some SNP councils criticising aspects of the settlement—for example, Dundee City Council in its response. The difference is that councils and council leaders up and down the country are close to their communities and they see the impact of the cuts—unlike Mr Mackay, who clearly needs to get out more.

The other issue is that the SNP is very timid on tax.

John Mason: Will the member take an intervention?

James Kelly: No. I do not have time.

Why are people on MSP salaries and above not being asked to make a contribution in order to try to mitigate the effects of the cuts? It is a fact of life that if Mr Mackay discovered a backbone and decided to use progressive taxation we would not see the job losses that are going to happen in local government, play schemes being cut or libraries being proposed for closure.

The budget is not about adding up the numbers on a spreadsheet; it is about the impact on people and communities. The fact of the matter is that, at present, the budget is not fit for purpose. It lets people and communities down. I say to Mr Mackay that it is time to think again.

16:21

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Before I begin, I point out that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution.

I am not sure that there is anything left to say after my colleague Tom Arthur's spirited speech. However, when I read Labour's motion on Monday night, it took me straight back to primary school, which might be more recent for me than for other MSPs—Ross Greer excepted. Labour's motion is like a petulant child standing there, arms crossed, face in a scowl, just saying "No!" There is no analysis, no judgment and no substance—just a big, fat "No!"

Scotland needs a budget and there needs to be scrutiny, discussions with other parties and amendments, as the Government's amendment mentions. To be fair to the Lib Dems and the Greens, at least their amendments have some substance.

Let us be clear. That big, fat "No!" in Labour's motion would be awful news for the Highlands. It would mean saying no to more than £100 million in digital infrastructure and the delivery of superfast broadband to 100 per cent of homes and businesses. It would mean saying no to more than £470 million of direct capital investment to deliver 50,000 affordable homes. It would mean saying no to £47 million to mitigate the effects of the bedroom tax, and it would mean saying no to continued dualling of the A9 and improvements to the A82. That is what is in our draft budget.

However, the Tories' amendment is even more predictable than Labour's motion. The Tories spend so much time talking about extra tax with

such misery that they scare away investment using empty rhetoric alone. Under the tax proposals in the draft budget, 99 per cent of taxpayers in Scotland will not pay a penny more. Only people who earn more than £122,900 will pay more—to the tune of £14 a year.

The marginal difference between Scotland and England was caused by the Westminster Tories taking the regressive decision to cut the thresholds, thereby giving higher-rate payers a tax break. That difference means that someone in the higher-rate band in Scotland will pay up to £314 more in 2017-18 than they would in the rest of the UK.

What the Tories blatantly and intentionally ignore is that taxpayers in Scotland, in any band, get more for their money and a much better deal than do people anywhere else in the UK. I, too, lament the difference in policy between Scotland and England, but not for the sake of the rich. It is for the sake of the 10 per cent poorest households, which the Resolution Foundation estimates will lose £400 a year by 2020-21 under Tory policies, while the richest 10 per cent are gaining £200 a year. I call on Labour and the Tories to park the premature stunts—

Neil Findlay: I wonder whether the member can tell me which households suffer most from cuts to local government, cuts to social care, cuts to the NHS and cuts to all our public services. Is it people at the top of the tree or people at the bottom?

Kate Forbes: I will happily answer that. I agree that, if there were cuts, it would be the poorest people who would pay. However, in the budget an additional £120 million is allocated to closing the attainment gap, there is an additional £111 million for councils as a result of changes to the council tax bands, there is an additional £250 million for social care, and there is an additional £107 million to deliver the living wage for social care workers. That is a budget that delivers for the poorest people in society. On that point, I will close.

16:25

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest as a councillor in South Lanarkshire Council. I am someone who will, once again, have to grapple with a reduced settlement from the SNP, and decide what to cut.

First of all, I thank Labour for bringing the debate to Parliament. Like our debate last week on the dismantling of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, this is an example of Opposition parties focusing on what matters.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

Graham Simpson: No.

Not for us the blame game of the SNP; the grievance and the grudge. The moaning minnies of the SNP would have us believe that nothing is their fault—that it is always someone else's fault. Well, after 10 years of being in Government, they cannot get away with it any more and people are seeing through it.

The funding—I am sorry. The underfunding of Scotland's public services by the SNP is a scandal and it is a choice that the SNP has made against a backdrop of increasing money from the UK Government. Health is in crisis, because the SNP has made it so.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Graham Simpson: No. Local government is on its knees, because the SNP has put it there. SNP austerity is with us. It is very real and it hurts; and SNP members—Tom Arthur, for example—who shout and bawl should be ashamed. Derek Mackay has made a conscious choice to chop council budgets.

Bruce Crawford: Will the member give way?

Graham Simpson: No—I am not giving way. There is not much time.

Derek Mackay has made a conscious choice to chop council budgets by £327 million next year—but only if Parliament lets him. We will not be voting for Derek Mackay's slash-and-burn budget: we will be voting with hard-pressed taxpayers and for public services.

Today, all parties have the chance to show us where they stand. The Conservatives have been clear that making Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK is not something that we can support. Labour has said, for different reasons, that it will not back Mr Mackay. What of the Greens and the Lib Dems? Will Willie Rennie jump into bed with Derek Mackay? We are not sure, but Mike Rumbles said yesterday that he was pretty sure that the budget will not pass next week. Will the Greens twist Mr Mackay's arm up his back? How could either party, while professing to back localism, do a deal with a party that is on a mission to destroy local government? How will they be able to look voters in the eyes in May?

The money that is being given to our local authorities by this SNP Government is declining—

Bruce Crawford: Where is that money coming from?

Graham Simpson: There is no use in shouting. Derek Mackay's smoke-and-mirrors draft budget—*[Interruption.]*

Bruce Crawford: Will the member take an intervention?

Graham Simpson: Go on, then.

Bruce Crawford: I thank Graham Simpson for the gracious way he has taken my intervention. There are so many spending proposals in the Tory plans, so will he please tell us—for the sake of everybody, and in particular for the people of Scotland—where the money will come from, given that the Tories actually intend to cut taxes?

Graham Simpson: Perhaps Mr Mackay should look to the extra half a billion pounds, in real terms, that he is getting in his budget. He could start there.

I am afraid that the money that is being given to councils is declining, and Mr Mackay's smoke-and-mirrors draft budget tries in vain to hide that. Expert after expert who has blown away the fog of figures has concluded the same. The Scottish Government has more money at its disposal than ever before. Since the SNP came to power in 2007, there has been no real-terms cut in its spending power—none.

The Fraser of Allander institute confirmed that last week, as Murdo Mackay said—I mean Murdo Fraser. *[Laughter.]* Jobs are at risk if Derek Mackay gets his way. Let us look at the reality. My council expects to have to make cuts of about £20 million next year, which means the loss of 282 full-time-equivalent jobs—the livelihoods of more than 300 people are at risk.

Those things matter. The SNP intends to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK, while local services are slashed. That is not something that we will support. Will others?

16:30

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): They say that persistence is a virtue. I will be persistent; I will also be brief.

There can be few more important things than debating the budget. Such a debate is an opportunity to reflect on our priorities as a country and lay the foundations of a growing economy and an inclusive society. We do so with more power than we have ever had. We have new powers, which come with new responsibilities. Gone are the days when we simply spent what someone else gave us; now we are responsible for raising a significant proportion of our revenue. One would hope that that would bring a new maturity to our politics, but I am not convinced that that has happened, based on the performance of some members this afternoon.

Let us start with the understanding that if the tax base contracts there are consequences. Fewer people paying tax and a lower tax yield mean less money for our public services. It is therefore self-

evident that growing the economy is a key priority. The more people in work, the more taxes get paid.

A quick glance at the Scottish Government's record on the economy should make us all very nervous about the future. Across virtually every measure, we are being outperformed by the UK. In Scotland, unemployment is increasing, employment is decreasing, economic inactivity is rising, work is precarious and growth has all but stagnated. Whatever selective statistics the Government quotes, the truth is that we are in trouble. If members need any more confirmation of that, they should look at business confidence. It is plummeting.

I would have much more respect for the Scottish Government if it was not in such denial. Recognition that there is a problem is the first step towards taking the pragmatic action that is required to turn the tide and grow the economy, which is surely an ambition that unites members of all parties and should feature in the budget.

I well remember Nicola Sturgeon going to London in advance of the general election and lecturing all the parties on being anti-austerity. It seems that she and the SNP are suffering from collective amnesia. The incredible thing is that she was prepared to do that when she had fewer powers over finance than she has now. I really do not understand why, with all that power, the SNP Government is content simply to be a conveyor belt for Tory cuts.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Jackie Baillie: I do not have time.

Devolution was about giving us the opportunity to make different choices, yet the party of independence is not using the powers that it has to protect Scotland's interests. What is the point of arguing for more powers if the Government does not even use the powers that it has?

Instead, what we get from the SNP is austerity on steroids, with £327 million of cuts to local services, on top of cuts of more than £300 million last year. That is a direct attack on education, on opportunity and on the future.

Economists tell us that, in growing the economy, one of the greatest investments that can be made is in human capital—investment in the knowledge and skills of our young people. Businesses continue to report skills shortages, yet we cut the very budgets that are designed to make a difference.

That takes me to the enterprise agencies. At a time when the importance of growing the economy is clear in the face of Brexit, what does the SNP do? It cuts the budget of the very agencies that are responsible for supporting business growth.

Kate Forbes: Will the member give way?

Jackie Baillie: Sit down.

Scottish Enterprise has had a staggering real-terms cut of 48 per cent, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise has had a cut of 18 per cent since 2009-10. Does the SNP honestly think that a 48 per cent cut to its main economic development agency will have no impact?

It is so completely wrong-headed, it is frankly breathtaking. Economics 101—if we want a bigger tax base, we need to grow the economy; we need more people in work. What does the SNP not get about that? In contrast, Labour's proposal is to use the powers of this Parliament to invest in our young people and to invest in growing the economy.

The SNP promised to protect Scotland's interests from austerity. It is increasingly clear that the hallmark of the SNP is to promise one thing but to do exactly the opposite. That is not just disappointing; the SNP stands charged with gross negligence of the Scottish economy and the evidence is there for all to see in its budget.

16:35

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): As has been explained and as was intended when the Parliament was set up again in 1999, no one party has an overall majority. Therefore, no one party can get entirely its own way and every party has to compromise a bit. I think that that is a healthy state of affairs.

There are many options for improving the budget. That has happened every year, even when the SNP has had an overall majority. I am sure that the cabinet secretary has a little bit of money kept aside that he can use for the priorities of other parties—*[Interruption.]*

Neil Findlay: A slush fund?

John Mason: It is probably worth reminding ourselves—

Patrick Harvie *rose*—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Is somebody intervening?

Patrick Harvie: Yes—I am doing my best to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sorry—I did not see you. I was distracted by the comments.

Patrick Harvie: Does the member not acknowledge that if he regards negotiation on this matter as a question of keeping aside a little pot of money, that absolutely fails to open up the possibility that we improve tax policy in Scotland and achieve a fairer, more redistributive economy

through the opportunity that faces Derek Mackay at the moment?

John Mason: Yes, I basically agree with that. The member may have intervened a little bit too soon, as I will develop my argument. There are two options—to stay within the present revenue or to raise more revenue. However, let us remember some of the things that are in the SNP budget: there is a record £12.7 billion for the health budget; £120 million is being targeted at closing the education attainment gap; there are still no fees for university students; we are heading towards 30,000 new modern apprentices each year; we are on target for 50,000 affordable homes by 2021; and we will complete the Forth replacement crossing, the M8/M73/M74 motorway improvement project and the rail electrification between Glasgow and Edinburgh—the list could go on.

