



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 31 January 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 31 January 2017

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The first item of business today is time for reflection, for which our leader is Mr Ron McLaren, who is chair of Humanism in Scotland.

Mr Ron McLaren (Humanism in Scotland): My thanks to the Presiding Officer, Willie Rennie and all members for the opportunity to present time for reflection today.

I hope it is all right to say that it is some time since I was fondled in the way that I was on my way in to Holyrood with the frisking and so on. Very nice. [Laughter.]

My tribute is to members and to the Parliament.

Recent years saw my inclusion as a secular humanist contributor to four national health service-related initiatives and publications. In 2003, cross-party concerns about NHS cost inflation inspired a scoping study. Who, in the biological garage, cares for the non-religious? It brought a secular, whole-person approach to all faiths and none, broadening the chaplains' role and testing their single-faith allegiance and the comfort of their spiritual homes.

Spiritual care was born and was transformational. NHS allied-professional silos were set aside. For example, a non-religious patient seeking help, and saying, "Sorry, but I'm not religious", brought the response, "Neither am I" from the spiritual care chaplain, dressed in civvy garb and with no clerical code in sight. A secular NHS is alive and well.

The harmony project involved mainstream faiths and beliefs. Where is the common ground? A secular approach, with no one being privileged, all eager to accept each other's right to be, and no reluctance to bridge foundational differences. On what would we all agree? Unanimity emerged as the golden rule.

Jo Cox was the epitome of secular inclusion. Her words of unity are more relevant now than ever before. She is probably the best role model as an individual who inspired relationships into buttresses of inclusion—her words on unity were relevant. Everyone was a member of her community. Creed, race, colour, gender and so on did not matter—all were treated as part of Jo's human family and, 24/7, there were no barriers to

engagement. Sadly, that was brought to an untimely end through a mindset of extreme political ideology that envied her outreach—and inreach—and which viewed democratic rights as evil.

I have a belief that dialogue and a secular vision are needed to focus change in social society through diversity: a mix of faiths, beliefs and none. Dialogue, understanding and acceptance are important.

At a wedding that I conducted in Auchtermuchty, under the nearby gaze of Sir Jimmy Shand's statue, all the guests were from "Muchty". "Auchter"? It was cast aside and dismissed. In an auld Scots dictionary, "auchter" is the high ground, above a place for pig-rearing. Scanning further, I found the game changer. "Och" is a frustrated "oh, yes". "Och, TV is crap—Eh'm awa tae ma bed." "Och, ye'r havering. Eh'm awa doon the pub."

OCH is also an acronym. In aviation it means obstacle clearance height and in astrophysics it stands for orbiter common hardware, but it suddenly dawned on me that OCH could also stand for "our common humanity"—a universal label for our single species. Given the requisite fertility, with members from opposite ends of the earth, procreation is assured. How common is that? It is undeniable.

"Time for reflection" is an all-inclusive mantra. It affirms secular inclusivity for all, with no privilege except via the democratic process. Sadly, however, secularism is often misrepresented and wrongly tagged as aggressive or as posing a threat. Why? Is it to ensure that the superior moral monopoly is preserved? Not at all. Its militancy is a myth. It is inclusive. It is secular.

MSPs—Scotland needs you to go well for our common good. My hope is that you become truly secular. Outcomes will get better and better. OCH. Thank you.

Topical Question Time

14:06

United States Travel Ban

1. Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what response it has received from the United Kingdom Government to the concerns that it has raised regarding people from Scotland being blocked from returning from overseas visits due to the United States imposing a travel ban. (S5T-00350)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I am deeply concerned at the executive order that President Trump signed on Friday, which in effect bans people from a number of Muslim-majority countries from entering the US. On Sunday, I wrote to the Foreign Secretary urging him to make the strongest possible representations to the US Government about the effect that the order will have on people who live, study and work here. The First Minister also raised the issue with the Prime Minister when they met at the joint ministerial committee in Cardiff yesterday. I have yet to receive a ministerial reply, but there has been communication at official level.

The Foreign Secretary made a statement in the House of Commons yesterday, saying that the UK has secured an exemption to the ban for UK passport holders, including dual nationals. However, that does not go nearly far enough. We know from cases such as that of Dr Hamaseh Tayari, a vet studying at the University of Glasgow, that the ban may affect many who live, work and study in Scotland but do not have or hold a UK passport. We are still concerned about the confusion over how the ban applies and I am seeking clarification.

More broadly, the imposition of a blanket ban on people on the basis of their birthplace, nationality or religion in the name of security is counterproductive and morally wrong. It risks exacerbating tensions between communities and it will undermine much of the work that the global community has been doing to tackle extremism.

The United States has long been a place that has welcomed people from other countries, especially those fleeing persecution. We will press the US Government directly and through the UK to reconsider the action and adopt an approach that reflects the values of equality, tolerance, diversity and human rights, and we seek the Parliament's support in doing so.

Sandra White: I thank the cabinet secretary for that full reply and I look forward to any further

replies from ministers such as the Foreign Secretary and others at Westminster.

The cabinet secretary mentioned Hamaseh Tayari, a postgraduate vet from the University of Glasgow, who was prevented from returning to Scotland via New York. We must all sincerely thank the women for independence campaign and all the people who have donated money to enable her to return to Scotland. We all recognise that that is a fantastic gesture and it is most welcome. However, does the cabinet secretary agree that the Westminster Government must condemn Trump's entry ban and work with the Scottish Government to ensure that this never happens again to people who live and work in Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: The confusion and chaos that are evident across the world show some of the issues that arise from the executive order and its immediacy. That an individual who simply goes on holiday is unable to return home shows the extremism of the action. I commend the money that has been raised through crowdfunding for the women for independence campaign and the wider community support that Hamaseh Tayari has received, not least from the University of Glasgow, which is her employer. We should all think very hard about the consequences—not just the immediate consequences—of the action that has been taken and what it says about the world we live in today.

Sandra White: We all realise that the particular issue of bringing Hamaseh Tayari back from the US, although it has been supported fantastically, is largely a reserved matter and is for the most part in Westminster's domain, but will the Scottish Government make any direct representation to the US Government on the issue? Will the Scottish Government make clear to the world that Scotland is a welcoming country that values people who come here to visit, live, work and study, regardless of their country of origin?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes, it is our intention to do that. The number of countries and Governments across the world that have set out their views is instructive. It is clear that the UK Government has lead responsibility on foreign relations, but it does not have lead responsibility on morality. The fact that so many of us view what has happened as morally wrong means that we have an obligation to speak out.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the minister join me in commending the University of Glasgow for being so quick to come out in support of its employee? Will she also join me in congratulating the many Scots who were on the streets of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen? It was very encouraging to see that people feel so strongly that the policy of the new President of the United States is racist.

Sadly, there will be more cases like that of Dr Hamaseh Tayari. I am sure that I do not need to get the minister's assurance in light of her excellent statement but, for the record, will she assure the Parliament that she will be ever vigilant in the weeks and months to come for the many other Scots who, sadly, might be in a similar position to that of Hamaseh Tayari?

Fiona Hyslop: Indeed. We need to be vigilant and alert to any cases. The lack of clarity means that we do not know who will be affected and why. That is why we are seeking clarification on what exemptions the UK Government may or may not have secured and when. Does exemption apply to dual nationals from one of the listed countries who are also European Union or Commonwealth passport holders? If a person is French-Iraqi or German-Iraqi and lives in Scotland, what does that mean? There are also issues to do with the suspension of the refugee programme in relation to the Geneva convention in particular.

Those are very big issues that people want to have a greater understanding of. People also want a greater understanding of the details of some of the confused statements that have been made.

On the point about the University of Glasgow, civic Scotland, including our universities, is very aware of its responsibilities to individuals from elsewhere who live and study in the country in which we live. They are of us, and that is why we respond to them as part of the community of Scotland, which has responded well. When I was travelling back from Brussels yesterday, I saw amazing pictures of people responding immediately and saying loud and clear that such behaviour is not in Scotland's value system and that we will join the rest of the world in speaking out.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Many thousands of refugees who expected to come to a sanctuary soon have had their hopes destroyed by the ban. We know that many of them would be welcome in Scotland.

Today, the Westminster Home Affairs Committee published a report that was damning of UK Home Office accommodation services for asylum seekers: it described them as a "disgrace". Following the Scottish Parliament's vote a few months ago, can the cabinet secretary update us on what representation the Scottish Government has made on the devolution of such services to the Scottish Parliament? Short of that, what consideration has the Scottish Government given to a public sector bid for the contract?

Fiona Hyslop: The Home Affairs Committee's report is very important and instructive. We have always made clear how Scotland deals with and supports refugees. From day 1, the quality of that

support, whether in housing or otherwise, must be secured.

I recall that one of the first things that I did as a temporary convener of a Scottish Parliament committee was to ensure that the conditions of asylum seekers in Glasgow were subject to an initial inquiry by the Parliament. I think that that was back in 1999-2000. At that time, the UK Border Agency's predecessor ensured that Glasgow had greater responsibility for accommodation for asylum seekers.

Having moved on, what have we learned in 17 years? The lessons that Scotland learned many years ago about how people who came to seek refuge in this country were treated stand us in good stead now. We have had issues and concerns with the centralised control of support for refugees, which has meant that the responsiveness that we could and should see has not been secured.

We will closely examine the committee report. Dr Alasdair Allan, who has lead responsibility in some of these areas, particularly in relation to the Home Office, will look at it but, clearly, the impact affects all cabinet secretaries with health, housing and other responsibilities.

Joint Ministerial Committee (Meetings)

2. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update following the meeting of the joint ministerial committee on 30 January 2017. (S5T-00359)

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell): The meeting discussed the lack of progress towards agreeing a common position on the triggering of article 50, which was the purpose of setting up the joint ministerial committee (European Union negotiations).

Given that the United Kingdom Government has announced its intention to trigger article 50 before the end of March, the First Minister stressed to the Prime Minister that the UK Government needs to intensify joint work on the proposals from the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. The UK Government must demonstrate how it will incorporate the devolved Administrations' interests into its negotiating position.

On the issue of powers, the First Minister made clear that it will not be sufficient to guarantee the powers that are already devolved; rather, we must see a clear indication from the UK Government that there will be a major transfer of powers to the Scottish Parliament once the UK leaves the European Union.

The Scottish Parliament is aware that the Scottish Government believes that, should the UK Government persist with its plans for the hardest of Brexits and remain unwilling to incorporate into its position the needs of the devolved Administrations, there would be no choice but to give the people of Scotland an opportunity to have their say on the matter. The next few weeks will be crucial in demonstrating the UK Government's intentions.

In line with the written agreement between the Scottish Government and the Parliament on intergovernmental relations, the First Minister will write to the Finance and Constitution Committee to provide a summary of the issues that were discussed at the joint ministerial committee.

Emma Harper: I welcome the First Minister's commitment to intensify joint work on the Scottish Government's proposals. I note her comments from yesterday that the process cannot go on indefinitely. When does the Scottish Government expect a substantive response to the proposals? Does the minister regret that that has not been forthcoming ahead of the UK Government's decision to press ahead with the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill in the UK Parliament to trigger article 50?

Michael Russell: Yes, I regret that. Clearly, there are events within the timeline that provide crucial moments. The next of those is most probably the triggering of article 50, presuming that the legislation that is being introduced today into the House of Commons is passed. It is essential that we have an intensification of the process in the run-up to triggering article 50; it is essential that that is a meaningful process that produces the compromise from the UK Government that would match the compromise that has been offered by the Scottish Government.

Emma Harper: I was surprised to hear the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, who was speaking ahead of the House of Commons debate on the UK Government's article 50 bill today, describe a hard Brexit for the UK as a foregone conclusion or, to use his words,

"a point of no return already passed."

Does the minister agree that such comments fly in the face of previous assurances by the Prime Minister to consider carefully the proposals brought forward by the devolved Administrations and perhaps typify the UK Government's regrettable approach of doing as it pleases when it comes to Scotland?

Michael Russell: It is regrettable that such language was used today, considering that David Davis was present as I was at yesterday's meeting, in which there was clear agreement to

intensify the process. That intensification is vital. If everything is a foregone conclusion, regrettably, there is no point in having a process, let alone an intensification of the process.

I hope that that was a slip of the tongue; I hope that what David Davis was indicating was not an intention to refuse to listen. I hope that he will be as good as his own word yesterday and will take part in the intensification of the discussions, so that we can come to positive conclusions that show that the UK Government is prepared to match the compromise that the Scottish Government has put forward.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): In "The Handbook of EEA Law", edited by Carl Baudenbacher, the president of the European Free Trade Association Court, the following conclusions are defended: first, that it is a "major weakness" of the European Economic Area agreement that EFTA states' ability to influence EU law to which they are subject is extremely limited; and, secondly, that such is the "complexity and sophistication" of the EEA agreement that in practice it would be difficult for any state other than Switzerland to qualify for membership. Have conclusions such as those, which come from Europe's leading scholars on the EEA, been addressed in JMC or JMC(EN) meetings?

Michael Russell: Well, I suppose I should say, "if only." If only the UK Government actually thought in some detail about those matters and entered into the debate—because, on both points, there are responses that are perfectly possible.

The first is to point out that we would be considerably weaker were we not engaged in the single market. This is not a question of saying that there would be a weakness; if we are not in the single market, there are huge disadvantages to Scotland, as the member will know, having read the important paper that we published in December.

On the second point, nobody is understating the difficulties. The paper does not understate the difficulties. However, I have to say that the difficulties of the UK position are also legion. This is not a simple matter for the UK. I am happy to quote chapter and verse of authorities who indicate that many of the things that the United Kingdom is saying will present enormous difficulties in negotiation.

There cannot be one law for the UK Government and another for the Scottish Government. The reality is that the difficult situation in which we are placed is not of our making, but we are still prepared to work exceptionally hard to get the best result for Scotland, as part of the best result for the UK. What we need is engagement in that process from

the UK Government. The commitment to such engagement was given months ago, but the process has not yet produced any results. That is why there is an agreement to intensify the process over the next few weeks.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): In the spirit of the wider perspective that he has just elucidated, will the minister talk about the level of engagement on the Welsh Government's proposals at yesterday's meeting, and in particular the bilateral engagement between the Scottish and Welsh Governments on the proposals?

Michael Russell: I am fortunate to have a productive relationship with the Welsh minister who is responsible for the matter, Mark Drakeford. We met twice yesterday: before the plenary session and then after it. We agreed joint action to take forward the intensification.

I spoke briefly to the Welsh First Minister yesterday and the view that we all have is that the Welsh paper, which was produced jointly between Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Government, which of course includes a representative of the Liberals, conforms closely with our views and there is clearly a community of interests in taking forward the discussions. Indeed, at the JMC two weeks ago, in my presentation of the Scottish paper, I said that the process of engagement on that paper must include consideration of the Welsh paper. That was welcomed by the JMC and by the Welsh Government.

I should also say that we recognise the contribution that Sinn Féin made before Christmas and the publication of a shorter document that indicated a desire for special status for Northern Ireland.

There is a widespread view that there is a requirement for differentiation in the UK position when article 50 is triggered. That is the key to the issue. That is one of the reasons why the Scottish Parliament's discussion of the article 50 process will be so essential; it is important that members are engaged in the discussion about why the triggering of article 50 needs to take place, recognising the need for differentiation.

Bailey Gwynne (Independent Review)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on the Scottish Government response to the independent review of the circumstances surrounding the death of Bailey Gwynne. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement. There should therefore be no interventions or interruptions.

14:23

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): There can be no greater tragedy for a parent than the loss of a child. I cannot imagine what the last year has been like for Bailey Gwynne's family. On behalf of the Scottish Government, I want to express my heartfelt sympathies to them and to acknowledge the resilience and dignity that they have shown since Bailey's untimely death. I know that Bailey's school and community have also been deeply affected. Incidents such as this have a profound and lasting impact, and it is important to continue to support Bailey's friends and fellow pupils as they come to terms with their loss.

I thank Cults academy, Aberdeen City Council and Police Scotland for the prompt and appropriate action that was taken immediately following Bailey's death and since. In particular, Aberdeen City Council has responded effectively and swiftly, commissioning a review into the issues that gave rise to the incident and taking forward recommendations from that independent review.