On the taxation side, let us not forget that many small businesses are not paying business rates at all; our land and buildings transactions tax is more principles based and more progressive than stamp duty was; many small businesses are not paying business rates at all; and our income tax is diverging from the UK in a fairer direction.

Clearly there is a challenge around whether we can raise more tax and therefore free up more revenue for other forms of expenditure. The Conservatives keep repeating their mantra that they do not want Scotland to be taxed more than the UK—they seem scared to be different from their neighbours. However, if we want the best health service in the UK, the best education in the UK, and the best social rented housing in the UK, what is so wrong with paying more tax than the rest of the UK?

A well-educated, well-housed and healthy workforce will be more important factors in attracting businesses to Scotland than whether the income tax rate is a few pence different. My feeling is that there could be room to raise tax a bit. However, there are certain parameters that we should take heed of. At the Finance Committee in the previous session, of which I was a member, we heard evidence that a 1p or 2p difference between Scotland and England would probably not lead to many people moving residence but a 5p difference—which I think that Labour was proposing at the top end—would be much more of a risk and tax take could be seriously damaged.

We should oppose tax rises for those on the lowest incomes. They already face a marginal rate of 20 per cent tax and 12 per cent national insurance, meaning 32 per cent in total for those on an income of £11,000. That was certainly the previous Labour plan—I am not entirely clear whether it is still the Labour plan to increase tax for people on £11,000.

When it comes to expenditure, it is easy to have a wish list but we still have to have a balanced budget, so more expenditure in one area means either increased taxation or less expenditure on something else.

Johann Lamont: Will the member take an intervention?

John Mason: I am sorry—I have taken an intervention already.

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

John Mason: Let us look at the Opposition motion and amendments. Labour's motion does not really say anything at all, apart from saying that the draft budget is unacceptable—I assume that that is to get the Tories on board, but it might have been more honest if it had set out what the party believes. The most honest amendment is that of the Greens who go straight in with a commitment to raise tax. The Conservatives' amendment appears to be honest, saying that they want to cut tax, but the hypocrisy comes when Conservative speakers tell us that they want to raise expenditure, as Brian Whittle did in relation to sport and Graham Simpson did in relation to local government. Sadly, the Liberal Democrats are the most predictable, with a wish list of five areas. I think that they have costed their proposals at £400 million, but they have given no explanation of where that money is to come from.

There is room to improve the budget process, but I do not have time to go there today.

I certainly can support the budget in its current form, but let us see whether we can all improve it together.

16:40

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I declare an interest as a councillor in the City of Edinburgh Council.

I welcome this debate, which has been secured by the Labour Party. It is helpful for us to be able to air our views at this early stage.

I have been a councillor in Edinburgh for more than 10 years. Over that time, I have seen the national Government cut local authority money year after year, which means that front-line services have been cut. That has happened again this year, with the local authority in Edinburgh due to get less money. Not only are we getting less money, but we are asking the people of Edinburgh to pay more of their money. Under the SNP Government's proposals, council tax charges will increase by 7.5 per cent at band E and by 22.5 per cent at band H. That means that somebody who lives in a band H house will pay over £500 more a

year. People in those houses are often elderly people and others who simply cannot afford to pay that money.

It gets worse. If, as the Labour-SNP administration in Edinburgh proposes, council tax rises by 3 per cent, there will be a 26.2 per cent increase at band H, which will bring the annual increase to more than £600. It does not stop there, because the people of Edinburgh will have a 1.6 per cent increase in household water and sewerage charges.

Derek Mackay: Will the member give way?

Jeremy Balfour: Not at the moment, sorry.

It does not stop even there, because the Labour-SNP administration in Edinburgh is demanding that a tourist tax be placed on every tourist bed in Edinburgh. Not only are we going to tax the people of Edinburgh more, but visitors who come to our city will have to pay more tax, too. That is simply unacceptable. VisitScotland says that such a tourist tax would damage and hinder one of Scotland's best-performing industries. I ask the minister to confirm, in his concluding speech, that he will say no to any form of levy or tax on tourist beds.

People could surely be forgiven for thinking that they will get better services in the city as a result of those rises. However, we see that that is not the case. Services in Edinburgh will be cut as a result of decisions that are being made by the SNP Government. Local people will face worse services in education, social security and other areas. We simply have to say that that has to come to an end. Why? Because families, elderly people, the infirm and the disabled will be affected if the budget is passed in its current form.

I argue that this budget is unacceptable as it stands today. The Conservative Party will vote against it. I hope that members of every party in this chamber will have the courage to vote down this budget and say to the SNP Government that it should protect local services and stop taxing the most vulnerable in our society.

16:43

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am disappointed by the Labour Party's lodging of a motion that rejects the draft budget in its entirety. Just last May, the electorate delivered a resounding verdict on the manifestos of each of the parties that are represented in this chamber, and I am sure that no one here needs reminding that the SNP won a historic third term at that election, winning more seats than Labour and the Tories combined.

Before detailing exactly what the Labour Party is refusing to support, I want to address the

Conservatives' amendment and their oft-repeated claim that we are the highest-taxed part of the UK. Like many of their claims, it does not stand up to scrutiny. After a nine-year freeze on council tax, we pay on average substantially less of that tax than do folks south of the border. As others have mentioned, if we look at indirect taxation such as the prescription levy, we see that we pay nothing, while folks south of the border pay £8.40 per item.

Johann Lamont: I agree that there are universal benefits available in Scotland that are not available in the rest of the United Kingdom. Does that not logically lead us to think that we should have a progressive taxation system to fund such welcome initiatives? Otherwise, what happens is that budgets for vulnerable people are cut in order to sustain budgets for the things you mention. Progressive taxation and universalism usually go together.

Maree Todd: We support universalism. For Scottish taxpayers, this budget upholds the much-valued commitment to free education, free personal care and free healthcare at the point of need.

Let us look at some of the specifics that the Labour Party is refusing to support. The Labour Party does not support increased investment in mental health. As someone who worked in mental health for 20 years and who is well aware that mental health care is often the poor relation of general medical services, I, for one, am very pleased to see that mental health is a focus of this budget. Investment in mental health will exceed £1 billion for the first time [*Interruption.*]—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask that members let me hear the speaker. I cannot hear her.

Maree Todd: It is set to exceed £5 billion over the course of this parliamentary session. The investment of an additional £150 million in mental health provision over the next five years will help to reduce inequalities in the access and support experienced by those with mental illness.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Maree Todd: No—I am sorry, but I do not have time. I have taken one already.

I agree with the sentiment that was expressed by Alex Rowley and that I, too, have heard expressed: continually comparing ourselves with the English NHS is aiming somewhat low. However, when criticism of this Government's management of the NHS is made in this Parliament, we must ask the electorate to look at how the NHS is managed in the countries where other parties are in charge.

The Labour Party, apparently, does not support community health. An additional £500 million is being invested in primary care each year until the end of this parliamentary session. That commitment will mean that by 2021-22, for the first time, more than half of NHS front-line spending will be in our community health service. Primary and community care is where most health care interactions begin and end. That investment means that as many people as possible will receive care at home or in a homely setting. It undeniably meets the priorities of the Christie commission by taking a preventative approach.

The Labour Party apparently does not support economic growth. This budget delivers investment in new and existing infrastructure projects that focus on the key drivers of economic growth. As a representative of the Highlands and Islands, I know that families and businesses in my region will welcome the investment in mobile and digital infrastructure. I know that the dualling of the A9 has been universally welcomed in my region, and in the far north we were delighted to hear a mention of the Berriedale braes in the draft budget.

Of course we want more money and faster delivery, but we know well that successive Governments in both Parliaments have failed to invest in Highland infrastructure and, at last, with an SNP Government, we see some investment.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the budget's commitment to protecting the environment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It has to be very brief. You must finish at exactly five minutes.

Maree Todd: I will finish, then, by reiterating what the Government amendment states. There is much to support in this draft budget. Let us get to work and find consensus.

16:49

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Based on that speech, when the SNP was voting against budgets when the Labour Party was in government, it was opposed to doubling spending on our national health service. I think that the member should get an education on how Parliament works. Perhaps Mr Mackay can provide that education to the member.

The SNP is a political party that campaigned against austerity in the referendum, that campaigned against austerity in the UK general election and that campaigned against austerity in the Scottish Parliament election. Now, when it comes to setting its budget, it is accelerating austerity for local government across the country.

We have had 10 years of cuts and of letting down local democracy. The SNP demands that

powers come to the Parliament but, when it gets those powers, it does not want to use them. Derek Mackay said at the Finance and Constitution Committee that he would consider raising income tax if that happened in other parts of the UK. It seems that he is a unionist when it comes to tax policy, or perhaps I should say that he is a unionist when it comes to Tory tax policy. The reality is that, under John Swinney and now under Derek Mackay, we have had a decade of cuts to Glasgow and across Scotland.

Since the SNP came into Government, there has been a £324 million cut from Glasgow's budget, which represents 17.5 per cent, and there will be £150 million of cuts in the next two years. It is a party that takes a Tory cut, trebles it and gives it to Glasgow and local government across the country. It is amazing that we had a Glasgow MSP speaking in the chamber and not once uttering opposition to cuts in the city that they are supposed to represent. Glasgow MSPs, from Mr Mason all the way to the First Minister herself, are passing on cuts to the city that they are supposed to represent. The SNP's Glasgow members are supposed to come here and stand up for Glasgow but, instead, they stand up for the SNP. They are meant to be Glasgow's voice in the Parliament, not the SNP's voice in the city, and they should reflect on that when they vote on the budget.

Derek Mackay: Anas Sarwar spoke about the arithmetic and the process in the Parliament. Does he not understand that, if members vote against the budget, they will be voting against £700 million-worth of extra resources going to Scottish public services?

Anas Sarwar: Why did Mr Mackay vote against Labour budgets in the Parliament in the past? He needs to understand that we have to prosecute a case against a budget that will pass on £327 million of cuts to local government. I know that, in the SNP's eyes, democracy means that you do what you're told. I am sorry, but it is not the job of Opposition parties to come here and do what Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP say. The job of the Labour Party, and indeed of every political party in the Parliament, is to stand up for the communities that they represent and to try to deliver fairness for people across Scotland, including in Glasgow.

Ms Forbes said that we are saying "a big, fat no". We are saying no to austerity, to cuts to local government, to cutting off opportunity, to persistent deprivation and to letting people rot in our communities. We are saying no to cuts the length and breadth of our country to social care, education and the NHS. I listened with interest to Maree Todd talk about extra investment in mental health. The reality is that, under this Government, there are cuts to mental health budgets in integration joint boards right across the country. I

see Maree Todd shaking her head. She should instead speak to her colleagues in the Parliament.

In the Parliament, we hear a lot about powers, mandates, standing up for Scotland and looking out for those who are struggling the most in our communities. We have an opportunity to use the powers that we have been given by the people of Scotland to transform our communities and the lives of the people we represent. Let us not waste this opportunity with a political gimmick and by having a game and a fight about something else; let us instead use the powers of the Parliament to reverse cuts, invest in opportunity and people's talent and make Scotland a shining beacon right across the United Kingdom.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr McKee, you are the last speaker in the open debate. I can give you only two minutes, so use them wisely.

16:54

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Where to start? I will do a minute each on Labour and the Tories. Frankly, the motion is a bit of an embarrassment, because Labour has not taken the time to write down what it wants to say; instead, the motion basically rejects the whole budget. Labour may as well have lodged a motion saying, "SNP bad."

It is the absence from the motion of any proposals—constructive or otherwise—that demonstrates why Labour is unfit to govern or to oppose. That shows why the people of Scotland have continued to reject the Labour Party at the ballot box.

Johann Lamont: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please sit down, Ms Lamont. Mr McKee only has two minutes.

Ivan McKee: It is important to remember that the budget is based on the SNP manifesto on which we were elected last year, when Scottish Labour did so terribly badly. By rejecting the budget, Labour is rejecting an extra £500 million for the health service, which is £500 million more—above inflation—than the health service would have received based on the commitments in Labour's manifesto for last year's election.

Labour is also rejecting the changes to the higher tax threshold, which will be different to what the UK Government is doing. We are not putting forward inflation-busting increases on the 40 per cent rate, which UK Labour's John McDonnell supported down south. Labour needs to improve its line on that.

As far as the Tories are concerned, the whole premise of their motion is based on an inaccurate assertion that Scotland is the highest-taxed part of the UK. That is not the case when it comes to council tax, which is significantly lower in Scotland than down south, or when it comes to business rates for the 100,000 small businesses that do not have to pay the small business bonus. That is also not the case when it comes to our commitment to have a lower starting threshold for basic rate taxpayers in Scotland compared with taxpayers in the rest of the UK.

16:56

Willie Rennie: We have had a serious attempt at building consensus this afternoon: Tom Arthur accused the Labour Party of not being able to run a ménage, James Kelly asked the finance secretary to grow a backbone, and Graham Simpson said that SNP members are moaning minnies. That is a serious attempt to build consensus across the Parliament and we should respect the serious effort that everybody has made.

We need to get real: this Parliament needs to reach an agreement on the budget and, given this afternoon's debate, we will not reach that agreement. Where is the serious attempt to come to an agreement? There has been no such attempt, just insults flying back and forward.

John Mason made an attempt, before spoiling it by saying that there was a bit of pocket money that could be handed out to the minor parties to try to reach an agreement. We need far more than that to have a radical change in the budget. He listed what was, in his mind, a huge list of successes, but failed to mention some significant problems. Those problems include the 150,000 places that have been cut from colleges; the slipping of the international standing of our schools, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; the 500,000 teacher sick days that are due to mental health problems; the 8,500 NHS staff who are going off sick because of mental health issues; police morale being very low; problems with the control rooms; and the backfilling of civilian jobs by experienced police officers. There are serious problems in our public services and our party has made a serious attempt to come up with some answers.

Jackie Baillie's speech was excellent. I wholeheartedly agree with her that our budget, especially in the current context, should be focused on getting the economy back on track, because the economy in Scotland is in trouble. She rightly pointed out that unemployment is up, employment is down and growth is really struggling. We have Brexit coming down the track

and we have serious skills shortages. She also noted that economists say that the best investment that we can make is in our people. I happen to believe that the best investment that we can make is in our children at the very earliest age—with nursery education—but she is right that investing in skills and people should be at the heart of the budget in order to grow the economy. The Tories say that the only way to grow the economy is to slash and burn—to cut taxes. They say that that is the only answer, and I reject that approach.

Murdo Fraser: Does Mr Rennie agree that one of the key things that could be done to grow our economy is for the Scottish Government to rule out a destructive second independence referendum?

Willie Rennie: Murdo Fraser reached for consensus—he did very well there, and I can agree with him. I thought that he was going to say something else on which I would disagree, but I agree with him absolutely on that.

Jackie Baillie was right in her focus. She was also right to say that Nicola Sturgeon paraded herself in London and argued that her party was the anti-austerity party but then failed to use the powers that have been devolved to her own Parliament.

Our offer is a reasonable one, and it is costed. We said that we would put income tax up by a modest 1p, which would raise £500 million, and in our letter to Derek Mackay, we came down from that figure. We are not expecting to get all our manifesto into the first budget, although we want it to be delivered over this session of Parliament, of course—

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: I will not give way just now.

We are prepared to be reasonable, which is why we have limited our requests to Derek Mackay for the first budget. We have said that there should be an increase in college funding to bring it back to its peak of £93 million. We have said that the pupil premium needs at least to match what we are doing in England, where the policy has proven to be successful in closing the inequality gap, and that the police should get an extra £20 million. We have said that we must deal with inequality in relation to transport for the northern isles; the road equivalent tariff system does not apply there, so we need measures on ferries as well as on flights. We have said that there must be some attempt to deal with the problems in the alcohol and drug partnerships.

We believe that all those things are at the heart of getting our economy back on track. We need to invest in people—for example, by dealing with the

mental health problems that it is clear exist among staff in our public services, given that so many of them are going off sick. Investing in our people is the best way to get our economy back on track.

I make a plea. I do not want to make cataclysmic predictions, but I think that we are heading towards another election—if the debate next week is the same as today's debate, we will not reach an agreement. We have to make some compromises, and Labour and the Conservatives must come to the table with serious proposals. So far, I have not seen any such proposals.

We have made a big effort to come forward and talk to Derek Mackay, and I will meet him later today to follow up on our discussions. Those discussions might not be successful—the gap between what we want and what Derek Mackay wants is huge just now, and we will need to work to close it—but others need to step up and make a serious effort to try to get the budget agreed, or we will be heading towards an election.

17:02

Patrick Harvie: I agree with Willie Rennie that the debate has been mixed at best. Yes, Opposition parties in a period of minority government need to come forward with positive and constructive ideas, but the minority Government must demonstrate a willingness to compromise and give ground. We have not yet heard anything specific from the Government in that respect.

Mr Mackay said that it is a historic budget, and he is absolutely right. For the first time, we are setting income tax policy for Scotland in a budget in this Parliament. We must, therefore, take the historic action on progressive taxation that such an opportunity affords us—the action for which many of us, including many SNP members, activists and politicians, have historically argued.

During the Finance and Constitution Committee's budget scrutiny, I asked the finance secretary about his commitment to progressivity as a core element of the Scottish Government's tax policies. I asked him whether he believes that the current income tax rates and thresholds are progressive enough at present, but I did not get a clear answer to that question of principle. If the Scottish Government is presenting what is pretty much a status quo tax policy in relation to the rates and thresholds that apply this year, that implies that it believes that income tax is progressive enough at present and does not need to change. I do not think that that should be accepted.

The purpose of tax policy is an unstated aspect of the debate. Part of the purpose is, of course, to raise the revenue that we need to invest in public

services. As was mentioned by members from pretty much every political party in the chamber, the impact on services will be significant. Even if the Conservatives believe that economic policies can be used to expand the tax base—I point out that closing down the loopholes that have allowed corporate profits to be taken out of the tax base is one way that we could do that—councils are setting their budgets now with the resources that we will provide them with in the coming weeks through the budget. We need to be realistic about the practical and immediate consequences of the choices that we make.

There is another purpose of tax policy: to provide fairness in the distribution of wealth in our society. We need proactively to reverse the unfair distribution and centralisation of wealth and its concentration in ever fewer hands over recent years and decades.

Let me restate some Green proposals for income tax from last year's Scottish Parliament election campaign. There should be a significant increase in the additional rate, but with an increase in the higher rate as well. We should break the basic rate into two, so that we reduce income tax for everybody earning below the average full-time salary. By doing that, we can redistribute wealth in a fairer way.

That is not the only way to achieve that. I have heard others talk about introducing a 30p band, and I suspect that that argument will grow over the coming year, but we need to take action this year if we are to begin to reverse the trend of recent years. There is a long way to go to rectify the long history of unjust, unfair economic policy that is designed around the false notion that there are a small number of people in our society who should be described as "wealth creators". In reality, all of us are involved in the creation of wealth, whether that is because we are wealthy investors or businesspeople, work for a wage, care for or educate the next generation or volunteer in our community. All of us are wealth creators, and we deserve to be remunerated fairly. That means reversing that concentration of wealth.

I am disappointed by the fixation on increasing the personal allowance. I hear that proposal from the Conservative Party and from the Liberal Democrats. I regret that, despite hearing SNP members share my objection to that in the past, it still seems to be SNP policy, too. Increasing the personal allowance gives no benefit to those on the lowest incomes, because they are already below the personal allowance level. Most of the benefit of increases to the personal allowance goes to households on higher-than-average incomes. That is not a progressive way to redistribute wealth in our society.

Derek Mackay said that the debate should not be a matter of playing games. I agree completely. We have seen in the past that brinkmanship is the wrong way to have such debates. I and my colleagues will approach the matter with seriousness, but that also applies to the Government. I have no interest in theatrics for the sake of it in tonight's vote. I will abstain on the Government's amendment—and I expect that it may be agreed to on that basis—but we will vote against the amended motion unless it includes the Green amendment.

The discussions that are mentioned in the Government's amendment can be constructive. They have certainly been friendly and professional, and I appreciate the opportunity to have them, but it is too soon to judge whether they have been constructive, because they have led to no substantive outcome yet.

To be clear, as well as voting against the amended motion if it does not include the Green amendment, we will also find ourselves taking the same position on the budget itself if it does not include meaningful change on taxation to fund local services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry to cut members' time in such an important debate, but we have to move on.

17:08

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The motion that is before Parliament is succinct and clear, and our amendment is just as apt. In my closing remarks for the Conservatives, I do not intend to cover the same ground as Murdo Fraser except to restate that given that the Scottish Government budget is increasing thanks to decisions that have been taken at Westminster, it flies in the face of all logic and fairness for Derek Mackay to continue to insist that Scotland will become the most taxed part of the UK.

Before the Christmas break we heard the Scottish Government's draft budget from Derek Mackay. It is clear that, at present, that budget has the support of the governing party alone—nobody else. That is for a very simple reason: it is because there are so many problems with it that the Government has chosen not to address.

I will concentrate on two areas that are of particular interest—health and sport. I will start with health. When Derek Mackay launched the draft budget, I asked him a simple question: I asked how much of the £72 million that was stated to be an improvement fund for primary care and general practice services would go directly in support of Scotland's general practitioners. I hoped that it was a fair question. However, the cabinet secretary not only chose not answer the

question but decided to ignore the concerns of Scotland's general practitioners. He suggested that I was asking for an increase in funding when, in fact, I was asking only for the detail of one of his commitments. Other complaints that funding has been cut were—and still are being—characterised as calls for increases in spending.

This Government has form on failing to tackle the big issues in health; I will go through them. Let us start with the damning report from Audit Scotland last year. Back in November, when we debated that report, I told Parliament that the report was critical of the fact that the Government has made little progress in shifting funding from hospitals to primary care despite the fact that, for over 10 years, almost every Audit Scotland report has called for that funding shift. We know that that shift is happening, but it is moving far too slowly and Audit Scotland has been routinely critical of it.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Donald Cameron: I do not have time.

It has taken almost 10 years for the Government to address that recommendation by Audit Scotland, and the fact that the Government envisages that half of front-line NHS spending will be incurred by primary services by 2021 means that it will have taken almost 15 years, from when Audit Scotland first raised the matter, to get to that point.

Derek Mackay's budget also announced £13.2 billion of allocated spending to health and sport, and he took great pleasure in announcing the real-terms and cash-terms increase. The SNP regularly likes to tell us that it is protecting the health budget in Scotland and increasing it in real terms. However, it also likes to tell us regularly about—and regularly to take pot shots at—the health service in the rest of the UK. For instance, how often do we hear SNP members compare the performance of the NHS in Scotland with the performance of the NHS in England, often gloating that the NHS here performs better? For once, let us indulge them with a direct comparison. During the last session of Parliament, health spending in Scotland increased by 3.4 per cent in real terms and by 9.7 per cent in cash terms, whereas health spending in England increased by 9 per cent in real terms and by 15.6 per cent in cash terms. That is more than double the investment in SNP-run Scotland.