As that report makes clear, although a death at school is very rare, Bailey's death was a shocking and tragic incident. It arose from an unplanned and spontaneous conflict from which we must learn in order to minimise the risk of the same happening to other children and young people. The resilience of schools in addressing the threat that is posed by weapons and violence is key.

I will set out the Scottish Government's response to recommendations 11 and 12 from the review. Both recommendations have been considered carefully, and ministers have been mindful of the need for a response that not only addresses what happened to Bailey and his family but will impact on all of Scotland's teachers, children and young people. I make it absolutely clear that the safety of our children and young people at school is paramount. The possession of weapons in schools is absolutely unacceptable, as are threats and violence towards pupils and staff.

I will respond first to recommendation 12, on behalf of the Government and with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice's full support. That recommendation asks us to explore further legislative controls that can be brought to bear on the purchase of weapons online, and I confirm that we are doing so. The Scottish Parliament has the ability and, indeed, has legislated to provide additional controls on the possession and sale of knives and offensive weapons. It is already illegal in Scotland to possess a knife in a public place without reasonable excuse.

In March 2016, we increased the maximum penalties for the offences of handling offensive weapons and knife possession from four to five years. Schools are included within the enforcement of those laws. It is also illegal to sell knives or similar products with blades or points to anyone under 18, with the exception that the sale of knives for domestic use is permitted to those aged over 16. A local authority licence is required to supply knives to the general public not for domestic purposes. That licensing scheme, which has no equivalent in England and Wales, aims to ensure that those who sell such knives do so responsibly. Anybody who sells a knife to somebody below the minimum legal age risks a fine of up to £5,000.

However, we know that, in the case of Bailey's death—indeed, this can happen in the sale and purchase of many weapons these days—all those legal requirements and processes were circumvented through internet activity. We can act to change the law on the purchase of knives in Scotland but, as the purchase and delivery of knives crosses the borders of all United Kingdom countries, it is clear that the impact of a change only in Scotland would be limited. The most effective way to ensure that more robust controls are in place would be through UK-wide action.

Accordingly, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has written to Sarah Newton MP, the UK Government's Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism, to seek agreement to a UK-wide approach to address concerns about the online sale and delivery of knives. I hope that Parliament will agree with and support that approach. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice will update the Parliament once a response is received.

Turning to recommendation 11, I reiterate that our approach to education places the health and wellbeing of children and young people at the heart of our curriculum. That begins with a whole-school ethos that emphasises the importance that positive relationships play in maintaining and building resilience, providing a protective environment, supporting vulnerable people and

addressing adversity. It is worth noting that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review of Scottish education that was published in December 2015 identified that "Scottish students are resilient" as one of its positive developments in terms of those performing in the top quarter of international achievement.

Although our approach, which is backed by tough enforcement when necessary, is working, we must be prepared to do more. In the rare instances when violence does occur, we take such cases extremely seriously. The safety and wellbeing of everyone in our schools is our top priority and, where concerns are identified, robust action will be taken. I have sought stakeholders' views to inform our response to recommendation 11, and I advise the Parliament that I will include new guidance on violence and weapons in schools in our refreshed guidance on school exclusions, which will be published in the spring. The new guidance will make it clear that any incident must be monitored and recorded at a local level. Indeed, Aberdeen has undertaken exemplary work to put such processes in place already. Monitoring and recording will enable local authorities to review and to improve local policies.

This Government's approach to the issue of violence has been consistent. By investing in early intervention, we can deter and divert people from harmful behaviours and can encourage positive relationships that are founded on respect, tolerance and inclusion. We have already invested significantly—and we will continue to do so—in activity that is delivered in partnership with schools and a range of agencies and organisations. Those activities will continue to be freely available to all schools.

Since 2007 we have invested more than £10.5 million in activity to reduce violence among young people, including more than £3 million for no knives, better lives, and since 2008 we have invested more than £7.6 million in the national violence reduction unit, including on the delivery of the mentors in violence prevention programme. That programme seeks to give young people the skills and confidence to safely intervene and to speak up to protect themselves and their friends against violence and abuse. We are now accelerating expansion of the MVP programme to reach an additional 30,000 young people in another 93 secondary schools across Scotland by March 2018. A total of 108 schools across 18 local authorities are currently engaging with the programme.

Recommendation 11 also asked the Scottish Government to give consideration to amending the law in relation to searching pupils. I want to assure Parliament that I have given very careful

consideration to that point and have listened to advice from key stakeholders, especially teachers and their representatives. I can advise Parliament that I will not be taking forward that recommendation.

Schools and local authorities in Scotland already have robust processes in place to address concerns about violence and weapons. Those processes take into account health and safety issues and are based on risk assessments that enable staff to deal appropriately with situations in which possession of a weapon is suspected. In such circumstances, teachers may ask to carry out a consensual search. Changing the law would confer statutory powers on teachers, which would allow them to compel a young person to be searched. Currently, outside of the prison system, this power is held only by the police. We would therefore be placing teachers on the same footing as police officers if we were to change the law. That would radically change the teacher-pupil relationship, which is often fundamental to encouraging young people to change challenging behaviour, and it could damage the school ethos and the commitment to positive relationships that currently exists in Scottish schools.

Given the recent debate on stop and search powers for Police Scotland in relation to children and young people, and the necessary safeguards that are now in place, it is important that we take that consistent position into our schools and communities. We will continue with the current approach, while strengthening and clarifying the position in our refreshed guidance on school exclusions. The guidance will make it clear that consensual searches can continue, but that if a teacher is uncertain or a young person will not cooperate by showing their belongings, the police must be called immediately.

I want to reassure Parliament that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and I have given careful consideration to recommendations 11 and 12. We have sought advice and listened to a range of views and experiences. We have taken seriously our responsibility to provide an adequate and appropriate response on behalf of Government to the changes that were recommended to us. Most important of all, throughout our deliberations, we have kept at the forefront of our minds the fact that a young man lost his life in one of our schools. We recognised that it was incumbent on us to respond in a way that not only minimised the risk of that happening again but acknowledged all the circumstances that led to Bailey Gwynne's death and the harm and hurt that were caused to his family.

Taking all of that into account, I believe that the response that I have set out to recommendations 11 and 12 in the independent review is the correct

one. It is a response that demonstrates this Government's—and, I believe, this Parliament's—absolute commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our children and young people in the schools of Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. The cabinet secretary will now take questions, for which I will allow around 20 minutes.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for the measured and sincere tone of his statement, with which the Scottish Conservatives associate themselves.

I understand what the cabinet secretary said in relation to the debate about whether teachers should have additional powers to search for weapons and specifically about the point made in the advice that has been provided to the Scottish Government that such additional powers would place teachers on the same footing as police officers, which would, by definition, change the pupil-teacher relationship. I can therefore accept the reasons that the Scottish Government has provided for why additional powers would not be acceptable and would be inconsistent with other policies. I think that the decision will be warmly welcomed by teachers, who I know had great concerns about the possibility of the extra powers.

Notwithstanding that decision, the cabinet secretary has made it clear that in certain circumstances, as is the case now, teachers may be permitted to carry out a consensual search, and further guidance on that will be issued in the spring. Can he ensure that that guidance makes it abundantly clear whose consent must be sought and specifically whether it would include the head teacher and the parent or guardian as well as the pupil? Is any discussion taking place with the General Teaching Council for Scotland about teacher training for circumstances that we hope will not be repeated but are nonetheless possible in schools? I draw Parliament's attention to my entry in the register of interests, which shows that I am a member of the GTCS.

John Swinney: I welcome the Conservative Party's response and Liz Smith's comments on the difficulties and dilemmas that are involved in the questions with which the justice secretary and I have wrestled over the past few weeks in coming to the judgment that we applied.

I make it clear that, when the Government formulates the guidance that will be issued to schools, we will do so through consultation and long-established mechanisms for dialogue on the subject that will involve us in discussions with the Scottish advisory group on relationships and behaviour in schools, which will bring together directors of education, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the teaching unions and a

variety of other stakeholders. That will ensure that the guidance can be clearly followed by members of staff in our schools.

That brings me on to the question of equipping our teachers to ensure that they can handle the kind of situations that we are discussing. Part of that involves the approach to initial teacher education, but there is also the on-going training of members of staff and those in leadership positions in schools. It is important that teachers are equipped to handle the situations that they might face.

The emphasis that I placed in my statement on encouraging positive behaviours is a strategically important commitment for the Government. We think that it accords with the prevalent ethos in Scotland's schools, which must be encouraged and nurtured. Equally, however, teachers must be able to be equipped to handle situations that we hope that they do not have to face but which—regrettably, as in the instance that we are discussing—some teachers have had to face. I assure Liz Smith that we will take due account of the need to ensure that teachers are properly trained for all circumstances and that the guidance that we issue is sufficiently clear to address the issues that she raised.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement. The death of Bailey Gwynne was tragic, and our thoughts are with his family and friends.

The decision to undertake a review and give all the recommendations serious consideration is welcome, and I appreciate the work that Aberdeen City Council has carried out. We support the Government's position on recommendation 11 and its analysis of the proposal—principally, that our schools must be places for learning and that parents must be confident that their children are safe and supported by teachers who have the relevant and proportionate powers and responsibilities to ensure that.

We support all efforts to restrict the purchase of weapons online throughout the UK and support the approach that has been made to the UK Government. However, will the cabinet secretary say more about what changes could be introduced to the law in Scotland, albeit that they would be limited, as would be UK restrictions in the context of worldwide online sales?

Recommendation 20 of the report depends on the completion of the Scottish Government's child protection system review, which was due to report in December but has still not published its report. Will the cabinet secretary update Parliament on when that report will be published?

John Swinney: First, I welcome Claire Baker's commitment on behalf of the Labour Party and its understanding and support for the position that the Scottish Government takes. The way in which she described our schools is exactly the way in which I would describe them as well—they are places of learning and of safety for our young people and they offer an environment of support from the teaching profession. We have to work to sustain that approach in the context of the report's recommendations.

I also welcome Claire Baker's support for the efforts that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice is making in trying to get to a UK-wide position. We have concluded that that would be the most effective way of taking as much action as we can to address the deficiencies in online security around the purchasing of knives. We could undertake and apply actions in Scotland—particularly more stringent measures on age verification—but the danger is that we would not capture all the potential sources of knives that are dispatched from online sales. We have to accept that that might not be possible to do even under a UK measure, because of the nature of the business traffic that is undertaken.

With the UK Government, we will explore how we can most effectively strengthen the provisions. As I said in my statement, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice will report to Parliament on that question and will ensure that the updates that we receive from our dialogue with the UK Government are reported to Parliament.

On Claire Baker's final point, the Scottish Government is still considering the issue, and reports will be published in due course.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. What is the Scottish Government doing to support schools in developing robust security and safety measures that ensure the wellbeing of all pupils and staff?

John Swinney: Much of that activity relates to ensuring that we create an ethos of safety in individual schools. The proactive measures that we take, such as those through the work of the violence reduction unit, the mentoring programme and the communication of the no knives, better lives campaign are all designed to create a positive environment in which young people can be supported effectively in our education system.

In my statement, I set out additional measures that we will put in place to strengthen the guidance so that there is more effective and assiduous reporting of incidents and, as a consequence, more effective and assiduous follow-up to those incidents, to ensure that we learn lessons and are

constantly trying to make our schools as safe as they possibly can be, to protect the wellbeing of young people in our country.

Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con): I declare my interest as a current and serving councillor on Aberdeen City Council.

As a North East Scotland member who represents the community of Cults, I know how deeply affected the school community and the wider community have been by the tragic death of Bailey Gwynne more than a year ago. It is welcome that, following the publication of Andrew Lowe's report, Aberdeen City Council agreed to a new strategy that is aimed at preventing knives and other weapons from getting into schools and acted swiftly to implement the report's recommendations. Will the Scottish Government act to ensure that the exemplary work that the council carried out in response will be rolled out by other councils?

John Swinney: I have already indicated my appreciation of the work that has been undertaken swiftly and timeously by Aberdeen City Council. The council has swiftly and effectively addressed the issues that the independent report raised. There is good learning to be undertaken, and the practice that the council has developed will be significantly influential on the guidance that the Government looks at in the further discussions that it will have before the guidance is published later this spring.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): As the parent of a former pupil at Cults academy, I thank the cabinet secretary for acknowledging the impact of Bailey Gwynne's death on the school and the community and, above all, Bailey's family, who have acted with the utmost dignity in the most difficult of circumstances.

The cabinet secretary has already confirmed the discussions that he has had with Aberdeen City Council. Will he confirm further that the model of joint working with the other public sector bodies involved in the case has direct relevance to other such cases where different public authorities have a responsibility and those responsibilities intersect? If the implementation of the recommendations for Aberdeen City Council and the other public bodies is well on course, does the Scottish Government expect to play any further role in supporting the council on those matters, particularly in relation to the school and the family?

John Swinney: First, I readily acknowledge the impact of the tragedy on Cults academy, on the community, and most especially on Bailey Gwynne's family. The school community has handled what is an almost unimaginable circumstance with all the dignity and the grace that

one could ever hope to summon in such circumstances.

Mr Macdonald is absolutely correct that none of the responses take place in isolation; they must be the product of good collaborative working between different public organisations. Having discussed the issues with the director of education at Aberdeen City Council, I can confirm how appreciative she is of the work that has been done with Police Scotland—in particular through the family liaison officers, who undertake a most extraordinary task on our behalf in very difficult circumstances—to draw all this together. It is important that that partnership remains in place and, from my conversations with the director of education last week, I am absolutely sure that that will be the case. The Scottish Government will work closely with Aberdeen City Council on any areas where we can assist in advancing that agenda. A lot of the joint working will be reflected in the Government guidance and we have been given significant assistance in developing our thinking on that guidance by the council's actions.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary provide more information about the no knives, better lives campaign and how it has impacted on the prevalence of knife crime in communities in which the programme has operated?

John Swinney: The no knives, better lives campaign has existed since 2009 and has been applied across 19 local authorities. The consequence of that activity has been the driving of a significant reduction in knife crime. The campaign is particularly focused on changing behaviours among young people—in particular those in the 11 to 18 age group. We have seen significant progress in that respect, which we are looking to sustain with the commitments that the Government has made today.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement, and I associate myself with his remarks and, indeed, the remarks of other colleagues about the dignity shown by Bailey Gwynne's family at what has been an exceptionally difficult time for them.

In relation to the response to recommendation 11, I warmly welcome the approach that has been taken. I do not underestimate the balance of issues that had to be weighed up. Does the cabinet secretary accept that going down the route of giving teachers statutory powers of search would have run the risk of undermining confidence, trust and relationships between staff and pupils, which arguably could have made school environments more difficult in terms of dealing with challenging behaviour?

In relation to online sales, is there any data or evidence that shows where online sales come from? One would imagine that such sales are probably international, but, within the limits of the cabinet secretary's powers, I certainly support the approach that has been made to the UK Government.

John Swinney: I thank Mr McArthur for his support. My judgment on recommendation 11 was essentially arrived at by wrestling with the dilemmas that he has put forward. My judgment was that the recommendation had the potential to fundamentally recast the relationship between teachers and pupils in a way that would be completely at odds with the approach of the education system. It would also create an approach on search powers that would be at odds with the prevailing direction of the very good work—led by the justice secretary and informed by the working group led by John Scott—to create the guidance that Parliament is currently scrutinising in relation to this very question.

We have taken a decision that is rooted in our views about how the education system should develop and our consistent approach on stop and search.

The question of online sales is more difficult for me to pin down. In my answer to Claire Baker, I accepted that there is a difficulty because of the international nature of the market. We have accepted the issue in part, and we are pursuing UK co-operation to try to cast the net as wide as we possibly can, but I do not underestimate the possible dangers of international activity. That strengthens the argument for saying that retailers must be mindful of their conduct and behaviour in relation to the sale and dispatch of knives. We know from the report that was undertaken in the Bailey Gwynne case that internet activity was involved and that certain approaches were taken to circumvent the controls that are in place in relation to purchasing. We have to be mindful that the Scottish Government cannot police all of this area of activity. However, I have tried to reassure Parliament today that we will do as much as possible to address the issue directly.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I am sure that the cabinet secretary's statement, in particular the points about the forthcoming guidance, will be welcomed by families and teachers in schools across Scotland. What input have teachers had, or what input will they have, in the drafting of the guidance?

John Swinney: The guidance is developed in consort with the Scottish advisory group on relationships and behaviour in schools, which brings together the teaching unions, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

We will also be mindful of input from key stakeholders working with the Government, such as the violence reduction unit. We will ensure that the views and input of teachers are at the core of designing the guidance that is rolled out to schools in Scotland.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

The cabinet secretary will be aware that page 27 of the independent review report quotes a chief superintendent, who said that, at the time of the review, the local force had recently been called out to six incidents at local schools, including three in Moray, at Buckie, Keith and Elgin. The chief superintendent also said that all those incidents were reported by school staff to the police. Despite that statement, recommendation 3 says:

“Police Scotland shall be notified of each and every incident of weapons possession of which the school become aware.”

Was that recommendation included because there are still concerns that some incidents are not reported by school staff to the police? What more can the Scottish Government do to ensure that each and every incident is reported by school staff to the police?

John Swinney: I said in my statement that

“The guidance will make it clear that consensual searches can continue, but that if a teacher is uncertain or a young person will not co-operate by showing their belongings, the police must be called immediately.”

That is a direct point about the importance of involving the police where there is suspicion that a weapon is being concealed and there is no co-operation with a search. The guidance that the Government produces will address those issues. That is part of creating an approach in our schools that tries first to resolve issues by encouraging young people not to carry knives in the first place. All efforts will be made to promote that strong message and contribution to the ethos of our schools. There will then be guidance about teachers' ability to exercise control and to undertake a consensual search if a young person is prepared to co-operate. Obviously, if that is not successful, the appropriate way for such matters to be handled is to involve the police in a way that is consistent with the approach that I have set out today.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I welcome the news that the Scottish ministers want the online purchase and receipt of offensive weapons to be outlawed. Will the cabinet secretary advise when he expects to receive a response from the UK minister and what action the Scottish ministers will take if the UK Government refuses to act to address the issue?

John Swinney: The Cabinet Secretary for Justice wrote to the Home Office on 18 January so we will wait some time before we hear a response. We hope that we can encourage the UK Government to work with us on the question and to find practical ways of addressing it. If we are unsuccessful, as I said to Claire Baker, we will do as much as we can within the confines of our powers and responsibilities to ensure that we are as effective as possible.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Recommendation 10 in the independent report to Aberdeen City Council recommends that the council work with the Ben Kinsella Trust on violence reduction policies, and recommendation 13 recommends that it consult respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service, regarding anti-bullying policies. I note and welcome the cabinet secretary's comments on violence reduction measures and programmes. Following those recommendations, what contact has the Scottish Government had with those organisations and others on these matters, and what revisions and improvements have been made to the violence reduction programmes in light of the tragic circumstances of Bailey Gwynne's death?

John Swinney: The violence reduction programmes are long-standing programmes. They have been well developed and are successful in reducing crimes of violence among young people, particularly knife crime. The statistics speak for themselves in that respect, so the programmes can offer us a lot of assistance on the matter.

On Mr Johnson's points about recommendations 10 and 13, respectme undertakes work on the Government's behalf to tackle bullying among young people. As Mr Johnson knows, some guidance on anti-bullying strategies is currently being consulted on. We are engaging with the Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee on our approach and I hope to draw matters to a conclusion once I hear further from the committee on its thinking. I assure Mr Johnson that we work closely with organisations such as respectme, focusing on tackling bullying in our schools and providing the most effective support to assist in that respect.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Like my colleagues, I send my condolences to the friends and family of Bailey Gwynne.

In light of not only the answers that the cabinet secretary has given regarding consultation with teaching unions and other stakeholders throughout Scotland but information about the consistency with which data is recorded, what steps will he take to ensure that there is a whole-Scotland approach to the matter across the 32

local authorities, and what support will the unions be able to offer in achieving that goal?

John Swinney: The guidance that we issue will obviously apply across all local authority areas. I have been greatly encouraged by the degree of common thinking about and support for the approach that we are taking that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has expressed. The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland has also supported our approach. The existence of guidance that applies throughout the country and the willing participation of a range of organisations will help us to advance an important agenda to safeguard the wellbeing of young people in Scotland's schools.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the statement.

Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-03748, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on celebrating our past: Scotland's year of history, heritage and archaeology.

Before we start, I inform members that we have a little time in hand. We will have six-minute speeches in the open debate, with time for interventions.

15:00

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): From our historic towns to our majestic brooding castles, and from the industrial wonder of the Forth bridge to the mysteries of the standing stones of Callanish, Scotland's history, heritage and archaeology are fascinating. They are set in wonderful landscapes and tell stories of fortitude, power and drama, and of people and their places. We inspire and captivate the imagination of Scots and visitors alike through our history, heritage and archaeology. Scotland's landscape is incredibly rich with the evidence of our history, from surviving neolithic tombs and homes to fascinating and enigmatic carved stones, to medieval castles, to renaissance palaces, to some of the finest surviving Georgian urban planning anywhere in the world, and much more. As well as celebrating our successes in previous themed years, today's debate also allows us to shine a spotlight on Scotland's wealth of fascinating and inspiring history, heritage and archaeology. Today, I will highlight 2017 as a celebration of Scotland's rich and diverse historic environment, its vibrant heritage and its world-renowned archaeology, which are key draws both to the people of Scotland and our visitors. I also intend to acknowledge the social, economic and cultural benefits of heritage, and the importance of taking full advantage of the opportunities that are offered to raise the profile of Scotland nationally and internationally as a world-class tourism destination.

Archaeology can also act as a catalyst for local communities by providing inspiration for activities through which communities can come together to celebrate their local heritage. Scotland's community heritage conference has celebrated that public role of archaeology and showcased community-led projects across Scotland—supporting people as they explore their connection to the past.

We already have in place an exciting programme of annual events that celebrate the

themes year after year—from the Edinburgh festivals, to the jousting weekend that is held every year at Linlithgow peel, to doors open days and the festival of museums—to name just a few. This year's winter festival events, including Celtic Connections and Burns night, have provided a fantastic opportunity to celebrate our intangible heritage, which is made up of our language, stories, songs, crafts and traditional food and drink, which are—rightly—famous across the globe.

Last week, I was delighted to attend three events that marked the finale of this season's winter festivals and the start of the year of history, heritage and archaeology. The Burns unbound event at the national museum of Scotland and the night at the museum event at the Hunterian museum were both popular free events that were open to all, and which invited local communities, families and visitors to celebrate and learn more about the life and works of the bard in the unique setting that is provided by those two world-renowned sites.

The BEMIS celebrates Burns event at Celtic Connections was the spectacular musical finale of the multicultural celebration of the year of innovation, architecture and design and winter festivals and was supported by £54,000 of funding from the Scottish Government. The programme has been a great success—it has inspired a wide range of minority ethnic communities to collaborate on delivery across the country of 63 events that were attended by around 15,000 people. All the events that were supported by the programme were developed and delivered at grass-roots level and provided the opportunity for people to share and celebrate their own unique cultures, history and stories, and what Scotland means for them, as their home.

The programme of themed years has been very successful in giving Scottish tourism an edge by galvanising partners to work across sectoral boundaries in order to create a strong collaborative platform to promote Scotland and our many assets. They will also significantly help us to grow the contribution that our tourism industry makes to the economy, as we aim to increase that contribution to more than £5.5 billion a year by 2020.

Our 2012 year of creative Scotland reached almost 70 million people. Our 2013 year of natural Scotland saw a 12 per cent increase in the number of visitors to rural and coastal locations over to the same period in 2012. There were more than 1 million attendances at events that were funded in connection with our 2015 year of food and drink, and during our 2016 year of innovation, architecture and design there were 30 funded and 125 partner programme events. In addition, more

than 1 million people have engaged in the centenary celebrations around the festival of architecture, which involved 460 additional events taking place all over Scotland.

In 2018, we will celebrate a global first in Scotland when we have a year-long celebration of the very best of Scotland and its young people. A programme of cultural and educational events and activities, co-designed with children and young people, will be held across the country to celebrate Scotland as a great place for young people to grow up in, and to mark their contribution to Scottish society.

This is 2017, however. We in Scotland are extremely fortunate to have on our doorsteps the most fascinating and inspiring history and heritage, which bring the spirit of Scotland alive. Our built heritage infrastructure is a key asset that contributes strongly to the Scottish economy and must be maintained. In 2015, heritage-based tourism alone generated an estimated £780 million for the Scottish economy, and supported 23,100 jobs throughout the sector.

It is not all about our iconic buildings and internationally renowned artefacts: every part of Scotland has its own story to tell. We have many hidden gems to find and explore—I am sure that we will hear about some of them during the debate.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the cabinet secretary agree that slow or ill-informed decisions regarding the planning process can have a knock-on effect when it comes to the viability of conservation and Scotland's built heritage?

Fiona Hyslop: I acknowledge that there are challenges in the planning system, a review of which is on-going. However, I reassure Alexander Stewart that during the passage of the Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014 we ensured that there would be parallel processes in planning, which has taken six weeks off some processes. We are always looking for opportunities to simplify planning in ways that respect our heritage while ensuring that decision making is timeous.

Globally, 50 million people claim Scottish ancestry. Genealogical research is growing and is an important niche market in Scotland. We know that people want to visit where their ancestors came from, which really keeps their history alive. Members will be aware of the recent success of television programmes that use Scotland as their backdrop. A notable example is "Outlander", which has helped to increase people's interest in their past. The numbers make it clear. Research by VisitScotland shows that 68 per cent of North Americans cite ancestry as a reason to travel to Scotland and that, in general, ancestry tourists

stay longer and spend significantly more than the average visitor. We take genealogical interest very seriously. We have supported the establishment of the Scottish ancestral tourism group, which is helping to develop the sector.

We acknowledge the benefits that the clans bring to our tourism industry, especially through the strong overseas memberships of the clan associations. That is why we continue to fund the Scottish clan event fund, which has to date supported 22 events among 17 clans. Nine more events are planned for 2017 to encourage more people to embrace their ancestry. This year, the splash of tartan programme at the 2017 royal Edinburgh military tattoo has taken on board our clan traditions. The standing council of Scottish chiefs has already helped to encourage more than 50 clans to participate in each night of the tattoo. I acknowledge the value of the spectacle and agree that the existing available resources within the clan event fund could be utilised to support clans to organise events throughout Scotland to enhance engagement. I will shortly be in a position to announce successful applicants.

We have much to celebrate—and rightly so—but we are also stewards of our heritage and must rise to the challenge of its care. That is why I commissioned Historic Environment Scotland to undertake an unprecedented survey of the properties that are in care of Scottish ministers. That report highlighted the need for a new focus on care and maintenance of those properties, alongside action to address the impacts of climate change. Despite the challenging financial position, I was pleased to announce an additional £6.6 million for the properties when I visited Doune castle earlier this month.

I was also able to maintain HES's overall budget and, as in previous years, I have protected its important and often game-changing support for other organisations through its external grant programme. Those grants will help to lever in significant additional funds to the benefit of our historic environment, and the benefit of local businesses and skills in the wider economy.

We know from evidence from VisitScotland and from other research that many more visitors come from all over the world to view and experience Scotland's history, heritage and archaeology. The major driver for the industry this year presents an exciting opportunity to build on that performance. Visitor research findings show that, in 2015, 32 per cent of visitors to Scotland came for the history and culture. More than half of visitors said that they had visited a stately home or castle; many others visit museums, galleries, cathedrals and churches. The evidence is clear that at every level of the tourism industry there are major assets. Our top two visitor attractions in terms of numbers are

consistently the national museum of Scotland and Edinburgh castle.

This year will, as usual, include a busy and exciting events programme. I will highlight some of the 2017 events that are being supported through the £300,000 year of history, heritage and archaeology visitor events fund. Events will form a key element of the programme for the year and the fund is administered by VisitScotland. The events will be held across the nation, from Unst to Paisley, and at all of Scotland's six world heritage sites—in virtual form, for St Kilda. I encourage members to explore events that are happening in their area and to take the opportunity to go further afield.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has created a £0.5 million dedicated grant fund, called stories, stones and bones, to encourage people and communities across Scotland to explore their past and to find out more about their local history, customs and traditions. The first set of successful applicants was announced earlier in the month and a further round of applications closed today. The fund has received a tremendous response: from young people in inner-city schools wanting to build buildings with turf, to the deaf community wanting to help to make heritage sites more accessible. That demonstrates further the exceptional interest from across the country in celebrating Scotland's rich heritage.

Some significant anniversaries and events that are taking place will form part of the year. Edinburgh will in 2017 celebrate its 70th anniversary as the world's leading international festival city. First held in 1947, the festival provided a strong and lasting platform for reconciliation in the aftermath of the second world war. Today, all the festivals and their strong value of internationalism continue to reinforce the richness of migration and our shared histories, as they formulate and shape our future aspirations.

I am excited by the prospect of the year of history, heritage and archaeology. I hope that members are as inspired as I am by how it will increase our already extremely strong offer in heritage, history and archaeology.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I am closing, but yes.

Liam McArthur: I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for taking an intervention in her final minute.

It is impossible to touch on everything in the area that is being discussed, but I am slightly surprised that there has been no reference to the world heritage sites, which do so much to attract people to Scotland—particularly the world heritage

site in Orkney: neolithic Orkney. Does the cabinet secretary agree that our world-class sites require world-class infrastructure and visiting facilities, and will she commit to those things in this year?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Good for you for getting Orkney in there, Mr McArthur.

Fiona Hyslop: I mentioned Orkney and the Forth bridge. If Liam McArthur had been listening, he would be able to acknowledge that I said that major signature events are taking place in the six world heritage sites.

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

Fiona Hyslop: No.

I pointed out that the event about St Kilda will be virtual. As Liam McArthur knows, I am always willing and able to promote world heritage sites. Some of the investment that I announced for properties and care will be for the physical infrastructure of the structures themselves, and some of it will be used for helping to enhance the visitor experience—for example, at Doune castle. Management of increasing numbers of people—which I know is the experience in Orkney—can be a real challenge.

We must continue to show that Scotland is a modern and dynamic country and we must also connect to our past and understand the value that history and heritage can bring.

I welcome the opportunity that today's debate provides to recognise the contribution of the themed years and to celebrate and promote some of our greatest assets. All members have the responsibility to champion our heritage, whether locally, in their own communities—I hope to hear more of that in the debate—or nationally, across Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the contribution that Scotland's Themed Years play in celebrating and promoting some of its greatest assets; welcomes the 2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology and the opportunities that it provides to celebrate Scotland's rich and vibrant history and heritage with the people of Scotland and visitors alike, and acknowledges the social, cultural and economic benefits that can be realised by harnessing the opportunities offered by the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology to raise the profile of Scotland, both nationally and internationally, as a world-class tourism destination.

15:14

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am very pleased to be taking part, on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, in today's debate on Scotland's year of history, heritage and archaeology. As the cabinet secretary said, the themed years play a very important part and are

integral to the role of showcasing and commemorating the best that Scotland has to offer people from here and from around the world.

Scotland has a distinct and rich history and heritage, which is brought together by a co-ordinated marketing and communications programme that showcases our history and heritage here in our own country and across the world.

Archaeology has shown that we have many different sites and discoveries that have been welcomed in Scotland and other parts of the world.

We must ensure, however, that we put the issue of encouraging more people to visit Scotland to see what we have on offer into some context. While there has been no change in the number of visitors to Scotland from the rest of the UK since 2009, there has been a reduction in overnight tourists to Scotland coming from other parts of the world. That figure dropped by 7 per cent between 2007 and 2015. That decline in international visitor numbers is something that we should all seek to address as we formulate Scotland's approach to tourism.