Maree Todd: Will the member take an intervention?

Donald Cameron: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

If members of the Government party do not like to hear that, they should not take my word for it,

but should listen to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which has said that

“the Scottish government has chosen to protect the NHS in Scotland slightly less than it has been protected in England.”

The same can be said for general practice. Over the course of the last session, spending on general practice in Scotland increased by 1.4 per cent in real terms, whereas spending in England rose by 4.6 per cent in real terms. That is more than three times the spending commitment on general practice that was made by the SNP Government.

Let me turn to sport, which is an area that is often overlooked in the debate. The amount that is invested in the sports budget in the current draft budget has fallen from £45.6 million to £41.8 million—a fall of 8.3 per cent in real terms. Only last night, many members from across the chamber spoke in my members' business debate about the need for action to tackle Scotland's growing obesity crisis and the necessity of getting people more physically active. It is my fear that wielding the axe on the sports budget will hamper our efforts to get Scotland fit and healthy, rather than improve our current position.

In the Health and Sport Committee yesterday, I asked officials from sportscotland about the implications that the budget proposal would have for them. The chair of sportscotland said:

“It has quite serious implications at that level in terms what we are trying to do”.

He referred to the reduction in lottery funding as “a double whammy” and said that

“If the strategy moving forward is about getting Scotland to be a healthy nation and to become active, the last thing you should be doing is cutting the sports budget”.

The chief executive of sportscotland added:

“You can't just take lumps out of the system and hope that it will continue to deliver in engagement and participation terms but also success with medals”.

That is the reality of the draft budget—a far cry from the dry figures and statistics in the budget document. Let us remember the effects of the draft budget on everyday Scottish life—the child who will not be able to participate in a local sports team being just one example.

In the brief time that I have left, I will make some comments about other members' speeches. It has been quite a confusing afternoon. I know that the budget process involves flirtations with other parties, but we have had John Mason sounding as though he would prefer to be in Labour and Jackie Baillie sounding as though she might prefer to be a Tory. To cap it all, there was reference to a new mythical political figure called Murdo Mackay. I cannot wait to meet him. However, Jackie Baillie

made a serious point when she spoke about the importance of growing the economy. If we want a bigger tax base, we must grow the economy. Andrew Wilson gets that, but no one else in the SNP does.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have to stop right there. Thank you very much.

17:14

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): It falls to me to close the debate for the Scottish Government. I will respond to some members' comments and I will focus on two issues that are central to the debate: the need for stability in our economy and wider society, and our partnership with local government.

I would like to say that today's debate has provided a welcome opportunity to discuss the Government's positive vision for Scotland and the benefits of our tax and spending proposals for 2017-18, but I do not know whether I welcome all the debate, given some of the rammies that have gone on—although there have been fairly constructive contributions, too.

I will concentrate on some of our positive vision, because our proposals include record funding for our NHS, additional investment in educational attainment and childcare, and real-terms protection for our police budget.

We are proposing a proportionate approach to income tax, building on the principles-based approach that we have taken to other devolved taxes and, of course, to a competitive business rates regime.

The budget contains key measures to support our economy and investment in infrastructure, including funding to progress our commitment to deliver 50,000 affordable homes, improve energy efficiency, enhance our digital infrastructure and take forward key transport projects across Scotland.

Our plans maintain our commitment to equality, to inclusion and to support for people on the lowest incomes, including through the Scottish living wage.

The draft budget provides a fair settlement for local government, on which a large proportion of the debate has focused. Local authorities are key partners for us. They deliver vital services and contribute massively to delivery of shared objectives in education, health, social care, economic development, housing and the environment.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): As an Aberdeen city MSP, does the minister think that

the funding settlement for Aberdeen—the lowest council settlement in the country—is fair?

Kevin Stewart: I pay tribute to the late Brian Adam, who ensured that the SNP Government put in place a funding floor, which means that the city of Aberdeen and the north-east are much better resourced than they ever were.

Let us look at some of the topics that have come up in the debate. Miles Briggs talked about council tax, but he failed to say to the people of Edinburgh to whom he supposedly spoke that Edinburgh—like every other local authority—will keep every penny of the council tax and every penny of non-domestic rates that it raises. That is the situation.

We have set out in this year's budget a deal for local government that is fair and offers considerable investment in key local services. There is an additional £120 million of funding for educational attainment; an increase of £107 million in funding to support the integration of adult health and social care, including meeting the costs of paying the living wage in that sector; and an increase in the local government capital grant of £150 million on the previous financial year. An additional £111m will be raised through the council tax rebanding, which, as I have said, will all be retained locally; and local authorities will be free to increase the council tax by up to 3 per cent next year, which will generate—if they so choose—up to a further £70 million. That is a fair and substantial investment package in local services across Scotland.

The Tories have had much to say about council tax today, but their manifesto proposals were little different from the ones that we put forward. Unlike south of the border, no local authority here is proposing to increase the tax by up to 15 per cent.

I turn to stability in our economy and public services. I note that Willie Rennie highlighted the challenges that we face as a result of Brexit, which poses risks to our economy and creates uncertainty for businesses, communities and households across Scotland, so we have to take that into account in everything that we do.

I have many more things that I could say, but I realise that I am short of time.

Willie Rennie: Will the minister give way?

Kevin Stewart: How long do I have, Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): You have seven minutes in total.

Kevin Stewart: I have a bit longer. In that case, I will give way to Mr Rennie.

Willie Rennie: Now that the minister has a bit more time, can he tell me, given his comment that Brexit is a threat, exactly what he is going to do

about it? Will he change his budget to reflect the real challenges that we face, or is he just going to carry on as normal?

Kevin Stewart: The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution is already taking cognisance of some of the challenges. I am sure that if Mr Rennie thinks that more needs to be changed in the budget in that regard, the cabinet secretary will listen to his proposals. He has been in listening mode.

We have to take cognisance of the fact that supporting neither the budget bill, nor the tax position through the Scottish rate resolution, will leave Scotland with no approved budget. That will affect our vital public services, because it will mean that we will forgo £38 billion of public spending, including crucial investment in health, local government and education. That vital public spending pays for vital public services, so I urge all members of Parliament to engage in meaningful discussions with the cabinet secretary and to offer credible alternatives for consideration.

In his speech, Mr Balfour said that members should have the courage to reject this budget. I think that members should have the courage to converse, compromise, reach consensus and create a budget that is best for Scotland.

17:22

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I want to start with a moment of consensus and agree with colleagues across the chamber that what has happened this afternoon has perhaps not been the best advert for this place.

In many ways, Kate Forbes started it; she was the first to decry the debate as petty and puerile, and that became a theme in SNP speeches. I find that a little bit ironic, given that it was, of course, the finance secretary, Derek Mackay, who told us in his opening remarks that voting down this budget would mean wages going unpaid and the lights going out. That appeared to be the strongest argument that he could muster for voting for his budget. Every attempt to argue that substantial investment was going into Scotland's services rung hollow from Derek Mackay, because for every pronouncement that he tried to make there is an independent expert telling us that he is about to make £327 million-worth of cuts to public services. What was also petty and puerile was Maree Todd's comment that to vote against the budget was somehow to vote against any money for mental health, against any money for schools and against any attempt to grow the economy.

Then we had Tom Arthur's speech, which was impassioned and contained many good things about the damage that the Tories are doing to our country. However, he also crusaded against the

apparent paucity of Labour's motion and demanded a more specific motion. However, his demand came only minutes after Bruce Crawford had told us off for daring to debate the budget at all and for somehow frustrating the whole scrutiny process.

I know that Tom Arthur is a good man and a socialist; I have heard him say very often how much against cuts he is. What a shame it was, then, to see him refuse to take any interventions. Had he done so, Labour members would have had the opportunity to remind him of the cuts that Derek Mackay made to his community when the SNP ran Renfrewshire Council.

Tom Arthur: Will the member give way?

Kezia Dugdale: I will let the member in once I have reminded him of those cuts. It was, of course, the SNP in Renfrewshire that cut 200 teachers, cut school buses for children and cancelled support for students struggling to get through school. Those are the cuts that the SNP made; I could also read out all the ones that we managed to stop. It is a terrible record by the SNP.

Perhaps the most puerile and pathetic thing that we heard in the debate was the suggestion from SNP members that somehow we could close our eyes and ignore the fact that there were any cuts at all. SNP members must see the impact of those cuts in their communities each and every single day. If they cannot see those cuts, they are simply not doing their jobs properly.

Derek Mackay: I remind Kezia Dugdale that we are in a Parliament, not a council chamber. Maybe the debate should have been conducted in that way.

Is it not alarming that the Labour leader does not recognise that voting against the budget means voting against £38 billion for public services and an extra £700 million towards public services?

Kezia Dugdale: It is very important that Scotland understands the type of finance secretary it has. I have just read out a list of cuts that he made when he was in charge of Renfrewshire Council. I will also mention some cuts that he tried to make but was prevented from making. He tried to cut a quarter of a million pounds from a home link service that supported vulnerable families, to rapidly increase care charges for elderly people and to cut classroom assistants, and he was defeated. That is the type of finance secretary we have, and that is the reality behind the debate that we have had.

On Sunday afternoon, I was fortunate to be able to see "T2 Trainspotting". "Trainspotting" is, of course, the story of four Edinburgh men living in 1996 in a city beset with drugs and all the rest of it.

“T2 Trainspotting” is a first-class film, with fantastic cinematography. Just how beautiful Edinburgh is shines through it. Two castles—Edinburgh and Craigmillar—are featured in it. Spud’s new house is in the grounds of Craigmillar castle. Craigmillar has been regenerated by the Labour Party. The community there is volatile and on the edge. That is where this matters. The £327 million of cuts are about to undermine all the progress that has been made in Craigmillar.

Let us talk about the Venchie project, which is more than a breakfast club. People do not just provide tea and toast there; they knock on the doors of chaotic families, get the kids out of their beds, put them on the bus and get them to the school gates. When the finance secretary cuts £327 million from council services, that is the type of service that he will shut down. It does not have to be that way.

Another project in that community is the Craigmillar books for babies project, which provides critical early literacy services for families with children between zero and three. That is another service that is on a knife edge—it runs from one charity grant to another—and that is the type of service that the finance secretary’s Government should support.

The neighbourhood alliance project, which is another project that seeks to protect and advance the community in Craigmillar, is about to go under. With it will go sporting facilities for vulnerable families, the community centre and the development trust. It does not have to be that way. The SNP needs to understand that.

When Derek Mackay was putting his budget together, he had two choices. He could complain about Tory cuts but do nothing about them, or he could complain about Tory cuts and use the Parliament’s powers to stop them. Unfortunately for the most vulnerable people in our society, he and the SNP went with the former.

Labour is here to say that it does not have to be that way. The Parliament has the power to raise enough revenue to stop the £327 million of cuts and instead choose to invest in our public services.

Our plans would mean the richest few paying their fair share through a 50p top rate of tax, which would be paid by those who earn more than £150,000 a year. The SNP used to support that, but the finance secretary said that he would now introduce that rate only if the Tory UK Government did the same and did it first. That is not quite being stronger for Scotland. By setting an income tax rate that is just one penny higher than the rate that Philip Hammond set, we can stop the cuts to local services, such as schools and care of the elderly.

We can choose instead to invest in education to give our young people a better chance of getting on in life, regardless of their background. We can choose instead to invest in social care so that more older people can be cared for at home, which will, in turn, tackle the growing NHS crisis. We can provide support to the most vulnerable, instead of pulling the rug out from under them, which is what I see in Craigmillar and across Edinburgh every day.

Tonight, the Parliament can unite to say that there is a different way. I know that members in other parties will not support everything that I have called for here today and will have their own particular concerns about the Government’s proposals. However, I hope that they will agree with me that the budget in its current form is unacceptable. We do not have to put the life chances of the next generation at risk by imposing £327 million of cuts on communities across the country. There is a better way and I hope that members grasp that opportunity tonight.

Business Motion

17:31

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-03603, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 31 January 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Celebrating Our Past: Scotland's Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology

followed by Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Gender Balance on the Parliamentary Bureau and SPCB

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 1 February 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Communities, Social Security and
Equalities

followed by Ministerial Statement: Review of Legal Aid

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Prevention and Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation and all Other Forms of so-called Honour-based Violence

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 2 February 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.45 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Stage 1 Debate: Budget (Scotland) Bill
2017-18

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 7 February 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:31

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum in relation to the Digital Economy Bill (UK legislation).—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

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

Decision Time

17:31

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-03576.4, in the name of Derek Mackay, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03576, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the Scottish budget, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lennox, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)

Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Abstentions

Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 63, Against 58, Abstentions 5.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-03576.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03576, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the Scottish budget, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)

Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (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 96, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-03576.2, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03576, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the Scottish budget, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 28, Against 98, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-03576.3, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03576, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the Scottish budget, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)

Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 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)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)

Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 5, Against 121, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-03576, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the Scottish budget, 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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 63, Against 63, Abstentions 0.

The motion, as amended, is tied and I will therefore cast my vote. As I previously intimated to Parliament, I will vote against the motion, so the motion is not agreed to.

Motion, as amended, disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-03604, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum in relation to the Digital Economy Bill (UK legislation).

Celebrating Burns and the Scots Language

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Happy Burns day, everyone. I am pleased to say that the next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-03351, in the name of Emma Harper, on celebrating Burns and the Scots language. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

There are a lot of subscribers to the debate, so I ask members to be quite tight with their time.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the annual celebration of Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, which is held on 25 January each year to mark the Bard's birthday; considers that Burns was one of the greatest poets and that his work has influenced thinkers across the world; notes that Burns' first published collection, *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, also known as the "Kilmarnock Edition", published in 1786, did much to popularise and champion the Scots language, and considers that this is one of his most important legacies; believes that the celebration of Burns Night is an opportunity to raise awareness of the cultural significance of Scots and its status as one of the indigenous languages of Scotland, and further believes in the importance of the writing down of the Scots language to ensure its continuation through written documentation, as well as oral tradition.

The member has provided the following translation in Scots:

That the Pairlament walcomes the annual celebration o Scotland's national makar, Robert Burns, whilk is haudit oan January 25th ilka year tae mark the Bard's birthday; conseeders that Burns waes ane o the greatest makars, an that his wark haes influenced thinkers the warld o'er; notes that Burns' first setten furth collection, *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, kent tae as the "Kilmarnock Edition", setten furth in 1786, did muckle tae mak better kent an tae forder the Scots leid, an conseeders that this bides amang his maist important legacies; believes that the celebration o Burns Nicht is an opportunity tae heize fowk's kennin o the cultural significance o Scots an its status as ane o the indigenous leids o Scotland, an believes forby in the importance o the scribing doon o the Scots leid fur tae mak siccar its bidin throu scribing documentation, as weel as oral tradeetion.

17:39

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Today is Robert Burns's birthday—the ideal day tae celebrate Robert Burns and the Scots language 221 years efter his death. I declare an interest as president of Dumfries ladies Burns club number 1.

Fowk fae a' over the world an here in Scotland celebrate Burns on this day whether they are in the Globe Inn in Dumfries, wi the Howff club, or in the place o the bard's birth in Alloway.

Burns's mither tongue was Scots. He spoke and wrote the Scots language: he speired and screived the Scots leid. My mither tongue was Scots when I

was a wee lassie; then, as I grew up, I lost a lot because it wasnae acceptable tae yaise the Scots words at scuil. I am rediscovering the mony words that I used as a wean that wernaie yaised in scuil when I grew up on the ferm wi the other weans. We were happy tae get clarty when we louped the burns, jouked awa fae the kickin kye in the byre, managin tae hing on tae oor jammy pieces, which were clapped in oor wally naeves. I am saddened—it gars me greet—that, 40 years efter bein telt, "Don't speak like that—speak properly," I am now learning ma lost leid again.

Robert Burns was asked to avoid his Scots and, for the Kilmarnock edition, submit poems in English. In further correspondence to his publisher, George Thomson, when he was requested to write supplementary poems in English, Burns wrote:

"If you are for English verses, there is, on my part an end of the matter ...

I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think my ideas are more barren in English than in Scottish."

The Kilmarnock edition was printed in Scots. It did much to support, popularise and champion the Scots leid. I ergue that we are richer for this decision.

Ma motion states that Robert Burns influenced thinkers around the world, such as Abraham Lincoln, Che Guevara and Hugh MacDiarmid. Even Bob Dylan said that Robert Burns was his greatest inspiration. This year, the influence of Burns on the USA is marked in a special TV documentary on the BBC, which I am gey looking furrit tae watching.

Burns wrote about fairness and equality in many of his songs. When Midge Ure sang one of them—"A Man's A Man For A' That"—at the opening of this session of Parliament, it showed how powerful and relevant the words are the day:

"Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
His ribband, star and a' that:
The man of independent mind
He looks and laughs at a' that."

The Scottish Parliament recognises that Robert Burns, and many efter him, should be celebrated fur scribing and speirin in thar ain leid. Burns's words have such muckle stannin as they have been embedded on the outside of the walls o this vera building.

Jackie Kay, the Scots makar, has a wee Scots poem fur the baby box; and, in 2016, Billy Kay was given the award for services tae Scots fur his

commitment tae advancing the leid for mony years.

The cultural significance of the Scots language has been promoted by the Scottish Government. Much progress has bin made tae advance the knowledge an unnerstaunin o the cultural importance o recognisin the Scots leid in recent years. Meenister Alasdair Allan must be commended.

We now have the Scots Language Centre, the National Library of Scotland, the wee windaes website and great Scots language resources for teachers.

There has been great work done by mony scientists, neurolinguisticists sic as Dr Michael Dempster and an exceptional champion of the Scots leid, Matthew Fitt. Baith are here the day in the gallery. Matthew Fitt is teaching weans in some of the most deprived areas. He telt me the ither day:

“Scots is the silver bullet for raising the confidence of so many of Scotland’s weans who’ve been telt they arenae clever simply because they speak Scots.”

I am jist stertin tae unnerstaun the implications for the weans and how not only allowin, but expectin, that better attainment—there is that wurd again—can be achieved by focusing mair on oor native tongue.

An then there is the neurolinguistical research conducted by Dr Michael Dempster. He is exploring development o language in the brain and how learning the Scots at an early age—even at the same time as English—is key to unnerstaunin oor functional development. He is caain for Scots to be a central consideration in a’ speech research carried out in Scotland. Members can watch him on the YouTube video, “We’r Needin Tae Talk About Wir Language”.

Worldwide evidence suggests that bilingual people hae mony cognitive advantages, includin later onset o dementia, by aroon five years. That suggests the use o Scots is a potential untapped goldmine in care an wellbeing work in Scotland.

Websites, videos, educational materials an a’ the experts I hae spoken tae promote furthering Scots language and bringing the benefits tae us a’. We need tae mac siccer that the leid gans furrit. I am asking the Scottish Government tae continue tae support the leid. We need tae celebrate Burns for keeping oor language alive. Let us continue to transmit it orally, but perhaps even mair important is screivin it, recordin it an getting it written doon. That is crucial.

Finally, Presiding Officer, I commend my motion, Burns and the Scots language, tae yer sonsie face. [*Laughter.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Talking of sonsie faces, I call John Scott.

17:46

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Presiding Officer,

“When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An’ folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
And getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam o’ Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne’er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses.)”

I will stop there, before members all become too enthralled in that magnificent poem, which defines Burns, Ayrshire and broad Scots.

At this point, let me agree with Emma Harper that one of Burns’s great achievements was to help to firmly establish Scots, or indeed broad Scots, as a language in its own right. The reason is that “Tam o’ Shanter” is an epic poem, on a par with Milton’s “Paradise Lost”, and is recognised worldwide as being so.

Another reason for reciting those lines is to show that in addition to Scots still being the living language of many lowland Scots, the observations in Burns’s works are as relevant to this day as they were to his.

Indeed,

“Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
nursing her wrath to keep it warm”

still describes the welcome on many a doorstep, for many men in Ayrshire at any rate, following enjoyment at a hostelry of their choice, and a forewarning of a row to come.

And the lines

“O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
An’ foolish notion”

were and remain a shorthand for mockery and condemnation of vanity and stupidity in daily and political life.

Many more quotations from Burns have become part of many people’s lives and language, my own included—like Emma Harper, I come from a farming background.

Burns was unique, which is why his words have been translated into so many different languages.

The Russians put aside Tolstoy and the French put aside Voltaire to read and recognise the quality of his work, and every year at this time, more than 10,000 Burns suppers are held, to celebrate the range of his work.

Burns suppers bring people together to discuss, debate, analyse, appreciate and enjoy the value and meaning of his work, whether that be his poetry, his songs or his letters. Because Burns's own life was so convivial, his legacy has engendered spirited gatherings and suppers at which fun and laughter predominate—with philosophical discourse on offer, too. Indeed, tonight, as we speak, here in our Parliament building our Presiding Officer is welcoming guests from all over the world and parliamentarians to the Presiding Officer's Burns supper, which is well established as one of the highlights of our parliamentary year.

However, what sets Burns apart is not his observations of human nature, his wit, his satire, his views of the church or his ambivalent political views. It is his empathy that makes him so special—his unique ability to connect with and relate and appeal to all levels of society, in his own time in Edinburgh and his beloved Ayrshire, and to this day. He is still relevant and connected. That is what sets him apart from others. His ability to take the ordinary day-to-day aspects of life and love, and to comment on them in verse or song, makes him and his legacy unique.

Tonight, Presiding Officer, we celebrate that legacy, which has established Ayrshire, his birthplace, and the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum as must-visit destinations for the worldwide Scottish diaspora and others who are rightly so proud of him and who flock to Ayrshire, to Alloway, to Burns Cottage and to the Banks of the Doon to see for themselves the landscape and buildings that inspired "Tam o' Shanter" and many other great works.

17:50

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Congratulations tae Emma Harper for securing this members' debate celebrating Burns and the Scots language.

There was, indeed, a blast o Jan'war win on or shortly after the night that Burns was born in 1759. A portion of the auld clay biggin in Alloway that was built by his father, William, was said to have blown in during a storm—a fitting entrance to this world, perhaps, for Scotland's greatest poet. That same blast o win still blows as strongly today as it did then.

We are eternally grateful to Robert Burns for what he did, and not just for the magnificent poetic legacy that he left us during his 37 short years. By

writing in his native Scots/Ayrshire tongue, he gave credibility to the Scots language and probably set the foundations for its recognition internationally.