The wide participation in the year of history, heritage and archaeology has shown that there are many organisations from the public and the private sectors that are willing to embrace civic Scotland. That has been very encouraging. I pay tribute to those organisations, which have made a huge difference by being involved in their own communities the length and breadth of Scotland to develop attractions and to ensure that our heritage is protected, and sought after. That has encouraged individuals to go to those locations, which continues to benefit communities the length and breadth of Scotland. I very much welcome that.

The bringing together of the creative industries, museums, historical trusts and the tourism activities that take place, and the agencies working together, have resulted in a better structure and a more informed and defined approach than we had before. The themed years have certainly engaged with that. The themes have taken on board what we are trying to achieve. We have brought all that together, and doing that has ensured that we have gone out to communities and organisations. They have taken on board many of the reports that are coming forward in order to try to inspire communities. Education, local authorities, trusts, and a range of different organisations are playing their parts.

We have the opportunity to ensure that our events and the tourism sectors that we are trying to engage have a common theme and a thread that runs through their work. That is very important. Many organisations talk about the

golden thread that tries to bring things together. That has certainly happened with the themed events, which have encapsulated all that we have wanted to convey, and have been of real benefit.

As we have said in the past, we in Scotland have a unique opportunity, in our nation's past. We should celebrate that, and many organisations and individuals do so.

I also want to take the opportunity to recognise the integral role that is played by VisitScotland in leading and co-ordinating efforts across Scotland's year. That has proved to be the foundation that we have built on and added to as we have moved forward. We are incredibly lucky to have that organisation, because it works both on marketing Scotland internationally and on providing information for tourists and visitors when they arrive in Scotland. It ensures that the themed years are encapsulated for visitors.

We can offer visitors opportunities to go to different parts of Scotland. If they come for a specific reason, we can say, "You can go to look at something else", or they may have the opportunity to develop and progress, depending on how long they are here, which gives opportunities across the piece for the retail and accommodation sectors.

I also heartily welcome the role that Historic Environment Scotland has to play in ensuring that we have a focused campaign. Over the last 10 years, HES has spent £140.6 million repairing Scotland's historic environment to preserve it for the future. That is so important. We have so much opportunity to look after the heritage that we have. If we can make sure that resources are going into it, it can be kept, as we move forward. I am therefore pleased to promote the many things that HES has done.

To that end, it is extremely important that we ensure that our tourism and other agencies are being funded and resourced adequately to ensure that they can market Scotland's heritage. That offers the rest of the world a real support. By supporting those organisations and supporting VisitScotland, we can step forward and showcase what we have and how it can be developed. It is very important that we do all that we can to ensure that those organisations are receiving as much resource and funding as they need.

It is clear that there is widespread support across the chamber for what we are trying to achieve today. I look forward to hearing members' speeches, in which they will have the opportunity to promote their own sector, region or constituency.

As I said, the themed years have given us real opportunities to promote Scotland to visitors from abroad, but also to people here. In many cases,

those individuals visit because they have clicked on to different organisations or events that are taking place.

In conclusion, VisitScotland and many other organisations have ensured that our success in that regard has been encapsulated as we have gone forward. I commend our committing to providing them with the funding and resources that they need to ensure that they can continue to do their excellent and well-regarded work.

People across the world look on Scotland as a nation that has so much heritage and culture, and so much opportunity. We must ensure that we encapsulate all the opportunities that we have to promote and market ourselves as a nation that has so much to offer.

I move amendment S5M-03748.2, to insert at end:

“; commends the leading role that VisitScotland is playing alongside other partners in promoting Scotland in the year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, and encourages the Scottish Government to ensure that tourism and development agencies are adequately funded and resourced.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Lewis Macdonald to speak to and move amendment S5M-03748.1. Mr Macdonald, you have a generous six minutes.

15:20

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer. We, too, celebrate Scotland's year of history, heritage and archaeology. The physical artefacts of past generations are worth conserving not just for their potential to generate visitor spend, which they do, but because they are important in their own right. None of it, however, comes for free. Part of the Scottish Government's responsibility in 2017 is to ensure that the relevant agencies are able to make the necessary investments, and another part of that responsibility is to strengthen the working relationships in the field between central Government agencies and local councils. Mr Stewart highlighted the role of VisitScotland, which is the lead agency for promoting tourism as a sector. Once again, it is having to plan its annual marketing expenditure with a real-terms budget cut. It is confident that it will be able to do that, but that is nonetheless an important point. Historic Environment Scotland, which is the product of a very recent merger of two distinct public agencies, is still seeking to find stability after a period of some difficulty, with no additional funding in real terms.

Fiona Hyslop: Is the member aware that, in the 2017-18 budget, Historic Environment Scotland's budget rises by 3.95 per cent? Does he recognise

that VisitScotland's written evidence on the budget states that it is pleased that its budget for the next financial year will be maintained at £43.9 million, which is exactly the same level as the budget for 2016-17? That is a challenge but, in a tight budget settlement, that has been received as a good result for both the tourism and heritage sectors.

Lewis Macdonald: I have no doubt that both agencies will do their level best to ensure that they deliver against their responsibilities in the face of the budget constraints that the cabinet secretary describes, but it is important, in seeking to make the most of a themed year such as the one that we are discussing, that we recognise that it will not happen by itself and that it will require expenditure by public authorities. The Government has an overall role in promoting the themed year, but it also has a role in ensuring that the resources that are required are provided.

I turn to Scotland's councils, because they are facing a substantial cut in their budgets for the next financial year, which can only add to the pressure on those aspects of Scotland's heritage sector for which they are responsible. This Parliament now has the power to consider a tourism levy, which councils might use to fund investment in visitor attractions and events, and the power to vary income tax, which councils might use to support local public services. Those will be matters for debate in the budget debate on Thursday rather than today, but if ministers agree that a world-class heritage sector requires adequate resources, part of their job is to ensure that they find the means to deliver those resources where they are required.

Local authorities fund many of the museums and galleries that are many people's first points of contact for the culture and heritage of their local area, and they are key partners in supporting many of the destination management organisations and city centre business improvement districts that pull together public and private sector partners to put their local areas on the visitor map.

Councils also employ archaeologists, who have what, in the words of the current chair of their association,

“can be argued to be the biggest role in protecting Scotland's heritage”.

Bruce Mann has said that, among many other things, their job is to assess every planning application for its impact on the historic environment; to provide guidance to landowners and developers; to support community projects; and to lead large teams of volunteers in excavating sites. Mr Mann reckons that he and his peers are responsible for managing 90 per cent of Scotland's historic environment and around

290,000 sites, and that, last year alone, they generated more than 1,600 projects across the country.

That is just one of the council services that are vital if our historic environment is to be protected and which create added value of their own.

It is clear that the direct employment of our professional archaeologists might be at greater risk if a council faces the prospect of having to make wide-ranging cuts in services, as many are likely to do this year. Despite the professional dedication of those archaeologists, the capacity of local councils to employ members of that profession has fallen in recent years as a result of funding issues.

It is important that councils are supported to make the capital investments that are needed to sustain the quality of the museums and galleries estate. Both the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government can help in that and act as funders for projects such as the refurbishment of existing buildings and the development of new projects. The Heritage Lottery Fund has, of course, a substantial role in working with both central and local government agencies.

European funding has been significant in many such projects in recent years.

Fiona Hyslop: I very much appreciate the point that Lewis Macdonald is making. Funding from the Scottish Government can quite often come early or late in a project. Amazing work has been happening at the Kelvin hall. There is funding from the Scottish Government already, and provision by the National Library of Scotland; there is also the roof project, which will free up additional space. That is very important capital funding that complements the work of Glasgow Life and Glasgow City Council.

Lewis Macdonald: I absolutely recognise that. To refer to my city, I recognise Scottish Government support for the refurbishment of Aberdeen music hall, but I remind the cabinet secretary that there has not been the same support for the refurbishment of Aberdeen art gallery, which is part of the estate. I understand that the Government cannot support every project and that it has to make decisions and choices, but when we look at the context of those choices, we need to recognise that all those sources of funding can be significant.

Many of Scotland's European structural funds for the current programme period have yet to be drawn down. I hope that ministers can provide certainty about spending the currently available funds and future plans.

I think that we all recognise that Historic Environment Scotland has faced challenges in

getting to grips with its very broad remit since it was created by the merger of Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The success of that merger faced real challenges as the new agency struggled to find its feet and achieve effective partnership working with other public bodies. It is clearly important that public bodies are able to work together to solve problems before the point is reached at which a significant site can be closed to visits by the public—the cabinet secretary will recall that that happened at Maeshowe last year. Working together takes leadership, and in the field in question that leadership must come from Historic Environment Scotland. It is now for the agency and its new chief executive, Alex Paterson, to provide such leadership and to move ahead in a spirit of active co-operation with local councils and other partners.

The challenge for the Government is not just around—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but I ask you to close very shortly. Thank you.

Lewis Macdonald: The challenge for the Scottish Government is not just to support Historic Environment Scotland and other public agencies, of course; it is also to ensure that all our public visitor spaces and all the places that we know about and which have been mentioned are given support, whether they belong directly to Government agencies or to local government, or operate in the private sector or the charitable sector. Many of our key sites in Scotland are not—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but you must close. You have had an extra two minutes. Please move your amendment.

Lewis Macdonald: Thank you for your indulgence, Presiding Officer. I move my amendment with the present, the future and the past in mind.

I move amendment S5M-03748.1, to insert at end:

“, and considers that adequate funding of local authorities, Historic Environment Scotland and other relevant agencies will be essential to maintain the quality and accessibility of museums, galleries and heritage sites in 2017 and beyond.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Speeches should be six minutes.

15:29

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to highlight a topic in which I have a keen interest: Scottish history. We live in a country with a unique and rich heritage.

That heritage and history have helped to define who we are as a country. It is important that this year is dedicated to reflecting on our country's rich past, because knowledge about that past can help us to form a better future.

Although looking at our country and reflecting on its history is something that we should do constantly regardless of the year, VisitScotland has dedicated 2017 to the year of history, heritage and archaeology. Under that theme, the aim is to promote our country, to celebrate its history, heritage and archaeology, to inspire Scottish citizens and visitors to engage with the country, to collaborate with the tourism sector on the theme and to encourage businesses to make the most of the year by seizing hold of opportunities to expand. That great concept will be beneficial to our country and will effectively contribute to its continued growth and success.

Statistically, tourism in 2015 contributed £11 billion to Scotland's economy. Historic Environment Scotland, the lead public body dedicated to the care of the historical environment, contributes £2.3 billion to the national gross value added, while supporting thousands of jobs.

History is never over; it continues to grow as time goes on, drawing more and more people towards it. People want to know about Scotland; they want to understand its unique beauty and culture. That interest continues to sustain us financially as a country and intellectually as human beings.

History is an interesting concept because the older we get, the more of it we have lived through. History contains the remnants of our ancestors and their lives, sorrows and joys. It teaches us about who they were, which allows us a better insight into who we are. We are nothing without the past and they are our past.

A VisitScotland web page says:

"We've been preparing for 2017 for centuries."

Indeed, we have been.

History can be found everywhere, in every town, constituency and corner of Scotland and the world. Within my constituency lies Dalkeith country park, which is a popular park marked by centuries of history. The woodlands found there are hundreds of years old. The beautiful park is also marked by the existence of Dalkeith palace. Unfortunately, the building is no longer open to public visits, but the history that surrounds it is truly fascinating. Completed in 1711, the current building was the home of the first Duchess of Buccleuch. The duchess commissioned the architect James Smith to build the palace after the manner of the Het Loo palace in the Netherlands.

Although the building that can still be seen standing in the park is beautiful and full of interesting stories, the historical nature of the location dates back long before that time. Before the 12th century, the ground on which the palace stands was occupied by Dalkeith castle. Passed from the Grahams to the Douglasses, the building lasted until 1547. In that year, the English invaded and destroyed the castle, leaving it in ruins until 1575, when James Douglas, fourth Earl of Morton, ordered a new castle to be built in its place. That castle remained until the widowed Anne Scott, the first Duchess of Buccleuch, ordered the palace to be built as it can be seen today.

It is remarkable to consider the palace's rich history. The grounds have been walked by important figures including Margaret Tudor, Charles I, Bonnie Prince Charlie, King George IV and Queen Victoria. That history on those beautiful grounds attracts a substantial number of visitors every year.

The history in my constituency does not stop at a palace. Every 21 years in the honest town of Musselburgh, people stand in the streets to watch the riding of the marches. In fact, that special riding took place last year, so if anyone missed the spectacle, they will have to wait another 20 years. If members cannot bring themselves to wait that long, they can always attend the yearly festival. As one of the most ancient ceremonies in the United Kingdom, the march riding commemorates the marking of the borough's ancient boundaries. The tradition is believed to have begun in the 15th century, although it was first recorded in 1682. In ancient times, it is said that the area might have suffered from years of raidings and the marches were created to protect the land from English encroachment.

Although parts of the tradition have changed over the years, some things remain the same. A proclamation is still made at the mercat cross, followed by the march of a town champion, a turf cutter, a turf cutter's assistant, squires and halberdiers to the boundary stations around the town. At those locations, a sod of turf is cut and the cry is made: "It's a' oor ain."

Scotland is our country, rich in history and full of culture that is unmistakably ours. Our past is there to learn from, to teach the children and to remember. The past can change the future, but if we do not learn about it, there is little hope for our future.

Not long ago, I was invited by the National Library of Scotland to speak on 17th century Scottish history. I was thrilled to be given the opportunity due to my keen interest in history and my love of books. I focused the majority of my talk on the events that resulted in perhaps one of the greatest bloodlettings in Scottish history. It is less

well known that the so-called English civil war resulted in the deaths of 237,000 Scots, out of a population of 1 million—a truly horrific statistic.

I want to focus on two people of specific interest from that century.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You will have to draw to a conclusion, not focus on two people.

Colin Beattie: In that case, I will skip past the two people of specific interest.

The Scottish Parliament itself has an interesting history. On 1 April 1690, the last order for the torture of an individual was passed in this Parliament—ah for the good old days. [*Laughter.*]

As we join VisitScotland in celebrating our heritage, history and archaeology, it is important for us to remember that Scotland is not only our past but our present and future. It is up to us to make it the best that it can be. The history of tomorrow is today, and I believe that this year will provide the world with an opportunity to see Scotland for what it truly is: a place of greatness, learning, opportunity, growth, strength and hope.

15:35

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): I am delighted that 2017 has been designated the year of history, heritage and archaeology. Our country has so much to show in every one of those areas, and in a way that few others can match. We have a long history, with much visual evidence still remaining, from Skara Brae and standing stones to castles by the dozen, imposing homes and the evidence of the part that our country played in forging the industrial revolution. Our heritage has been nurtured through the generations. We live in a country that values its past. Such is the wealth of history that we can see in Scotland today that I hope that members will understand if, for reasons of time, I concentrate on the history on my doorstep. I live in Falkirk and could easily fill a number of speeches with the history, heritage and archaeology of a town that has played such an important part in the history of Scotland.

Long before Falkirk was the scene of two pivotal battles, the Romans found that it was just about as far into Scotland as they wanted to go. In 142 AD, the emperor Antoninus Pius ordered the building of a wall across Scotland, from Carriden, near Bo'ness, to Old Kilpatrick. There were Roman forts further north, but by and large the Antonine wall was the northern border of the Roman empire. There was a wall of turf on a stone base, with a deep ditch in front of it. We can get a good idea of how imposing the wall was at various points along its length, including at Callendar park in Falkirk. There were stone and timber forts every 2 miles,

and Rough Castle, near Bonnybridge, gives a good understanding of what they were like.

The wall was barely finished when the Romans decided to withdraw behind Hadrian's wall. In the middle ages, the wall's Roman origins were largely forgotten and it was called Grahamsdyke—something that is remembered today in street names in Bo'ness and Laurieston. In Victorian times and in the 20th century, archaeological work was carried out, largely by the Glasgow Archaeological Society, which unearthed many of the remains that tell the story of a fascinating period of our history.