Are we not relieved that Burns basically ignored the pleas by Dr John Moore and others in 1787—just a year after the Kilmarnock edition was published—to write not in Scots but in English to reach, as Moore put it, a "wider audience of admirers"? Burns attempted some work in standard English but quickly abandoned it. His book was already a huge success, he was working on his Edinburgh edition and lots of his works in Scots had already been penned awaiting publication. Thank God for that and the legacy that we now enjoy, written in that rich Scots language of Ayrshire, where much of it can still be heard today.

Do you recall, Presiding Officer, this small but famous extract from "Tam o' Shanter", which John Scott quoted from?

"O Tam! had'st thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober."

The unthinkable version of it in English is:

"Oh Thomas, had you but been so wise,
As to have taken your own wife Kate's advice!
She told you well you were a waster,
A rambling, blustering, drunken boaster,
That from November until October,
Each market day you were not sober."

Much, much more is lost than the Scots words themselves. The equivalent words are there, but for me there is no real connection with the sense of drama and devilment. As a result, the impact of such a wonderful depiction that that scene illustrates would have been diminished beyond repair.

Interestingly, most—if not all—of Burns's letters were written in highly polished, technical English, even more elaborate than we see today, reflecting the style of the 18th century. However, when it came to exercising his creative talents in poetry, or shaping and crafting the lyrics of many hundreds of Scots folk songs that would have been lost had he not intervened, Burns was clearly at home using the everyday language of his own people. I think that he knew that.

We have other more contemporary Scots writers to thank as well for keeping our language fresh and current. MacDiarmid wrote masterpieces, of course, such as "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" in Scots; in it, he even has a conversation with Burns, saying:

"Rabbie, wad'st thou were here—the warld hath need,
And Scotland mair sae, o the likes o thee!

The whisky that aince moved your lyre's become
A laxative for aa loquacity."

That is a plea, I think, for more intelligent and informed discourse among the people, especially when talking about Burns himself.

Back in Ayrshire again, we are proud of our other two sons: Billy Kay fae Ga'ston and Rab Wilson fae New Cumnock. Billy made a huge contribution to the Scots language in his book "The Mither Tongue" and his numerous radio and TV productions, delighting in using Scots as his preferred medium. Rab Wilson, the distinguished writer and poet, wrote a magnificent poem for us in Scots in 2009 during the dispute with Diageo over its ridiculous decision to take Johnnie Walker away from Kilmarnock after 189 years.

Our Scots language is very much alive today, but it could always benefit from more exposure and more encouragement, especially among our youngsters, to create new works, poems and songs in their native language. We also have a role to play as members in the Scottish Parliament; we should use our own language much more than we probably do. Efter a, it is who we are, and we shouldnae be feart tae yaise it.

Well done tae Emma Harper for bringing this matter to the attention of the Parliament.

17:54

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am sorry that I will have to leave before the minister's reply, Presiding Officer, so I offer my apologies to all concerned.

I am grateful to Emma Harper for bringing the debate to Parliament, in part because of my father, the Rev Roderick Macdonald. He was first a published poet in Gaelic—Scotland's other language that has been too-long neglected—and an enthusiastic translator between Gaelic and English. He was deeply honoured to be crowned Bàrd at the National Mòd in 1977. However, when he went from St Columba's parish church in Stornoway to Inch parish church in Aberdeenshire, he discovered a third Scottish tongue for poetry and prose—just as we, his children, discovered it in daily life. Aberdeenshire Scots is known today as Doric, thanks to the classical preoccupations of 19th century scholars, but it is, in truth, one of the richest regional varieties of a language that can be heard in many places, from Shetland to Galloway. Lowland Scots is not heard in the Outer Hebrides, but it is still the mother tongue of local children in Inch and the Garioch, and many other communities, besides.

Roddy Macdonald would have fully agreed with the view that is expressed in the motion this evening—that the written word, in a standard form, is vital to sustaining and transmitting a living but

largely oral culture from one generation to the next. He considered himself to be bilingual, which he defined as not just speaking and writing in two languages, or even just thinking in two languages, but as dreaming in both Gaelic and English, which he had done for most of his life. I do not think that he ever dreamed in Scots, but he made understanding and explaining the relationships of Scots, English and Gaelic a focus of his learning and his creativity in the second half of his life.

A book that reflects that focus very well is one that he wrote in collaboration with Joyce Collie and Derrick McClure in 1995. It goes not by one name, but three: "Trilingual Poetry", "Bàrdachd Thri-Chànanach" and "Sangs in Three Tongues". That was original and groundbreaking, but it was in the translation of the entire works of Robert Burns from Scots and English into Gaelic that Roddy Macdonald's scholarship in Scots and creativity in Gaelic found their perfect fusion. As Derrick McClure has said since, what is impressive about the work is not just its scale but the fact that the translations succeed in retaining the metre and rhythms in which Burns wrote, while presenting them in a quite different language.

However, my father would have said that achieving that was not so hard, or down only to his own poetic gifts. He was delighted to discover that a good deal of the Scots of Robert Burns had Gaelic roots, which some earlier translators had failed to recognise. The Scots tongue of Robert Burns is not, as some would have it, different from northern English only because of loan words from Scandinavia, the low countries or France—such loan words are to be found in Northumbria and Yorkshire, too. What makes the Scots language unique is its roots in Scottish Gaelic, combined with those other influences.

Robert Burns was born in Ayrshire in 1759, the same year in which the last speaker of Ayrshire or Galloway Gaelic died. His family had moved not long before from the north-east, at a time when Gaelic was still the first language in places such as upper Deeside and Glengairn. The cadences and metres of Burns could readily translate from Scots to Gaelic precisely because Gaelic had helped to shape many of those rhythms and metres in the first place, and Roddy Macdonald was proud to make the connections among Scotland's three tongues because he believed that those connections strengthened them all. I am certain that, if he were still with us, he would want to join us in celebrating that view today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Afore we gang any further, I am minded to accept a motion under rule 8.14.3 that, due to the number of members who wish to speak, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

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

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Tapadh leibh. There, Mr Macdonald—I have used all three languages.

Lewis Macdonald: Glè mhath.

17:59

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Emma Harper on securing this debate marking the importance of both our national bard, Robbie Burns, and one of our national languages, Scots.

Many towns lay claim to the bard, but there can be no doubt that it is the town of Irvine, in my constituency, that has the strongest claim of all. Indeed, without Irvine, there might not even have been a world-famous poet called Robert Burns for us to talk about today. It was in the then-bustling harbour of Irvine, where Burns arrived in 1781 as a young 22-year-old, that he became friends with a local sea captain, Richard Brown, who encouraged him to become a poet.

That was attested to in Burns's own hand, when he later wrote to Brown, reminding him of a Sunday that they had spent in Eglinton woods, where Brown, upon hearing Burns recite some of his verses, had expressed his wonder that Burns could

"resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine".

It is was that moment, in Burns's own words, that he decided to

"endeavour at the character of a Poet".

Alloway may have made the man, but it was Irvine that made the poet.

It seems fitting that Irvine is home to what one national paper deemed to be "the A-list Burns Club". I am particularly proud to draw Parliament's attention to the Irvine Burns Club, which has an unbroken history of nearly 200 years. It was first established in 1826 and will this year celebrate its 191st anniversary. The first president of the club, Dr John Mackenzie, attended Robert Burns's father in his last illness. The first vice-president was David Sillar, who was a friend of Burns from his early 20s.

A highlight of the club's calendar is, of course, the annual Burns night celebration, which I am looking forward hugely to attending. However, as great a poet as Burns was, and as braw as Burns suppers are, it is important to remember that Scots should not only be for Burns night. We still have much to do to overcome the paradox that the

Scots language that we celebrate and encourage on one day of the year remains all too often misunderstood, and even discouraged and disparaged, the rest of the time.

As someone with a bit of Gaelic, I am only too familiar with the hostility that can be faced from some quarters when it comes to Scotland's minority languages. However, one thing that Gaelic is never accused of is being a dialect or, worse, a corruption of English. With Scots, on the other hand, despite great and on-going efforts to raise awareness of its status and history, those misperceptions are still all too common. Overcoming them remains perhaps the biggest issue for those of us who want to see the language respected and promoted.

As such, although I welcome today's debate and look forward to joining my friends at Word Powers Books's radical Burns night supper tonight, and the Irvine Burns Club later in the week, I hope that Parliament will take opportunities in the future to delve deeper into the issues around Scots, and to continue to build on the progress that has already been made in normalising, legitimising and promoting the language in all settings—written and spoken.

18:02

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I thank Emma Harper for the opportunity to talk about Burns. I have used the opportunity to extend the world of people who are familiar with Burns to one more person—my new American intern, Melia Dayley, who is sitting in the gallery and who has written the speech that I give tonight.

I stand with members today to celebrate the enduring legacy of Robert Burns and, of course, the Scots language. I believe that it is central that we understand what is meant by the word "legacy". It implies something of great significance in the past that continues to affect our present. It is a history that is ever present and impactful. That is a perfect description of Scots and the bard.

The Scots language has had a turbulent history. It went through periods of discrimination, when it was not to be spoken in good company, to times when it was championed by the Scots people. We have championed the language, in large part, thanks to Robert Burns, whose memory we celebrate today. It is a language that has divided society during parts of its history, but that is partly why it makes such an impact today—it shows us the diversity of our history. It is now a jewel of our culture, whereas once it was something very different.

We remember the man who wrote great literary works in Scots and who helped secure the Scots

language's importance to the definition of Scotland. Burns was, without doubt, a literary genius—one need read very few of his works to see that. Of course, he was also a man with an entirely justifiable reputation for womanising, but we rarely talk about one particular woman in his life—his wife, Jean Armour. She was the silent, strong supporter of the poet. I suspect that being a poet's wife under any circumstances, then or now, is not terribly easy. She was a loyal wife and not one for coming forward, but she was always there and was the woman Burns needed and loved. While he was arranging Scots into iconic poems, she was looking after the basics of his life. She was working to make life better not just for her but for her significant family—although I am not sure what role she played with the family members who were not hers. Her legacy is alive in Scotland, right alongside that of Burns, so we should think of her as we think of Burns.

We work diligently and proudly to celebrate Robert Burns's life. I am not here to preach on the issue—I perhaps came to Burns quite late in my life—but people right across Scotland understand who Burns is and what he has contributed to Scottish life. People on farms, on ships and in cities all know of Burns and they are all part of the community that has inherited the legacy of Burns. The language and words of Burns live today, as they lived when he wrote them. They strengthen the ties that bind us together. We overcome and rise above difficulties by looking at some of the things that he wrote, and we find simple enjoyment in his words. When we hear "Holy Willie's Prayer" or "Tam o' Shanter", the narrative simply engages us.

The work of Burns is part of what makes us Scots, but it is also part of what we contribute to the world community. As Burns said of Jean,

"But to see her was to love her".

The legacy of Burns and Scots is that we recognise that his words are more than simply words—their legacy is us.

18:07

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I always find it intimidating to stand up and speak about Robert Burns, particularly when I have only four minutes, because my first real memory of a Burns supper is of one in Moffat, and it opened with a joke that any speech on Burns should last exactly as long as it takes a married man to make love to his wife. At the time, I had no idea what that meant, but—

Stewart Stevenson: I would sit down now.

Oliver Mundell: I am being told to sit down, but I will continue, because the debate is really

important, and I am grateful to Emma Harper for introducing it. I know that she is passionate about the subject and has a long-standing connection with the issue in the community.

I was in St Michael's church in Dumfries today, at a memorial service to commemorate Burns's life, and many people there were very excited about this debate taking place. That is because Burns is at the heart of Dumfries and of my Dumfriesshire constituency. I do not want to get too controversial for a members' business debate, but I take slight issue with the claim from those in Ayrshire that Burns properly belongs to them because, although he might have been born there, we have still got him. He is very important to Dumfries.