Of course, no self-respecting part of Scotland is complete without a good castle. It is even better if the castle is built in the shape of a boat. Blackness castle, which was built in the 15th century and knocked about a bit by Cromwell, juts out from the southern shore of the Firth of Forth in the shape of a stone boat, complete with bow and stern. Its beauty and unusual design have made it a popular venue for film makers. It was used by Franco Zeffirelli for his 1990 film "Hamlet", in the BBC series "Ivanhoe" and in the 2008 sci-fi film "Doomsday".

I am proud that my town was at the centre of the creation of modern industrial Scotland. The Forth and Clyde canal, which reopened as part of the millennium link, was the original motorway of central Scotland. It took goods from coast to coast, and later, by means of additional canals, it enabled goods and passengers to flow between our two largest cities and to all points in between. The canal's waters were used to demonstrate the world's first practical steamboat, the Charlotte Dundas, which was built in Grangemouth.

The canals and viaducts were built by human endeavour, with the limited equipment of the day. It is interesting that one of the men who came from Ireland to work on the canal was William Burke, who settled in Maddiston, near Falkirk, before meeting up with fellow Irishman William Hare, who also worked on the cutting of the canal. I am happy to say that the other people who came from Ireland during that period contributed to our heritage in much more positive ways than Burke and Hare.

Today, a new wonder, the Falkirk wheel, stands joining the Forth and Clyde canal and the Union canal, and the Kelpies remind us of the role that heavy horses played in pulling much of the canal traffic. The canals made Falkirk an ideal site for the developing industries of the mid-18th century, and the establishment of the Carron ironworks in 1759 really put Falkirk on the map. The largest ironworks in Europe, they were visited by Robert Burns and Benjamin Franklin. From the famous carronades for the Royal Navy and the guns that defended the Alamo to later items such as stoves

and pillar boxes, Carron was a byword for quality. Today, the gatehouse remains to remind us of that giant of our industrial past.

I wish that I had more time to tell the chamber of Callendar house, in the centre of Falkirk; of the Pineapple at Dunmore; of Kinneil house in Bo'ness, where James Watt worked on his first steam engine; of the community heritage centre in Grangemouth; of the hangers that stand witness to the site of Central Scotland airport, which opened at Grangemouth in 1939; of the Bo'ness motor museum; of the Bo'ness steam railway; and of the local individuals who have played a part in building the story not only of Scotland but, indeed, of the wider world.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

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

Alison Harris: I applaud all the groups, public agencies and private individuals who keep our history and heritage alive and make Scotland such a great place to visit. To do so, they need support in terms of both funding and resources. Recognising that, this afternoon I shall support the Conservative amendment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: For our next trip round Scotland, I call Stewart Stevenson.

15:41

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I stand before you a self-confessed geek. My geekiness comes from my hobby of genealogy, which is an interest that I took up some 50 years ago. I recently completed an online post-graduate certificate in genealogical, palaeographic and heraldic studies from the University of Strathclyde—I commend the university's courses to anyone with an interest in the subject. In Scotland, we have world-leading access to our family history information, which, for tens of millions of people around the world who have a familial connection to Scotland, is their "I know you". Many people who research their own family history from a distance end up coming to Scotland. When I visit the ScotlandsPeople centre at 2 Princes Street, I regularly hear the helpful and informed staff taking people from across the world through how to find their family history records for their ancestors. There are gentle whoops of joy as granny MacGregor is finally found.

Like probably most families, my family is full of migration. Besides my great-great grandfather Archibald Stewart who, in 1853, left Scotland for Canada at the age of 64 after being widowed, I have identified 13 sets of my relatives of his generation and their descendants who migrated to Canada, the USA, Ceylon, Australia and New

Zealand. In my wife's family, I have identified 12 migration events over the same period, and the migration continues to this day with our having nephews and nieces who are long-term residents of Sweden, Denmark and Australia. I have a more distant connection in the brother of the five-greats grandfather of my nephew's fiancée, who was convicted of stealing a coat in 1830 and travelled at the Government's expense to Australia. For George Adam's benefit, I should also say that I have a family member who emigrated as far as Paisley.

All of us are likely to have relatives out there who are interested in what we do in Scotland and who retain an active interest in their own history here. The huge Scottish diaspora are part of us and we are part of them. For us, this year is an opportunity to raise their interest and attachment to their mother country to another level. The refresh of the ScotlandsPeople website has given even better access to a wide range of family history data—new data has just been added—and is a key factor in drawing in our international cousins. When they visit the historic building lurking behind the Duke of Wellington's statue, they get the expert advice that they are looking for and, for many people who come to Scotland, it can be the highlight of their visit.

However, it is not just the people who are employed professionally who matter. There are family history societies right across Scotland, and volunteers regularly go out to record the inscriptions from gravestones and publish the results. About 18 months ago, I bought the book of inscriptions of the new Calton cemetery—which is about 400m behind the Presiding Officer—from the Scottish Genealogy Society, and that helped me to track down three particular family members. The Fife Family History Society's book of criminals helped me to solve another problem—in someone else's family tree, of course, not my own. In Aberdeen, we have the massive resources of the Aberdeen and North-East Scotland Family History Society, which has well over 10,000 members from right across the world. In my constituency, the Family History Society of Buchan does likewise for local data.

To know our own family history is to better understand ourselves. To be personal, I have more politicians in my family than I ever thought that I would have. A third cousin, the Canadian senator Keith Laird, was a legal partner of Paul Martin senior, who was the father of a Canadian Prime Minister. A cousin four times removed, Alexander Berry, was an MP in New South Wales. He became wealthy 150 years ago by employing convicts, and subsequently endowed a chair at the University of St Andrews that continues to this day. Lord James Stevenson, my father's first cousin, chaired the empire exhibition committee in

the 1920s and was responsible for the building of the first Wembley stadium.

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

Stewart Stevenson: I really do not have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not think that it would have been friendly.

Stewart Stevenson: My great-uncle Alex Stevenson, lord provost in this city, ensured that the statues to Robert the Bruce and William Wallace were installed on either side of the entrance to Edinburgh castle in 1929.

The attraction of genealogy, which the cabinet secretary referred to, is one of the branches of history and one that is intensely personal. It is also one in which someone will never finish their research. That means that there is the opportunity for people to make lots of repeat visits.

Of course, when one discovers something that took place 200 years ago that today would be bad news, it is merely interesting. In a parish record of a child's birth, I once saw the phrase "conceived in ante-nuptial fornication". If that had been my parent, that might have been one thing but, as a description of something that took place 200 years ago, it is fascinating, because it is redolent of another age.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: And there, I am afraid, you must close.

Stewart Stevenson: I must go back to the National Records of Scotland to read the 200 pages of court papers and the 17 precognitions and so on that relate to the case of the young man who stole a coat from a Leith Walk house in August 1830 and got a free trip to Australia for his pains.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much—I am now enlightened on your family.

15:48

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am sure that we can all agree that Scotland's heritage is vital to our economy, our culture and the history that we will pass on to the next generation. As such, the safekeeping of our heritage is a responsibility that we should take seriously and, to do that, we must recognise that adequate funding, including for local government, is essential. Therefore, although I support the Government's motion, I also support Labour's amendment. A fundamental aspect of our heritage that is often ignored is that of workers' struggle. The social artefacts that men and women in our industrial areas left behind can help to inform future generations of that struggle and the working-class background that many of us grew up with. The

mines, steelworks and factories of the industrial belt built our prosperity as a nation, and those who worked there deserve to be remembered.

I understand that the festival of museums will begin in May with events across Scotland to encourage visitors to see our heritage. Fortunately, we are privileged in central Scotland to have great examples of workers' heritage attractions, including in my home town of Coatbridge.

Summerlee heritage museum, which was originally planned and built by Monklands District Council, is based around the site of a 19th century ironworks. Entry to it is free. I used to be able to boast that Coatbridge had the only working trams left in Scotland, as the museum has a tramway, which is operated by volunteers, that takes visitors to the model drift mine and cottages.

The mine is extremely well done and gives a sense of what it must have been like to toil underground, never seeing the sun and breathing in dust, dirt and fumes. The guides who take visitors down talk about the miners through the ages, the horrendous working conditions and the industrial diseases and ailments. Indeed, one of the model miner figures shows clearly the extent of what was known as miner's tattoo: a blue scarring caused by coal getting into cuts and abrasions. The cottages show living conditions from the 1840s to the 1980s.

In the museum's main hall, visitors can see social history artefacts, including trade union banners and election posters, such as one for Jennie Lee. Outside are the remains of the Monkland canal, with a replica of the Vulcan, the world's first iron-hulled vessel. There is also an outside playground for young ones.

Over the years, I have taken many visitors from home and abroad to that fantastic museum to learn about the toil and togetherness that helped to build Britain throughout the industrial revolution and beyond. However, one of my most memorable visits was with Dr Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che Guevara, who was staying with me for a few days in Coatbridge. She was extremely impressed by the museum, but she particularly enjoyed having a shot on the flying fox in the playground area—the memory of her on the flying fox still lives with me.

We should recognise the achievement of a small Labour council in taking on such an innovative, forward-thinking project as the Summerlee heritage museum and leaving a legacy for future generations. I have said previously that I do not imagine that holidaymakers will flock en masse to the Costa Coatbridge, but I highly recommend that visitors

come to see Summerlee, as well as Drumpellier country park and the time capsule.

It is important not only to highlight places, but to remember the people who are part of our history and heritage. I noted recently that the Scotswummin project has been set up to remember and celebrate the life and work of Scottish women, who have been too often overlooked. I take this opportunity to promote Janet Hamilton, a great poet who detailed the changing shape and culture of her native Langloan area in Coatbridge—indeed, there is a monument to her there.

Fiona Hyslop: The member is quite right that we need to do more in Scotland to celebrate women and our heritage. Would she help to encourage people to promote the heritage plaques programme, which is run by Historic Environment Scotland? We are particularly keen to get women who have helped to forge Scotland's history commemorated right across Scotland.

Elaine Smith: I thank the cabinet secretary for that intervention. Perhaps we can consider Janet Hamilton for that commemoration.

As it is still January, it is relevant to refer to Robert Burns, who died the year before Janet Hamilton was born and whom she cited as one of her greatest influences. She wrote a poem for the centenary of his birth in 1859 and recited it at the Burns centenary festival in Dumfries that year. I will share the first verse with members, but I hope that they will forgive my delivery, as I have a bit of a cold.

“Oh Bard beloved! As pilgrims to thy shrine
With song and gift we come, our vows to pay;
The growing fame of a hundred years is thine,
And lands and nations hail thy natal day.”

In 1868, Janet Hamilton dedicated one of her published volumes of poetry—“Poems and Ballads”—to

“her brothers, The Men of the Working Classes.”

Women such as Janet Hamilton documented the story of Scotland and its people: their loves and losses, their community and their solidarity. It is important to remember them.

I will mention briefly the heritage of those who moved to this country looking for a better life, who include some of my ancestors. In particular, the Irish community in Scotland helped to lay the foundations of many of our great towns and cities. They made a home here, built churches and raised children who went on to become doctors, builders, teachers and engineers. Their story is reflected in many parts of Scotland; it is a story of triumph in the face of adversity and of the success of hard work across the generations.

In Coatbridge, we celebrate that heritage with an annual St Patrick's festival that lasts for two weeks, celebrating all aspects of Irish culture and its legacy, and attracting visitors from home and abroad. I am sure that all members would be welcome to come along to the festival this year. It is a great example of the sort of heritage that we should be championing in Scotland: cross-community, co-operative and constructive. We should reflect the mixed palette that makes Scotland the place that we all love, and we must invest in both education and upkeep.

15:54

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I am glad to speak in this debate. The opportunity to talk about the constituency of Motherwell and Wishaw and its heritage is one that I truly relish. My first home was in north Motherwell, adjacent to Strathclyde country park and, as a youngster, I was fascinated by the Roman remains in the park. It is believed that the Romans came to the Motherwell area in 140 AD. A garrison of some 600 soldiers was based overlooking the South Calder Water. In the 1970s, a bath house was discovered during the landscaping of the park, which revealed a carved drain cover that is thought to be one of the best in Europe. It is now housed in a museum in London, so it might be more than the Lewis chessmen that we seek to have returned.

The area is now protected for wildlife, which I am sure will have been of interest in our year of natural heritage, so further investigations are not possible at the moment. If members are interested, they might want to consult my colleague Gordon MacDonald, who I believe was involved in some of the research while studying archaeology. I was a mere wee lassie at the time.

The bath house is the only standing-stone remains of its type in Scotland and is open freely to the public, making it an attraction for children, dog walkers and tourists alike.

More recently, artefacts from the lost medieval village of Cadzow were found near the M74, during the excavations for the current motorway works near the Raith interchange. I was delighted to be able to attend the unveiling of the finds, at the edge of the motorway bordering Strathclyde country park, along with the then Minister for Transport, Keith Brown. The finds included two structures, coins, pieces of pottery and—not very politically correct for modern Scotland—smoking pipes. Archaeologists believe that they may be more than 1,000 years old and could finally identify the location of the lost village of Cadzow, which was the name given to a community on the edge of the River Clyde at the location until 1445.

The artefacts and structures were uncovered close to a memorial stone marking the former position of the 1,000-year-old Netherton cross—one of the earliest symbols of Christianity and one of the most valuable pre-Norman Christian relics in Scotland.

Warren Bailie, from Guard Archaeology, said at the time:

“Medieval remains rarely survive in industrial centres such as Glasgow due to widespread industrialisation of the nineteenth century, including mining, road and housing construction.

Very few medieval settlements have survived, so we're delighted to recover and record such a rare and interesting piece of Scottish history.”

There is no doubt that Lanarkshire and some of our most valuable buildings have been ravaged by the industrial era. In my area, very few of the old houses remain, most of them having had to be destroyed because of undermining.

Also included in the Cadzow finds was a lead pistol shot. It was on the floor of one of the structures and is possible evidence that an officer involved in the battle of Bothwell bridge in 1679 may have taken cover in the then ruins of the buildings at Netherton.

That brings me to my next tale of intrigue and interest. Presiding Officer, you will know how I love my dog Coco and that I really enjoy a walk with her at Greenhead Moss in Cambusnethan. One of the most mysterious stories in the area concerns the discovery of a partially preserved body of a man in the peat bog in the 1930s. The remains consisted of decayed fragments of human bones, clothed in a wool jacket, shoes, stockings and a cap. A report on the finds in the *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society* concluded:

“Laid upon the improvised stretcher the body was apparently carried over a considerable stretch of desolate bog and disposed of furtively—the burial in unconsecrated ground suggests a case of suicide; yet the slashed bonnet and shoe, indicating sword thrusts, seem to weaken this conjecture.

It cannot be stated definitely whether this killing episode was connected with the fighting induced by the religious disturbances prevalent in the district in the later part of the 17th century.

Nor can it be affirmed whether the victim was a military or civilian person. He did not belong to the very lowest grade of society. If a Royalist he was more likely to have been a foot soldier ... A dragoon in uniform would wear boots, not shoes, and his equipment, as described in the ancient records, was apparently of better quality and ... greater elaboration than that now discovered

If the victim were a Covenanter he may have been cut off unbeknown to his companions and his body, bearing wounds on the neck and foot, carried away secretly and probably in darkness by the aggressors and given a hurried burial”.

The dating of the body was done by a costume expert—a Mrs Helen Bennet of the National Museum of Antiquities—and, just like the stories of the chess men and the drain cover, its story involves a request for return: the central community council in Wishaw petitioned the Kelvingrove museum to have at least part of the remains returned so that they could be interred at the Covenanters monument on Greenhead Moss.

Motherwell is at the heart of Scottish history—so much so that it inspired one of the world's greatest historians, Tom Devine—so I recommend to everybody to come to Motherwell, surrounded by history and castles. There is the historic town of Lanark, with its links to William Wallace, and there is New Lanark as well. The whole of Scottish history is there, including political history, as we had the first Scottish National Party member of Parliament in 1945.

16:00

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): This afternoon's debate has a bit of the feel of a balloon debate. It will come as no surprise to anyone fortunate enough to have watched the recent BBC series “Ancient Orkney” that I whole-heartedly welcome the debate; indeed, I feel moved to declare an interest on behalf of my entire constituency. Instead, I offer my strong support for the cabinet secretary's motion. Likewise, I believe that the amendments from Alexander Stewart and Lewis Macdonald sensibly highlight the partnership approach as well as the resources that are essential to making a success of this year of history, heritage and archaeology. I want to return to that point shortly, drawing on a particular example in the Orkney context that perhaps underscores the work that still needs to be done to match the laudable sentiments that are set out in the Government's motion more consistently with the reality on the ground.

However, the cabinet secretary is certainly right to point to the success of the themed years. They have provided an opportunity to bring together different aspects of national life in Scotland, celebrate them and promote them to a wider audience. Each plays to our strengths but recognises the inherent risks in resting on our laurels. History, heritage and archaeology fit the bill perfectly and very much deserve their time in the spotlight.

I hope that over the coming year, more people will come to recognise and value what it is that Scotland as a whole has to offer and the extent to which every community right across the country has a part to play in telling that story as well as its own story.

Archaeology, heritage and history are fundamentally important in shaping our identity by increasing our understanding of the people of the past as well as by promoting popular local and visitor interest. In Orkney, what has been striking over the years is the extent to which local communities themselves often provide the driving force. The Sanday Development Trust is only one example of the enthusiasm, commitment and local knowledge of people in the community—with the input of experienced archaeologists and specialists—leading to wonderful discoveries and a much clearer picture of the past.

Similar groups exist around Orkney and nationwide, as acknowledged by the cabinet secretary in her remarks. Without them, we would have nothing like our current understanding of our history and heritage. The same, of course, can be said of the network of local rangers, who certainly do a fabulous job in Orkney and, I dare say, across the country.

That all needs to be supported, however. Building capacity at a local level is vital—not just extending the powers of Historic Environment Scotland at the centre. It requires support for regional archaeologists, who are under threat in a number of places across Scotland.

In passing, I note that the current archaeology strategy for Scotland has been criticised in some quarters for perhaps underplaying the role of universities in both research and education. That strikes me as slightly counterintuitive. I hope that the cabinet secretary might agree to investigate to see what more can be done to set out that role more clearly.

As I mentioned in my earlier exchange with the cabinet secretary, we are hugely fortunate in Scotland to have six world heritage sites, which are recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as having global cultural and natural heritage significance. Obviously the heart of neolithic Orkney site has been the one grabbing the headlines of late, thanks to Neil Oliver and co, and there is no doubt that Nick Card and his team deserve enormous credit for the astonishing work that they are doing at the ness of Brodgar. It has been fascinating to witness first hand the challenging of long-held assumptions about the neolithic age based on what is being unearthed at the ness. Some of us, Presiding Officer, take quiet satisfaction—indeed vindication—at proof of Orkney's place at the centre of civilisation.

Disappointingly, however, the remarkable finds at the ness, their capturing of the public imagination and the interest in Orkney and in archaeology more generally that they generated coincided with what I believe was a ludicrous decision by Historic Environment Scotland, first, to

close and, subsequently, to limit access to one of the jewels in the crown—Maeshowe.

Fiona Hyslop knows about and probably shares my concerns about what happened there. It illustrates that the aspirations that underpin the year of history, heritage and archaeology are still some distance from being realised consistently on the ground. I welcome the agreement by the HES chief executive, Alex Paterson, to visit Orkney next week to meet stakeholders, including representatives of the local tourism industry, to discuss possible solutions. The urgency of those talks should not be underestimated.

We need action in the short term, not least to avoid squandering the benefits of the current focus on Orkney. We cannot afford to raise expectations on the one hand and then fail to deliver for potential visitors on the other. We also need a more ambitious long-term solution. It makes no sense at all to serve our world-class heritage sites with anything less than world-class infrastructure and facilities, yet that is what is happening in this instance. What more fitting legacy could there be for the year of history, heritage and archaeology than a firm commitment by the Government, its agencies and local partners to deliver the sort of world heritage gateway in Orkney that will do justice to the internationally renowned sites there? I very much hope that the cabinet secretary agrees on that point.

I will raise one more example of how I think the year ahead could be used to make progress by developing interest in and understanding of our heritage, this time by growing an increasingly important segment of the tourism sector in Scotland. Scapa Flow's decisive role in both world wars puts Orkney in a special position when it comes to attracting the growing numbers of people with a passion for military history. Last year's Jutland centenary commemorations provided ample evidence of that. As more of those with lived experience of the wars pass away, we can expect the interest in what they went through only to increase and intensify, and that should be recognised and reflected in whatever is planned for the rest of the year ahead.

I warmly welcome the fact that 2017 is to be the year of history, heritage and archaeology. As with past years, however, the challenge will be to ensure that it leaves a positive and lasting legacy. On that basis, I hope that Fiona Hyslop will reflect on the areas that I have identified and respond positively in due course.

16:07

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Despite all of the troubling news that seems to be rolling round the world early in 2017, there is at least one

domestic agenda to get excited about, and that is of course our subject for debate today—our year of history, heritage and archaeology. I agree with the cabinet secretary that it is something to get excited about—and no wonder, given the outstanding success of the two previous themed years. Last year's focus on innovation, architecture and design saw Scottish projects featured across the world. In 2015, the year of food and drink allowed Scottish produce to be noticed on the international stage, resulting in a visitor spend of almost £1 billion on food and drink, the highest ever recorded. Both 2015 and 2016 were a phenomenal success for Scotland, and I have every confidence that 2017 will be another fabulous year for our country—and Stirling—to showcase what we have to offer. I say to Clare Adamson that, actually, it is my constituency of Stirling that is at the heart of Scotland's history and heritage. Indeed, the city of Stirling was built on history, with our streets, homes, schools and businesses clustered around the magnificent fortress castle and medieval old town. Stirling also played a role in Scotland's Roman history, as Alison Harris will be pleased to note. There are remnants of an old Roman road running alongside Stirling golf club. Of course, like many other places, Stirling's heritage and history go back much further than that. It is hard to believe but, in 5,000 BC—I was not around at the time—a huge tsunami hit Stirling, leaving behind whale bones on the carse, which nowadays hosts one of the busiest roads in Stirlingshire. The town of Callander is famous not just for its links with Rob Roy; it is also home to a neolithic site that includes the Auchenlaich cairn, which, at 322m in length, is the longest burial cairn in the United Kingdom.

Looking forward, what does Stirling have to offer in this year of history, heritage and archaeology? First off, we are home to the wonderful Stirling castle, which was once a palace for some of Scotland's most notable kings and queens. Following Historic Scotland's £12 million palace project, the magnificent James IV renaissance palace was returned to how it would have looked in the 1540s. Since that renovation, Stirling has welcomed around 460,000 visitors a year to its castle. Last year, it was deservedly named Scotland's best visitor attraction—Edinburgh, eat your heart out. I encourage anyone who has yet to visit the castle to do so; it is really worth a look.

My constituency is also home to Cambuskenneth abbey and Inchmahome priory, which is found on the island of Inchmahome in the Lake of Menteith. It was, of course, at Cambuskenneth that the nobility and clergy of Scotland swore fealty to David Bruce as the heir to King Robert in 1326 at the first Parliament to include representatives of the burghs. That was a real step forward for democracy in Scotland.

Inchmahome played host to many important figures throughout Scotland's history, including Robert the Bruce and Mary, Queen of Scots, who found refuge on the island. It is also the burial place of a significant political figure from Scotland's past: Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, who was a founder member of the Scottish Labour Party and the National Party of Scotland. It is little known that the island is his burial place and, although I have praised Historic Environment Scotland, I am a critical friend of the organisation on that point. I agree with Elaine Smith that we need to do more to remember our people. There is a fantastic opportunity at the Lake of Menteith to do a lot more to recognise that colourful and flamboyant character from our past.

Stirling is also fortunate to have the wonderful resource of the Stirling Smith art gallery and museum, as well as being home to the renowned battlegrounds of the Scottish wars of independence at Stirling bridge and Bannockburn. The state-of-the-art visitor centre at the site of the battle of Bannockburn has brought an abundance of new visitors to the area, which has benefited local residents and businesses alike. However, we really need to complete the telling of Stirling's history by erecting the planned magnificent memorial statue to William Wallace and Andrew de Moray at the site of the Stirling bridge battle.

I was privileged to host a VisitScotland reception last week to help to showcase how the year of history, heritage and archaeology can be realised in the best possible way for Scotland. On the night, one thing that really captured my imagination was a new virtual reality app that VisitScotland is developing. Using the app to fly around the majestic Wallace monument was a truly remarkable experience and showed me strongly the power of virtual reality for the future. It is a fantastic tool in enabling potential visitors to explore our history, landscape and heritage and encouraging them to travel to Scotland.

Recently, I was delighted that the cabinet secretary announced that Doune castle would be one of the sites in Scotland to receive a portion of £6.6 million of funding to support conservation, repair and visitor facilities. The castle's visitor numbers have been boosted after it featured in the "Outlander" television series, which my excitable staff informed me was recently filming near the Parliament.

Stirling has such a wealth of history that, if it happened in Scotland, Stirling was probably involved somehow. Therefore, like the cabinet secretary, I am incredibly excited to see what the year of history, heritage and archaeology will bring.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Time is creeping up on us, so I ask the remaining speakers to stick to six minutes.

16:13

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Please accept my apologies in advance for joining many members in sounding a bit like a VisitScotland advert. Although I cannot compete with Elaine Smith and Costa Coatbridge, it would be remiss of me not to do my bit to talk up the Solway riviera. It is the part of the world that I know best and about which I know the most. I also believe that Dumfriesshire is one of the most diverse and distinguished parts of Scotland and I welcome the opportunity to take part in a debate in which we are all united in talking up communities the length and breadth of our country. Dumfriesshire is best known as the land of Burns, JM Barrie and, of course, Bruce. Indeed, it does not matter what era or area of Scottish national life and history we look at, the connections can be seen in every town, village and settlement that I represent. From the Covenanters to world war commanders, from the great Border reivers to our poets, from kings to simple country folk living life as they have always done, our heritage is in abundance.

In particular, I think of Langholm common riding, which takes place every year and is a sight to behold, with people lining the streets as folk from the town and nearby ride out to mark the boundaries of the land, making new the traditions of the past and keeping our history alive. Having recently taken up horse riding, I hope that I will be able to join them next year. I also think of the old blacksmith's shop at Gretna Green, which has become famous the world over as a place where marriage ceremonies take place, and all the history that is wrapped up in that.

In relation to more recent history, I think of the devil's porridge museum, which has relatively recently reopened on a new purpose-built site in Eastriggs. It commemorates the great war and the efforts of tens of thousands of women who produced munitions in HM Factory Gretna. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the incredible work that members of the community have done to ensure that that story is told and given justice. As we look at the events that are planned across the year, it is good to see the grass roots involvement in such projects across Scotland.

Going further back, we have Lochmaben castle, which is linked to Robert the Bruce, and, of course Caerlaverock castle on the Solway estuary—or riviera—near Dumfries, which has not only become a monument to our past but is a great site for bird watchers and nature enthusiasts. Further north, in upper Nithsdale, the Crawick Multiverse

is in full swing just outside Sanquhar. It not only recognises the impact of mining in that area and acknowledges that heritage but also creates a new attraction and makes the area once again a destination for visitors from further afield.

I mentioned Burns earlier and, as I said in a debate last week, one cannot visit the Dumfriesshire constituency without finding oneself on the Burns trail, whether visiting his home in Dumfries, the mausoleum where he is buried in St Michael's kirk yard, his farm at Ellisland or the Brow well just outside Ruthwell.

Of course, going further back, we have some interesting archaeological history that has recently come to light at Burnswark hill just outside Ecclefechan, which was the site of a Roman battle. The distinctive flat-topped hill where those events took place can be seen for miles around and I encourage anyone with an interest to take a look at that.

Finally, I mention Thomas Telford, who was born in Westerkirk. This week, because a book on his life is featured on Radio 4's "Book of the Week", we have heard once again his remarkable story.

There is so much to cover and so much heritage and history right on our doorsteps. I believe that it is for all of us to encourage people to take advantage of those opportunities and to sell our country not just to our fellow countrymen but to those around the world. I commend the efforts of VisitScotland and others in highlighting our cultural assets. However, we cannot afford to be complacent, and on a more substantive point I encourage ministers and the Scottish Government to do all that they can to ensure that our tourist industry is as well supported as possible and to help to ensure that we have the right mix of skills. In particular, I think of projects undertaken by Dumfries and Galloway College that are ensuring that that is the case in our local economy. I strongly believe that we must give the new south of Scotland enterprise agency the remit to help our tourism businesses to make the most of our culture and heritage and ensure that people are well supported to take their ambitions forward.

I thank the Scottish Government for bringing this debate to the chamber and giving me an opportunity to highlight some of the visitor destinations and areas of interest in my constituency.

16:20

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I welcome this debate on celebrating our past. Scotland is a nation built on history and, as we have heard from other members, history forms a great part of our appeal as a tourist destination.

My colleagues' contributions today have inspired me to get out and see more of my ain country. Scotland's history is loaded with great academic, cultural, philosophical and literary achievements. In my constituency, Aberdeenshire East, we have more than our fair share of those. It has always bewildered me that more is not made of our corner of the country in the tourism portfolio. At the weekend, I had a wee go at BuzzFeed for omitting Slains castle near Cruden Bay from its article on 25 Scottish locations that could easily be in "Game of Thrones". Mine was not in there. It knows now.

A literary tour of my constituency would rival any other. The starting point could be Mintlaw, to see the ancient "Book of Deer" in the museum dedicated to it. It is a 10th century gospel that survives as the earliest-known example of Gaelic writing in Scotland. A 10-minute trip takes us to Strichen to find out about the novelist Lorna Moon, who left the small town at the turn of the century and ended up as one of the top screenwriters in Hollywood in the 1920s. The story of her colourful life reads like a film script in itself. Ten minutes away, we can nip over to Fetterangus and ask about Jean and Lucy Stewart, collectors and performers of the north-east's folk ballads from the travelling folk tradition. Many of those ballads influenced artists such as Bob Dylan and inspired the folk revival of the 1960s.

Driving south towards Cruden Bay, we see the inspiration for Count Dracula's castle, Slains castle, on the edge of the magnificent cliffs of the Buchan coast. It certainly fits the bill for a dramatic setting for the home one of literature's best-known characters. Bram Stoker was a frequent summer guest and drew on its haunting qualities for his work. A top tip is to go at sunset, when the granite seems to glow red in the light. It is very spooky.

Heading inland, we come across Gight castle. That spectacular, famously eerie castle, which is now a ruin, is perhaps most renowned for being the childhood home of George Gordon, better known as the poet Lord Byron. One of Scotland's best-loved authors, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, was born in Auchterless, just beside Turriff. Anyone who is, like me, a fan of "Sunset Song", might want to see where he was born before they head to the Mearns, where his works were set.

It is not just literary history that we have in abundance. Take those who have an interest in Robert the Bruce and the wars of Scottish independence. After visiting Bruce Crawford's constituency, come up to mine and follow in the footsteps of Robert the Bruce and his brother Edward as they drove out his enemy, the third earl of Buchan. That was known as the harrying of Buchan. The battlefield of the battle of Barra is currently under research to be inventoried and

protected by Historic Scotland. All that activity might explain why Aberdeenshire has more castles per acre than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. A number of those castles are on the excellent National Trust for Scotland castle trail in Aberdeenshire, including Fyvie castle—the song "The Bonnie Lass o' Fyvie" comes from that area, too—and Haddo house in my constituency. Those castles are now part of the nation's fantastic cultural heritage. I pay tribute to the fine work of volunteer organisations such as the Tarves, Turriff and Garioch heritage centres in my constituency for keeping that history alive.

Turning to archaeology, Aberdeenshire has a further unique attraction in our recumbent stone circles. These monuments are peculiar to the north-east and there are a number of fine examples in my constituency, including Easter Aquhorthies near Inverurie, Loanhead of Daviot and Aikey Brae between Maud and New Deer. An authority on those stones is the former rock star turned archaeology writer Julian Cope, who wrote "The Modern Antiquarian", which is a directory of all the stone circles in the British isles. Julian has visited Aberdeenshire many times over the years to record the history and location of the many standing stones and circles. He has a website, if members ever want to find one near them. In Aberdeenshire, we have the highest concentration of standing stones anywhere.