It is impossible to go round my constituency without finding Burns heritage or meeting people who are there to explore his legacy and history, whether that is in Dumfries or further afield. He visited practically every pub that is still going, and generally had a rather good time, although that is with the notable exception of a pub in Ecclefechan, where he managed to get stuck of an evening. He described that village as a wicked and evil little place. That had absolutely nothing to do with the residents or the quality or quantity of the drink; it was purely because there was a lady singing in the establishment on the evening in question and Burns felt that listening to her was like hearing the sound of the sow meeting the butcher's knife. He could not decide whether the answer was to get drunk or to hang himself. Luckily, he chose the drink.

One only has to go to my hometown of Moffat to see his connection with local drinking establishments, because it was at Moffat's Black Bull Inn that he carved on the window:

"Ask why God made the gem so small,
And why so huge the granite?
Because God meant, mankind should set
That higher value on it."

His enduring legacy and the power of his works cannot be escaped. I will read a section of his "Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet":

"It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in makin muckle, mair:
It's no in books; it's no in Lear,
To make us truly blest:
If Happiness hae not her seat
And center in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest:
Nae treasures, nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay,
That makes us right or wrang."

Burns and Scots are in our heart. He wrote that no Scot could fail to be moved by the tale of William Wallace, but—as we look at Burns’s legacy—there is no Scot who cannot be moved by the influence that Burns has had on our nation.

18:11

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I am proud that our Parliament recognises the richness of the various Scots tongues and nae jist in debates specifically aboot our mither tung. Even in this parliamentary session, if you look through our *Official Report*, you will find numerous Scots words peppering our members’ speeches. Not least by my fren Emma Harper, with whom I share a challenge to sneak the odd wee boorach, craitur or hallirackit into our speeches. Who knows, I might even get away with a bahookie or a besom one day, if it disnae scunner the Presiding Officer—or, should I say, the Heid Bummer. My thanks go to yon affa fine quine Emma Harper for this debate, not least because I can catch up with her in the amount of wordies on the record.

In schools last week, a the bairns would have been learning their Burns. It reminds me of ma ain school days, when it was the only time of year that we could spik Scots or Doric in the classroom wi ony legitimacy. It is changed days. Last week, I was in Meiklemill school in Ellon, where they have Scots and Doric a o’er the place and it is nae jist for Burns nicht. Ben the hale place, there are Doric words o the wa’s and a the weans are encouraged to tell stories in their ain tung.

We are celebrating the life o the Bard today. Burns’s faither was from the north-east, changing his name from Burness to Burns as he headed down to Ayrshire. The north-east has a very strong Scots and Doric language tradition and we all like to think that Burns was influenced by his faither’s history.

Talking of Burns is as good an excuse as any to shine a light on other champions o the mither tung. Some might not be so well known as our bard, like Jean and Lucy Stewart from Fetterangus, or Fishie, as it is known. Their renditions of traditional Scots songs and ballads helped to fuel a renaissance of interest in Scottish music that began in the 1960s. Lucy’s collected and recorded work was an influence to Bob Dylan. In 1962, he modelled his song “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” on “Lord Randall”, which Lucy’s work had introduced him to. The Stewart family tradition continues with Elizabeth Stewart, who is widely known as a traditional Doric folk singer and storyteller in her own right and who, I am proud to say, is a constituent of mine.

Then there is Stanley Robertson who, like the Stewart quines, was fae a travelling family.

Stanley was a poet and storyteller. Before his death, I had the great privilege of working with him on a range of Doric materials for a literacy programme for Aiberdeen schools. The oral tradition of travelling fowk in the north-east was embodied by that man, whose mind was chock-full of old stories from generations of travelling fowk. I am glad to say that those stories have been collected in the Elphinstone kist in Aiberdeen university. The Elphinstone kist is a rich collection of the sangs, stories and rhymes of the north-east, which leads me to the keeper o the kist, the unofficial north-east bard, Sheena Blackhall. Bairns are learning Burns’s “Tae a Moose” right now, but I bet you that they can a recite Sheena’s poem “Hoolet” without giein it a second thocht.

Celebratin Burns every year reminds us of the richness of the mither tung, but wi fowk like Sheena Blackhall, Matthew Fitt—who I believe is in the public gallery, an who scribes awa in *The National* in oor mither tung ivery wick—our makar Jackie Kay and Derrick McClure, who Lewis Macdonald mentioned, an who is the author of one of my favourite books, “Why Scots Matters”, an wi a’ the guid work o the weans an the teichars, Scots and Doric are alive and well. They are nae jist for 25 January but fir a’ the days o the year.

18:15

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): My thanks to Emma Harper for giving me and everybody else the opportunity to talk in the debate.

It is fair to say that I am a wee bit of a Burns fan. I see Emma has the same book—I, too, have the complete collection, as a book and also in CD format. It is quite a number of CDs, but I would highly recommend it to anybody who wants to listen. It features a whole load of different singers from across Scotland. Some of you may be familiar with it.

Turning to the motion, it is fair to say that Burns still influences people here in Scotland and across the world. I was heartened today to note that schools across my constituency—as I am sure is the case for every member here—have had very active Twitter feeds today, with all the kids engaging in various Burns activities. I have a few examples. Townhead primary school had a poetry competition and the delighted winners were shown their prizes. At Kirkshaws primary school, pupils were tweeting about watching the highland games. They had dressed up, and it was good to see the pictures showing an engrossed audience. At St Stephen’s primary school, pupils tweeted that they were learning about the Scots dialect, and that they had taken the time to write their own poem. That was very fitting and in line with the debate. It is good that kids today, across my constituency

and across Scotland, are getting to learn about our heritage and the Scots dialect.

When I was growing up we did Burns every year, probably like most people in school, but there are regional variations in the accents and words that we use. I did not realise that a lot of the words that I was using were Scots until I went to university and left the confines of Coatbridge and Lanarkshire. People would ask me, "Why do you speak so slang?" I did not realise that a lot of the words that were integrated into my speech at various points were actually Scots language. When I found that out as a teenager and into my 20s I was absolutely delighted.

On Burns's work, I like the classics such as "A Man's A Man" and "Ye banks, and braes" among many others, but I also like some of the lesser-known works: "Of a' the airts" and the ballad that is the "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots", which I think is a fantastic poem. Two of my favourites are "Such a parcel of rogues in a nation" and the absolutely brilliant "Caledonia". "Such a parcel of rogues in a nation" is a very political message from Burns. Given what Burns was writing and some of the messages that he was getting across at that time, it is absolutely fascinating to think about how many years ago that was.

I had intended to go to the full dinner tonight at the Presiding Officer's Burns event, but I also promised my wee boy that I would eat some haggis with him—he is just coming up for three. I hope that it is a good night for everybody who is going. I have now put in my apologies.

I will finish with the final paragraph from my favourite song, which I mentioned earlier, "Caledonia".

"Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd, and free,
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run;
For brave Caledonia immortal must be,
I'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:
Rectangle-triangle the figure we'll chuse,
The Upright is Chance, and old Time is the Base;
But brave Caledonia's the Hypothenuse;
Then, Ergo, she'll match them, and match them always."

18:19

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries)

(Con): It is a real privilege to take part in the debate, and I thank Emma Harper for securing it. It is such a shame that we have been conditioned out of speakin Scots. When I am at home, I quickly revert to ma playground chat wi ma dad, and we talk about the weather an what we're gaunae dae, and I quickly go to into it, particularly if I've had a wee rusty nail. It is a shame—we have to put in an effort not to use Scots when we are in the debating chamber.

From a personal perspective, 25 January has always been an important date for me and my family. There is every likelihood that my great-great-great-grandfather was Burns's blacksmith, as he lived at Hollywood when Burns farmed at Ellisland. My family are all Burns enthusiasts, and my daughter, Vicky, and my son, Hugh, regularly sing, recite or play Burns's works.

There is no point in my giving you a history of Robert Burns, because I am sure that you all know it as well as—if not better than—me. What is worthy of reflection, though, is the state of the world that Burns was born into and in which he grew up. Only 13 years had passed since the battle of Culloden, which was the last battle to be fought on British soil and one in which—let us not forget—Scots participated on both sides. When Burns was only 17, news came of the American declaration of independence and, by the time he was 30, we had the French revolution. All through his life there were conflicts, and whoever lived in those times lived with a certain amount of fear, suspicion, danger and challenge.

Of course, many of those uncertainties and challenges were also reflected in the thinking and writing of the time. All that turmoil can only have influenced the mind of young Robert as he sought answers to the questions that must have poured out from his fertile imagination. Many of those questions must have been political, and I am always fascinated by the fact that most shades of the political spectrum will claim that Robert Burns was one of their own.

Our Labour colleagues have left the chamber, but the socialist would look to "For a' that, and a' that":

"For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin yet for a' that,
That Man to Man the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

The nationalists could choose "Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn", which is known more commonly as "Scots, whae hae" and was written just 3 or 4 miles away from where I live at the moment, in Gatehouse of Fleet:

"Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie ,,,

Wha for Scotland's king and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or Free-man fa',
Let him follow me."

Unionists and, amazingly, even UKIPers claim him as their own from the "The Dumfries Volunteers":

"O, let us not, like snarling tykes,
In wrangling be divided,
Till, slap! come in an unco loun,
And wi' a rung decide it!

Be Britain still to Britain true,
 Amang oursels united;
 For never but by British hands
 Must British wrongs be righted."

He cleverly spanned all shades of politics and, as a novice politician, I can only admire the dexterity and ease with which he did so.

Given the tumult of his day, Burns could easily have written with bitterness, envy, greed or jealousy, yet what emerges from his work is a picture of a man of understanding, of honesty, of justice and of extraordinary emotion and compassion for his fellow man. As Oliver Mundell has said, Burns penned his "Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet" when he was only 25:

"It's no in titles nor in rank;
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
 To purchase peace and rest;
 It's no in makin muckle, mair:
 It's no in books; it's no in Lear,
 To make us truly blest:
 If Happiness hae not her seat
 And centre in the breast,
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest:
 Nae treasures, nor pleasures
 Could make us happy lang;
 The heart ay's the part ay
 That makes us right or wrang."

Burns always had a healthy scepticism of the authorities, whether they took the shape of the local landlord, the local church, the presbytery or the Parliament. He made that quite clear in "Holy Willie's Prayer", in which he wrote:

"Lord hear my earnest cry and prayer
 Against that Presbytry of Ayr!
 Thy strong right hand, Lord, make it bare
 Upon their heads!
 Lord visit them, and dinna spare,
 For their misdeeds!"

I am sure that that scepticism would remain alive and well today.

I am certain that Burns would have been enormously proud of a moment that will live with me and many other MSPs for ever. How he would have filled with pride at the opening of Holyrood in 1999, when Sheena Wellington sang his wonderful anthem, and more recently, in 2016, when Midge Ure sang it.

"Then let us pray that come it may,
 As come it will for a' that,
 That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth
 Shall bear the gree, and a' that.
 For a' that, and a' that,
 It's comin yet for a' that,
 That Man to Man the world o'er,
 Shall brothers be for a' that."

There can surely be no better vision for any politician, no matter his political creed or colour, than that.

18:24

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I, too, thank Emma Harper for securing the debate. For all that I love the poetry of Robert Burns, what pleases me most is that, down these two centuries or more since he died, our country has chosen his birthday to think on a poet and poetry. I do not mind whether it is his radical sentiments, observations on a fast-disappearing agrarian way of life, bonny verses or the peerless tale of "Tam o Shanter", we cheer our most famous poet, recite and enjoy his verses and songs and do so in singular style. I do not suppose that it is unique, but it is perhaps unusual that a country should, for a day each year, take a collective breath and turn its thoughts to poetry in this way. It makes me just a little proud, because poetry matters.

Since our Parliament has reconvened, we have blessed ourselves with marvellous makars, cementing poetry in our consciousness and civic life. None of us who watched it or who had the privilege of being present when the Scottish Parliament reconvened will forget Sheena Wellington singing "A Man's a Man for a' that" and how a nation responded on that day. The occasion was also illuminated by Amy Linekar, a schoolgirl from Thurso, with her poem "How to Create a Great Country", which contained a thistle's-worth of spike.

Just this month, our latest makar, Jackie Kay, caused a bit of a stooshie with her poem about the love that parents feel for their newborn babies. I loved it. My daughter, Rachel, shares a birthday with Robert Burns, and I hope that members will indulge me as I take the opportunity to wish her a happy birthday:

"Let your life hae luck, health, charm,
 Ye are my bonny blessed bairn".

When Jackie Kay took her post, she said:

"As Robert Burns demonstrated, poetry holds up a unique mirror to a nation's heart, mind and soul. It is the pure language that tells us who we are."

Holding that mirror to a nation's heart, mind and soul can be dangerous. Even a poet as sensational as Robert Burns—a rock star of his day—had to watch his step. Writers and songsmiths across the world endure persecution. We live in a world where some Governments or rulers can be so alarmed at thoughts written, spoken or sung that they will suppress them cruelly. In these dangerous and worrying times, we need our poets more than ever.

Poetry, whether in its highest expression or the rhymes of the playground, has the capacity to be fun, to make us laugh or cry, to bring the best of us to the fore. Poetry can do that. Are we a nation of poets? Perhaps that is not a bad aspiration. Although we may believe poetry to be in the mist

and our hills, in the closes and wynds of our burghs and cities, embedded in our souls or our DNA, such a belief—such an aspiration—cannot be fulfilled by chance. It must be nurtured and protected—space and time, understanding and our love given to all our languages and means of expression.

In a chamber full of honest men and bonny lasses—and, hopefully, some bonny men and honest lasses, too—I toast not just Robert Burns’s memory but all the poets, past, present and future, of

“Our multiform, our infinite Scotland”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am starting to feel quite emotional.

18:28

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): A want tae congratulate ma frien, Emma Harper, on securin this debate. Usually, we see muckle flytin here. The day, on the bard’s birthday, we’re all canty and agreed.

Rabbie Burns wid be fair astonished—an content—tae hear himsel praised in oor reconvened Scots Pairlament sortit agin, despite the action o that parcel o rogues he admonished lang syne.

A’m nae Scots scholar, but A ween A speak Scots. Mony Scots wi a guid Scots tongue in their mooth hav been telt they just haver in slang. Oor Pairlament kin challenge those attitudes.

In 2003, a cross-pairty group on the Scots leid was formed by Labour’s Cathy Peattie and the Scottish National Party’s Irene McGugan. The statement o principles fir that group is worth repeatin:

- “1. Scots is a language
2. Action maun be taen tae pit an end tae aw prejudice an discrimination agin the Scots language.
3. The Scots language is integral an essential tae cultural an personal identity in Scotland.
- 4 A knowledge o Scots is vital tae a knowledge o Scotland.
5. Action maun be taen tae gie the Scots language whitiver means is needit tae mak siccar its transmission an continuity.
6. Scots shuid be an essential pairt o the educational curriculum in Scotland at aw levels.
7. Naeboddy shuid be penalised or pitten doun for speakin Scots.
8. Scots proper names an place names shuid be valued an safegairdit.”

Thon principles were scribed mair than a decade syne. Huv they been achieved? I hae ma doots. There is mair wark tae be done.

I hope aw the MSPs who spoke sae well the day will consider supportin anither cross-pairty group on the Scots leid and play oor part in helpin it tae thrive aw year.

The statement o principles o that group quoted Iain Crichton Smith, anither poet who wrote in Gaelic, anither tongue:

“He who loses his language loses his world.”

Let that our lesson be.

18:31

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I thank Emma Harper for securing this wonderful debate. So many heroes of the Scots language have already been mentioned, particularly Billy Kay, whose book “The Mither Tongue” gave me permission to love my language. I am very grateful for that.

I also give grateful thanks to Matthew Fitt for the wonderful memories that I have of reading his Scots language books to my son, who is now 19 years old, and for being able to share them, especially with my English nieces. They have given me wonderful memories and wonderful experiences of our language.

One person who has not been mentioned—and who it would be very remiss of me not to mention, as she comes from Motherwell—is Liz Lochhead. She was a wonderful makar for Scotland and inspired so many of us. I want to quote a short extract from her poem “Kidspoem/Bairnsang”:

“it wis January
and a gey dreich day
the first day Ah went to the school
so my Mum happed me up in ma
good navy-blue napp coat wi the rid tartan hood
birlid a scarf aroon ma neck
pu’ed oan ma pixie an’ my pawkies
it wis that bitter
said noo ye’ll no starve
gie’d me a wee kiss and a kid-oan skelp oan the bum
and sent me aff across the playground
tae the place Ah’d learn to say
it was January
and a really dismal day
the first day I went to school
so my mother wrapped me up in my
best navy-blue top coat with the red tartan hood,
twirled a scarf around my neck,
pulled on my bobble-hat and mittens
it was so bitterly cold
said now you won’t freeze to death
gave me a little kiss and a pretend slap on the bottom ...
to the place I’d learn to forget to say
it wis January
and a gey dreich day
the first day Ah went to the school”

That poem, to me, holds a lesson for every child in Scotland about the warmth, the feeling and the nature of a language that is their own and about

how they should never be made to feel as if that language does not belong to them.

Today, though, is all about Burns and his many characters. Some of his indiscretions and his negative side have been mentioned, and I know that he is often considered as not being a friend to women. However, there are two of his poems that mean a lot to me. Both are songs—thankfully, I will not be singing them tonight—but they are unusual in being told from a woman’s point of view.

The first is an extract from “The rantin dog the Daddie o’t”, which is about a young woman who finds herself pregnant and unmarried. It highlights all the concerns that someone in the same situation today might have. Who will buy the baby’s clothes? Who will pay the midwife, as happened then? Who will clean the baby? It goes:

“O Wha my babie-clouts will buy,
O Wha will tent me when I cry;
Wha will kiss me where I lie,
The rantin dog the daddie o’t.

O Wha will own he did the faut,
O Wha will buy the groanin maud,
O Wha will tell me how to ca’t,
The rantin dog the daddie o’t.”

That shows a real understanding by Burns of the predicament of women.

Lewis Macdonald had to leave the chamber, but the poem that came to mind when I was listening to him was “The Highland Widow’s Lament”. Burns wrote it, and it meant much to him. It is about seeing a woman from the Highlands begging. She had been made destitute. It is about the end of the war at Culloden, when she was made homeless, and it includes the lines:

“Their waefu’ fate what need I tell
Right to the wrang did yield;
My Donald and his Country fell,
Upon Culloden field.

Oh I am come to the low Countrie,
Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
Nae woman in the world wide,
Sae wretched now as me.”

Those are among my favourite bits of Burns. I thank Emma Harper once again for the wonderful opportunity to celebrate him.

18:35

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): Mony thanks tae Emma Harper for bringin this debate tae the fluir o the Pairliament the nicht and tae the rowth o ithers—ower mony to name—that spak in the debate an aw.

It was a disappointment the nicht—nae offence intended—when Stewart Stevenson spak, because mony o us in this place are acquent wi his tales o his faimily an his faimily history. It was a

sare disappointment till mony o us to find oot that he isnae come doon frae the great man himsel.

Let me stert bi readin ye ane o the first reviews Burns iver hed anent his wark, i *The Scots Magazine* o 1 December 1786. It tells us a fell lot about the things Burns an the Scots tung haes hed tae thole thir hinnermaist tway hunner year. Like Ms Harper, I come fae the bit o Scotland that says “tway” instead o “twa”. The reviewer scrives in his bit o *The Scots Magazine*:

“I know not if I shall be accused of enthusiasm and partiality when I introduce to the notice of my readers a poet of our own country ... The person to whom I allude is Robert Burns, an Ayrshire ploughman ... In mentioning the circumstances of his humble station, I mean not to ... urge the merits of his poetry when considered in relation to the lowness of his birth, and the little opportunity of improvement which his education could afford. These particulars, indeed, might excite our wonder at his productions; but his poetry, considered abstractly, and without the apologies arising from his situation, seems to me fully entitled to command our feelings and to obtain our applause.”

Whaur Burns cam frae socially is airt an pairt o wha he is, but it haes bin used tae sneer at him, or tae gar folk jalouse at his poetrie maun jist be couthie, orra stuff. The reviewer wrings his hands a wee bittie mair and talks about

“the language in which most of his poems are written ... in England it cannot be read at all, without such a constant reference to a glossary as nearly to destroy that pleasure.

Some of his productions, however, especially those of the grave style, are almost English.”

Gin A can owerset thon for the record, he is sayin this—Burns winna mak onie siller oot o aw this, for the ae leiterary scene at maiters is in Lunnan. But he alloos at Burns can mair or less screive English forby, sae he canna be awthegither donnert. He screives:

“with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and manners.”

An sae we hae the review o the Kilmarnock edeition—at aince praisin Burns an patroneisin him, and gien us for the record maybes the first-ever yis o the phrase “heaven-taught ploughman”.

Tho A represent the Gaelic-speakin bit o Scotland, A wes brocht up i the ither enn o the kintra awthegither. Baith ma granfaithers wes ploumen, sae Burns speaks tae me. But he speaks tae the hail warld an aw. Mr Macdonald mentioned about his faither’s wark to translate Burns frae Scots intae Gaelic. Juist the ither week, a bodie screivit tae me tae tell me about a new ettle tae owerset Burns intill Estonian. Awreddies, as ither members haes mentioned, Burns is being recitit an sung the world over the nicht. As Mr Scott haes richtly said, pairt o the wey it is at we are celebratin him is at he gied the Scots tung an epic poem an the status at yon brocht wae it.

The Scottish Guivernment fordere the recognieition o Scots in aw its forms. It is at the hert o oor communities an oor leiterature. A few year syne, A was a memmer o the Guivernment's Scots language meinisterial wurkin group. For the first time, i 2011, there was a question on Scots i the census at shawed at 1.5 meillion Scots hed some kennin o Scots. We brocht in Scots language co-ordinators i the scuils, a Scots leid policie an mony ither things forby. Creative Scotland an ither hae been supportive anaw. Tho some memmers grat for rage aboot it at the time, as an edication meinister, A brocht in the requirement at the higher English exam speirs a compulsory question on Scottish leiterature.

A will gie the hinmaist word tae Burns himsel in the satirical wurd at he addressed tae Scotland's representatives i the Hoose o Commons. O course, Burns didnae hae a vote, but he had his ain thochts. Amang ither things, he gies us his thochts on the question o language:

"Could he some commutation broach,
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,
He need na fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie, queer hotch-potch,
The Coalition.

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue;
She's just a devil wi' a rung;
An' if she promise auld or young
Tae tak their pairt,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert.

God bless your Honors, a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail an' brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes
That haunt St Jamie's!
Your humble poet sings an' prays
While Rab his name is."

Meeting closed at 18:41.

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