My parents have a stone circle in their back field in Sheldon of Bourtie, which is near Oldmeldrum, and one day my mother was surprised to see chapping on her door Mr Cope, this long-haired bloke who she kind of recognised from "Top of the Pops", who was there to ask if he could have a look. His visit is recorded in the book, although my mum is not mentioned.

We also have the Pictish monument of the Brandsbutt stone in Inverurie. Its carvings are dated to around 600 AD. We also have Roman remains from where the Picts drove them away from their camps. The Romans did not make many inroads into my area, because we are hardy folk.

In this year of history, heritage and archaeology we must encourage not only tourists but those who live in Scotland to engage with our past. People visiting our castles, heritage centres and attractions will help not only the economy, but us to better understand the present and pass on our culture and heritage to our kids. Kids love a ghost story and they also love a gory tale. Who needs "Game of Thrones" or "Outlander" when we have the real thing on our doorstep? We just need to bring things alive again by visiting those places and telling all the stories about them.

16:25

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Gosh! What a wonderful walk through Scottish heritage we have had this afternoon. It has been absolutely brilliant. I commend Bruce Crawford for his excellent extolling of Stirling castle, which is my regimental home. However, he failed to mention the wonderful museum that is being developed there with Heritage Lottery Fund money, which is worth seeing and which I commend to members. It is slightly out of my region, but it is in my regimental family. I am passionate about that castle, which is very dear to me. As a member of the Scottish Parliament for the West Scotland region, I am lucky enough to represent a part of Scotland that has many landmarks and historic sites that are of both local and national significance. Where do I start? There are so many to count. I shall refer to some of the key ones in my region.

We have Dumbarton castle, which is an Argyll and Southern Highlanders regimental site for the ninth battalion. It is built atop the imposing volcanic plug that is known as Dumbarton rock and has specular views over the Clyde and Dumbarton—for anyone who is willing to brave the 557 steps to the top.

There is also Kelburn castle, which is near Fairlie in North Ayrshire. It is a 13th century castle that has been given a makeover, in a very 21st century style, by four Brazilian graffiti artists.

Brodick castle, on the isle of Arran, is the former seat of the dukes of Hamilton. It is such an imposing and beautiful site that it is on the back of the Royal Bank of Scotland £20 note.

Neil Findlay: I think that I picked up Maurice Corry right when I heard him say “Brazilian graffiti artists”. Are there no graffiti artists in Dumbarton?

Maurice Corry: I am sure that there are. I knew some of them in the 11 years that I served as company commander in the Territorial Army unit there—I am sure that we certainly had a few in our unit. I am more than happy to send them across to Kelburn castle.

In Helensburgh there is the Hill house, which was designed by the world-renowned architects, Charles and Margaret Rennie Macintosh. In Old Kilpatrick we have the west end of the Antonine wall, which is well known in my area and is well visited. The east end of the wall is at Falkirk.

We also have Paisley abbey, which is recognised as the cradle of the royal house of Stewart and is the burial place of all six of the high stewards of Scotland. Being a Stewart myself, I should perhaps have declared an interest.

Those are just a few of the sites in the west of Scotland that people from across the world flock to

in their droves every year to see and marvel at. That such sites bring social, cultural and economic benefits to communities right across Scotland is something that I am sure that members will agree on and welcome.

According to Historic Environment Scotland, which is one of the partner organisations that is helping to run Scotland’s year of history, heritage and archaeology, Scotland’s history and the industry that it supports secures more than 60,000 jobs and is worth more than £2 billion a year to our economy.

Historic sites have economic benefits, which are of course welcome, and there is also the opportunity for Scots and visitors alike to learn and appreciate our shared history and heritage, which is of untold benefit to our societies and communities across the country. That is why all attempts to encourage people to visit Scotland as a historic site, and in particular visit our many historic sites in the west of Scotland, are very welcome. Themed years, such as the year of history, heritage and archaeology can play a big part in helping us to do that.

I am glad to see that included in this year’s programme—Mr Adam will be delighted to hear this—is Paisley’s international festival of weaving, which is running on 1 and 2 July. I believe that some events will be held at the Sma’ Shot Cottages complex and others across the town. The events cover two days, giving both locals and visitors alike the opportunity to connect with Paisley’s proud history of weaving and textile manufacturing.

It is a great idea and I hope that it goes well. Having started my own business training and career in JP Coats’s Anchor and Ferguslie mills in Paisley, I am very pleased to see that the town’s textile history and heritage are now being exposed and promoted to the world at large.

I am glad that my colleague Alexander Stewart, in his amendment, is highlighting the vital role that VisitScotland and the partner organisations are playing. Those are Creative Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, the Built Environment Forum Scotland, the heritage tourism group, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland—known as TRACS—and Museums and Galleries Scotland.

All those organisations are helping to promote the year of history, heritage and archaeology in Scotland and around the world. Without organisations like those doing the hard work in helping our tourism industry, I am sure that it would be a lot smaller and would not be

contributing to the economy and society in general as much as it is.

I mentioned Museums and Galleries Scotland and I want to take this opportunity to note its work. In particular, I was lucky enough to visit the Clydebank museum with it late last year. The museum holds a number of superb exhibitions on shipbuilding on the Clyde, including one that has the name of every single ship that was ever built on the Clyde. What a great heritage for Scotland.

Another great museum will open in my home town of Helensburgh this year: the Scottish Submarine centre will exhibit and commemorate the Royal Navy's submarine service. I know that the cabinet secretary is aware of that, and indeed visited the big brother, the Tower centre, a year or so ago.

The museum will have a real midget submarine—HMS Stickleback—on display alongside a digital exhibition giving visitors, including those with family members in the submarine service, the opportunity to see what the day-to-day life of submariners is really like.

As Alexander Stewart correctly points out, it is vital that our tourism and development agencies are adequately funded and resourced to help this incredibly important sector to thrive and thus ensure that Scotland remains a world-class tourist destination.

I will support Alexander Stewart's amendment.

16:32

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I, too, warmly welcome 2017 as the year of history, heritage and archaeology and I welcome the opportunities that it will provide to celebrate Edinburgh Northern and Leith's vibrant history and heritage and to raise the profile of the area that I represent and of Scotland as a whole.

Edinburgh Northern and Leith makes a significant contribution to Scotland's profile and its strong reputation as a world-class tourism destination. Whether people arrive in Leith on a cruise ship at the waterfront, which is a growing trend among visitors, or whether they travel from the town centre of Edinburgh into the area, Edinburgh Northern and Leith is replete with superb attractions for visitors from all around the world—attractions of key historical significance that are a key part of our shared national heritage.

From the fishing communities of Newhaven to the industry of Granton, from the internationalism of the old port of Leith to the influence of imperial commerce and the slave trade in the residential development of Inverleith and Trinity, the history and heritage of the constituency that I have the privilege to represent are varied and complex and

are bound into our wider stories and the achievements and mistakes of generations past.

The most famous attractions in my area are the royal yacht Britannia, which has been settled in Leith docks for several years, and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, which was established in 1670 as Scotland's premier civic garden and is the second most important botanic garden in the UK. It moved into Leith in 1793 and in 1820 was relocated to Inverleith, where it is now. I pay tribute to all the efforts of the Royal Botanic Garden to conserve Scotland's biodiversity and reduce climate change.

As well as those famous examples, there are many less well-known attractions and sites of historical significance in Edinburgh Northern and Leith. Granton harbour is where Queen Victoria landed in Scotland in September 1842. Today, it is in the process of being rejuvenated as a waterfront attraction for our country. National Museums Scotland and the National Galleries of Scotland have collection centres in the north of Edinburgh and are considering making those fantastic facilities more accessible in order to display more of our heritage to the public.

There is rich heritage in Leith, from the old docks to the civic journey of Leith itself, and from the legacy of Leith's democratic journey to products that we associate with our everyday lives that were invented in Leith, such as Rose's lime cordial, Glayva and the grain spirit that was key to the development of London dry gin. Also associated with Leith are modern cultural phenomena such as "Trainspotting". We are all excited to see "Trainspotting 2", if we have not seen it already.

Neil Findlay: I am glad that the member came to that, because one of the serious points is that, when I speak to people in such communities during the Edinburgh festival, they say that they feel completely and utterly detached from much of the stuff that goes on around all the cultural events. How are we getting out to communities in Granton, Wester Hailes, Niddrie and the rest of it?

Ben Macpherson: That is a good point. I was going to say that "Trainspotting" as a phenomenon tells us all about not just the character of Leith but the socioeconomic challenges that we all face in trying to help communities such as Leith. There were moves to get the premiere of "Trainspotting 2" in Leith; I was in correspondence on that behind the scenes. However, I will move on to other aspects of tourism in Leith that may create such opportunities.

Leith theatre—I know that the cabinet secretary has been engaged in that project—was, unfortunately, closed in 1988, but there are now moves to re-establish it and use it as a cultural

hub to spread the benefits of our festivals into other parts of the city. Leith rules golf society is working hard to establish an attraction on Leith Links, where the first rules of golf were created in 1744. That could bring benefits to Leith. At Leith docks, a great group of volunteers is involved in trying to rejuvenate the SS Explorer, which was one of Scotland's first purpose-built ocean-going fisheries research vessels and one of its lead research facilities for 28 years. I am delighted to say that the fire museum will also be coming to Leith soon, and Leith is home to Scotland's first virtual reality centre, with all the possibilities that that can bring.

The heritage of Hibernian Football Club is also a big part of Leith's history. The historic Scottish cup win meant a huge amount to the community and will be remembered fondly for a long time.

Stewart Stevenson: By some.

Ben Macpherson: By many.

I will finish by talking about the history of Leith as a vibrant hub for Scotland's multicultural journey and burgeoning diversity. As a sea port and as a community, and as more and more families have made the area their home over the decades, Leith has developed into a positive and inspiring tapestry of ethnicities and faiths. Many threads and stories are woven into the united colours of a shared and modern one international Scotland.

From the gurdwara at the Shore to south Leith parish church, from the Annandale Street mosque to St Mary's Star of the Sea, Leith today represents the best of Scotland's diverse religious heritage. From Polish cafes such as Yellow Bench to established Italian restaurants such as Vittoria, and from social enterprises such as Punjabi Junction to Portuguese coffee shops such as Casa Amiga, Leith today embodies the richness and strength of Scotland's multicultural history.

With all that is happening on this island and around the world at present, as we celebrate and recognise 2017 as the year of history, heritage and archaeology, let us remember that the most important history and heritage that we share—what we must always celebrate, recognise and promote—is our internationalist shared history and heritage and our shared common humanity.

16:39

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I am happy to support initiatives that bring people to visit our great country and all that it offers, which create and sustain employment and which stimulate interest in our people and our country's history.

We have certainly been around the country this afternoon, from Brazilian graffiti artists in

Dumbarton to Stirling castle, the Falkirk wheel, Summerlee heritage museum, Netherton and neolithic Orkney. Even the ex-lead singer of the Teardrop Explodes has been mentioned.

Mr McArthur mentioned Orkney. I understand that his partner in crime, Mr Tavish Scott, is not here. Mr Scott might be engaged in some culture at Up Helly Aa, although I imagine that he is probably in the pub.

The debate has got me thinking about past and present issues that dominate our historical narrative. It has also got me wondering whether, against the backdrop of savage cuts to local government and other public services, the initiative that we are discussing and others like it can be implemented effectively and can reach out to not just the usual people but everyone, or whether, like much of what the Government does, the initiative appears to be good but is maybe less so when we scratch the surface.

I could probably recite Stewart Stevenson's family history, as I have heard it so often in the chamber. At least he spared members the story of his career inventing the internet, being a pilot and being a water bailiff, and the story of the numerous other absolutely fascinating events in his life. He also spared us the story of Mary, Queen of Scots and her trunk of treasure in which keys go all over the place. Do not worry—he will bring that story back to the chamber several times before members leave Parliament. Jackson Carlaw and I are probably on our sixth version of it.

Bruce Crawford: The member might like to know that Stewart Stevenson passed me a note during the debate that says that Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham was the great-uncle of the spouse of a great-nephew of the spouse of a second cousin once removed of his. Beat that one.

Neil Findlay: Bruce Crawford started by saying that I might be interested to know that. He was incorrect on that point.

Is the Government asking communities, councils and local groups to put on events and promote the year of history, heritage and archaeology without putting money behind that? We know that, this year, councils are threatened with a further £327 million-worth of cuts on top of all the rest of the cuts that they have had to put up with over the 10 years of the Government. A person does not need to be Professor Tom Devine, who is one of my ex-university lecturers, to work out that local authorities' ability to maintain and invest in culture and heritage is fatally undermined by such an approach.

Across the board, grants to local history groups and cultural organisations are being cut; museums, galleries and libraries are threatened; and staff are losing their jobs. It is hardly

surprising that, when choices have to be made between social care and museums or between nursery education and galleries, cultural funding is often seen as an easy target. In such circumstances, we are all the losers.

Some councils have not sat back and complained; they have offered solutions. The authorities in Aberdeen and Edinburgh have called for the power to implement a tourism levy so that they can invest in things that attract tourists here in the first place. However, I understand that the Scottish Government has so far failed to support that levy. Maybe the cabinet secretary would like to take the opportunity now to advise us whether she supports that initiative. Apparently not.

The debate has got me thinking about the history that is promoted in our schools and communities, which reaches into the national and local psyche. Local history—not the histories of kings and queens and battles of centuries ago—is the history that resonates most with people. The history that resonates most with them is about their local identity, which is associated with the development of their village or town or of a particular industry or sector.

Class and cultural identity is central to how a community sees itself and its history. People identify with the history of steel, textiles, oil and fishing. The history of a West Lothian or Midlothian mining community has much more in common with the history of a south Wales mining community than with the history of a Highland country estate. The history of those people is not dominated by Wallace and Bruce or Mary, Queen of Scots; it is dominated by hard graft and struggle for better conditions and wages, improved housing, education for their children and the development of their community, built on common aims and bonds of solidarity.

I see that I have only a minute left, Presiding Officer. That is the history that people want to learn about and celebrate. I wonder how many of the projects that the cabinet secretary promotes and how much of the money that is spent will go to communities and projects that hit right at the grass-roots level. That was my point to Ben Macpherson. How much money will go to places such as Niddrie, Broomhouse, Castlemilk, Milton and Whitfield and areas that are in need of investment but all too often miss out on it?

We need to analyse our history critically and learn from it. We need to learn about Scotland's role in empire building and the slave trade. We need to hear about huge political figures such as Hardie, Maxton and Jimmy Reid, about events such as those at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, Timex and Piper Alpha, and about Glasgow's role in fighting apartheid.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must come to a close, Mr Findlay.

Neil Findlay: We should learn about all those matters. We need not just to target new initiatives towards the usual people but to encourage everyone.

16:45

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): It has been a fascinating debate. We have had everything from fornication to eloping and from battles of old over land to battles new over funding. Admittedly, history was never my strong point at school, but I spent a fair amount of time with a metal detector in the fields near my house searching for old coins. I recall the excitement of finding a penny that was 100 years old.

As an adult, I find that that that excitement is now best expressed by sitting on my sofa, watching catch-up television. Programmes such as last night's "George III—The Genius of The Mad King" are fascinating. The king's entire archive of letters is now available online to browse, so we can all trawl the hundreds of thousands of pages of manuscript and interpret for ourselves the world in which he lived, especially his relationships with politicians. We are all historians now. How we access the past has changed, but the excitement of discovery still remains.

Colleagues across the chamber have talked about the importance of Scotland's heritage for tourism, culture and education. We have discussed the need to foster the skills and craftsmanship that maintaining our historic buildings requires.

I turn to some of the speeches in the debate. Maurice Corry spoke of our shared region—of Arran, Dumbarton and areas across the Clyde region. He said that such sites are not just culturally important but help the economy directly. In fact, on page 3 of *The Scotsman* today, I read about the launch of a new Jacobite trail that covers a huge part of my region.

Oliver Mundell spoke about Robert Burns. No longer confined to suppers and speeches, we can all walk the hills that he walked and get fou in the pubs that he frequented.

Alison Harris spoke about the great role that Falkirk has played in the history of Scotland. Alexander Stewart spoke of the importance of bringing together the creative industries, the museums, the trusts and our agencies. He also gave a warning that we cannot be complacent: in today's world, tourism is fiercely competitive and getting on a plane is just as easy as getting on a bus.

The cabinet secretary talked about ancestry and clans as the main reasons why people come to Scotland. I think that golf and whisky are two others, and in that respect I recommend a visit to the Isle of Arran.

Stewart Stevenson spoke—at great length—of genealogy's importance and his family's criminality. Clare Adamson spoke of Motherwell, Liam McArthur spoke eloquently of Orkney, Bruce Crawford spoke of Stirling and Ben Macpherson spoke of Leith and the royal yacht *Britannia*, which I visited a few weeks ago and thoroughly recommend.

To those contributions I add my own thoughts. The promotion of heritage tourism is not just a matter of visitor numbers. There are a host of benefits. There are jobs, indirect and direct, with local suppliers and artisans used to restore and maintain buildings and support provided for the development of craft skills, some of which are in danger of disappearing in Scotland. There is also work with academia and education to bring to life classroom theory with field studies and practical work, such as the excellent work that dig it! 2017 is doing.

Lewis Macdonald made an important point about the direct relationship between councils and support for culture. We on the Conservative benches hope that culture is not first on the list when councils propose and vote on cuts, so we will support his amendment.

When planning for future construction and development, we should always be mindful of preservation—looking to the future need not be a contradiction when preserving the past.

From the perspective of my portfolio, it is clear to me that we should use technology to promote Scotland. In the garden lobby a few weeks ago, I tried out the new virtual reality app, Scotland VR. It is a good start and I commend it. More than a million people use Samsung's VR product every month, and tens of millions of people use the PlayStation VR product, so there are great opportunities for people to put on headsets and be transported from their homes to somewhere overseas—perhaps to Edinburgh castle, Burns's house or the inside of this chamber.

Technology can also ensure that our national landmarks are preserved in a sustainable way. A good example is—excuse my pronunciation—Plas Newydd in Wales, which has swapped fuel oil for sea energy. The mansion is powered by sea energy from the Menai Strait and is home to the biggest marine-source heat pump in the UK. Marine-source heat provides 100 per cent of the heating that the house needs, thereby saving around £40,000 a year in operating costs. That is money that can be reinvested in the conservation

of the house and its art collection. It is a fine example of what can be achieved if we take a cross-sector approach to conservation.

Our amendment simply asks the Government to keep a watchful eye on the resources and funding that are required to maintain the high standards of history and heritage tourism to which we have become accustomed in Scotland. For that reason, we ask members to support our amendment; we will support the Labour amendment.

16:51

Fiona Hyslop: What a fascinating, informative and impassioned debate we have had. I think that the only sourness came from—this is no surprise—Neil Findlay, who made sweeping generalisations and unresearched assertions. In comparison, Jamie Greene spoke knowledgeably about skills, jobs and the use and impact of technology. Such knowledge and passion have been important in the debate, in which members talked about the challenges and what we can and should do. I point out to Jamie Greene that I have been supporting research into a heat pump for Linlithgow loch that would provide heat for the area and Linlithgow palace.

The themed years are, in essence, a tourism opportunity that brings together different agencies, as Alexander Stewart said. We are seeing the benefits of such work. It is creating a sense of place for our villages, towns and cities. It is generating employment and training, and it is the inspiration for learning and education.

However, the approach needs careful stewardship. I agree that we should always seek to provide sufficient—I think that the amendments use the word “adequate”—resources for culture and heritage. That has been a priority for me for some time, in the context of the culture portfolio. I pointed out earlier that VisitScotland's budget for the next financial year will be maintained at £43.9 million, if the budget is approved. Although there are challenges in that regard, the news has been well received by the tourism sector.

I remind Lewis Macdonald of the increase in Historic Environment Scotland's capital budget, to enable the agency to address the conservation works that were identified in the conditions survey that I instructed. Although the additional £6.6 million is a start that will go only some way towards doing what we have to do, it is a commitment, as is the overall increase for HES, if the budget is approved.

Lewis Macdonald: I acknowledge the point about the £6.6 million. Will the cabinet secretary acknowledge that although visitor attractions such as Edinburgh castle and Stirling castle will repay investment relatively quickly, there are issues for

less well-known and well-visited places in the estate, which also require significant investment?

Fiona Hyslop: I think that that is the challenge. How do we ensure that the visitors who come to Edinburgh, in particular, over the year enjoy all the stories and all the places that we have heard about? It is important that we spread the visitor experience and income.

We must recognise that there are specific challenges. What has been great about the debate is that members have not only talked with passion and enthusiasm about what their constituencies have to offer but raised issues that need to be addressed. For example, Liam McArthur talked about Maeshowe—I take a keen interest in Maeshowe and the visitor centre there—and a number of members, including Lewis Macdonald, talked about archaeology. Clare Adamson talked about what was revealed as a result of archaeological work in the context of the M74.

Colin Beattie made a thoughtful speech. His quote about history being something that is never over was very apt. He also reminded us of the context when he started the theme, which ran throughout the debate, of the importance of intangible heritage and people's stories. He talked about the Musselburgh ridings and the Dalkeith country park.

Alison Harris made an excellent speech in which she talked about Falkirk. We know much about Glasgow, shipbuilding and the industrialisation of our country, but the story of central-belt Scotland, including its contribution to that industrialisation, and the stories of individuals must be told. I point out that, although Blackness castle is in Falkirk district, it was always the port for Linlithgow, which is in my constituency.

That brings me to a point that was made by a number of members, which is that the issue is about not just visitor attractions but helping communities to find out more about their own areas. That is particularly important in schools.

Jamie Greene: Does the cabinet secretary appreciate the genuine concern among members on both sides of the chamber that the potential cuts to local government may have a knock-on effect on culture, which is perhaps not as high up the list of priorities as other public services? That is a genuine concern among members.

Fiona Hyslop: We will leave the budget debate for another day. Jamie Greene cannot call for more money without saying where that money will come from. The signature event money is designed to help local communities to run events, and those events are run, by and large, with local authorities. That is one of the reasons why I have brought together culture conveners from across local authorities to share best practice. There is

real merit in helping them to share their experience of events, as some local authorities are better than others at running them.

Neil Findlay: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: No. I think that we have heard enough from Mr Findlay in the debate.

Neil Findlay: You have still got five minutes.

Fiona Hyslop: I am sorry, Mr Findlay, but I want to address the speeches of other members who made more constructive contributions to the debate.

Mr Findlay's colleague Elaine Smith talked about the Costa Coatbridge. She also talked about the importance of telling the stories of women and about Janet Hamilton's "Poems and Ballads".

Clare Adamson was right to name-check Professor Tom Devine, who was the lecturer who taught me about economic history.

The story of people and place is the strongest. Not everything is done by national organisations or national public bodies, as was acknowledged in Liam McArthur's tribute to the Sanday Development Trust and Oliver Mundell's tribute to some of the local activity around the devil's porridge museum—which, again, is a story about women's contribution to Scotland's history through their work at the munitions factory in Gretna.

I did not know that there had been a tsunami in Stirling that brought whale bones up to the carse, but I do now. Bruce Crawford also made the economic point that the result of our themed years is that we get economic benefit. For example, in the year of food and drink £1 billion was spent by tourists, which shows the economic benefit of promoting themed sectors.

A number of members mentioned virtual reality. The issue is how we can ensure that our fantastic heritage is broadcast and that people are encouraged to take part in a modern way.

I was a bit worried that we had forgotten about the Picts until Gillian Martin gave her speech. She also reiterated that this is about stories, and we need to tell those stories in all their different iterations—particularly the industrial stories. Maurice Corry mentioned the textile industry in Paisley. Such things are part of the fabric of Scotland, and we are the better for them.

The National Trust for Scotland, local community development trusts and local family history resources—which we heard about from Stewart Stevenson—all have a part to play in the story of Scotland. However, 200,000 people are employed in tourism, and our history, heritage and archaeology underpin all of that. We must develop

the skills that are needed to exploit those things and ensure that they are promoted.

Every member who has spoken in the chamber tonight has talked about Scotland's spirit, and VisitScotland's spirit of Scotland campaign will want to capture everybody's authentic experience of their local place. I encourage every member who has taken part in the debate today to ensure that they record their message about their constituency to help that authentic promotion of Scotland.

Gender Balance (Parliamentary Bureau and Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-03514, in the name of Clare Adamson, on gender balance on the Parliamentary Bureau and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. I call Clare Adamson to move the motion on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

16:59

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Following the Scottish Parliament elections, an all-male Parliamentary Bureau was appointed and an all-male Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body was elected. The Presiding Officer subsequently wrote to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee to invite it to consider that lack of gender balance, and whether any new rules were required. He commented that the situation reflected poorly on the Parliament, given its strong commitment to equal opportunities.

The committee shares the Presiding Officer's concerns, so it is proposing some new rules about gender balance on the bureau and the SPCB. First, there would be a new requirement on party leaders to consult one another and to have regard to gender balance before nominating members for the bureau. Secondly, members who intend to nominate someone to the corporate body will need to have regard to gender balance before making a nomination.

The committee believes that the proposed rules will help to promote gender balance on the two bodies, but they are not prescriptive in nature and would not, for example, require a gender balance: the committee does not wish to restrict the right of members to decide who would best represent them. The committee has consulted the corporate body and the bureau, and both are content with the proposed approach.

I am pleased to move,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 1st Report 2017 (Session 5), *Gender balance on the Parliamentary Bureau and SPCB* (SP Paper 58), and agrees that the changes to Standing Orders set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 2 February 2017.

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

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of motion S5M-03777, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme. I invite Joe FitzPatrick to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 2 February 2017—

delete

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

insert

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Ministerial Statement: Scotland's Ferry Services

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Budget (Scotland) Bill 2017/18—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-03748.2, in the name of Alexander Stewart, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03748, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on celebrating our past: Scotland's year of history, heritage and archaeology, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-03748.1, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which seeks to amend motion S5M-03748, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-03748, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on celebrating our past: Scotland's year of history, heritage and archaeology, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the contribution that Scotland's Themed Years play in celebrating and promoting some of its greatest assets; welcomes the 2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology and the opportunities that it provides to celebrate Scotland's rich and vibrant history and heritage with the people of Scotland and visitors alike; acknowledges the social, cultural and economic benefits that can be realised by harnessing the opportunities offered by the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology to raise the profile of Scotland, both nationally and internationally, as a world-class tourism destination; commends the leading role that VisitScotland is playing alongside other partners in promoting Scotland in the year of History, Heritage and Archaeology; encourages the Scottish Government to ensure that tourism and development agencies are adequately funded and resourced, and considers that adequate funding of local authorities, Historic Environment Scotland and other relevant agencies will be essential to maintain the quality and accessibility of museums, galleries and heritage sites in 2017 and beyond.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-03514, in the name of Clare Adamson, on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 1st Report 2017 (Session 5), *Gender balance on the Parliamentary Bureau and SPCB* (SP Paper 58), and agrees that the changes to Standing Orders set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 2 February 2017.

Veterans

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-02578, in the name of Graeme Dey, on Scotland's veterans. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the report by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, *The Veterans Community: Employability, Skills and Learning*; understands that the study looks at the crucial issue of veterans' employability and makes recommendations that both seek to promote the skills, experience and attributes of veterans more vigorously and remove barriers to civilian employment; acknowledges that this is the third report published by the commissioner; understands that the commissioner believes that there is an increasingly enlightened attitude towards ex-military personnel, and welcomes the part that it hopes this report can play in the formulation of policy pertaining to skills, training and employment for veterans in Angus South and across the country.

17:04

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I thank the many MSPs who have signed the motion that allows us the opportunity to debate this subject. More important, I thank and congratulate the Scottish veterans commissioner, Eric Fraser, for the report that he has produced. It is a thought-provoking, constructive and balanced report which, as he says in the foreword, is aimed

"at helping more members of the veterans community in Scotland to secure meaningful and sustained jobs"

and at providing

"direction for improving employment and learning opportunities for the veterans community in Scotland".

It is heartening to see the commissioner acknowledging that here in Scotland we are on the path to achieving a situation in which the last remaining disadvantages and barriers are removed, and opportunities in employment, skills development and academia are maximised for veterans.

I also pay tribute to the role that Keith Brown played, as Minister for Transport and Veterans, not only in championing the cause of veterans but in ensuring that we have made progress on so many relevant fronts. Support for our veterans is an issue that undoubtedly attracts cross-party consensus in Parliament, but turning that into something tangible requires leadership. Keith Brown provided that.

I declare an interest in that I am the grandson of a major in the Gordon Highlanders, the nephew of a Royal Army Pay Corps staff sergeant and the cousin of a captain in the Royal Engineers, so I

have strong family links to the military. However, although that perhaps provides an insight into the basis of my interest in veterans, that interest was very much fired by a comment that was made at an event that was held here during the previous session of Parliament to explore how we might best support our veterans. During the event, it was suggested that we needed to get away from the service veterans being viewed, from an employment perspective, as "sad, mad or bad." That remark stuck with me because I cannot imagine how it could not be seen as offensive and—to be frank—unacceptable for such a sweeping generalization to exist for any other group in our society. However, it did exist and perhaps, albeit to a lesser extent, still does. That challenges all of us who have the opportunity to act in this area.

A few months ago, I welcomed into my parliamentary office someone who had served 12 years in the Army prior to undertaking a degree in politics. I did that not as a gesture or a nod towards the subject that we are debating tonight, but because the person was the best candidate for the job. I know that I run the risk of his looking for a pay rise on the back of these comments, but I have to say that I have been hugely impressed. I have added to my staff someone who is hard working, confident, dedicated, proactive and not afraid to offer suggestions on smarter ways of working. He sees a problem: he finds a way of overcoming it. Having condemned making sweeping generalisations a moment or two ago, I should avoid making one of my own; however, on the basis of personal experience—never mind my more general views on the issue—I am happy to encourage any employer to do what I have done and to take on a veteran and to do so not as a gesture, but because of the attitude and skills that they will bring to their role.

"The Veterans Community: Employability, Skills & Learning" is the third report to be produced by the veterans commissioner. The first, which was produced a little less than two years ago, focused on the need to reverse the broad and destructive narrative that viewed veterans through the prism of need and obligation rather than recognising them for their strengths and attributes. The second report focused on housing.

The current report looks at employability and how we can best remove barriers to civilian employment and promote the skills, experiences and attributes of the veterans community. The report acknowledges that we are making big progress in the matter, if we use a 2014 Poppyscotland report as a guide. However, the fact is that former service personnel are 7 per cent less likely than their counterparts in the general population to be in work.

The commissioner identifies that outwith a growing number of major employers that have demonstrated willingness to recruit service leavers and veterans, there remains reluctance in some quarters—the public sector and small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular—to hire from the ex-services community. The report, in essence, calls for a variety of new approaches in order to prioritise access to work for veterans. The timing of that is perhaps unfortunate, in that it comes as we are also looking to support other key groups—for example, carers, through the carer positive initiative. Nevertheless, the report makes a number of recommendations that are worthy of exploration by the Scottish Government, and I understand that a response is due shortly.

I will focus on just a few matters—given the time constraints for the debate, and recognising that colleagues will wish to speak about matters that I have not touched on. The first concerns the establishment of a high-level group to be tasked with taking forward the employability agenda that is outlined in the report and the Scottish Government's strategy document "Renewing our Commitments". It is suggested that the veterans employability strategic working group should include the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, local government representation, the Ministry of Defence, the Department for Work and Pensions, and Veterans Scotland. I hope that the Government will support that proposal.

However, it strikes me that the proposal perhaps misses a trick. If one looks at how the carer positive initiative is being deployed, it will be seen that major employers such as Scottish Gas and Scottish Water are front and centre, and are proactively spreading the message, from an employer's point of view, of the benefits of employing carers and how such arrangements can be made to work in practice. Any group that is set up for veterans should perhaps have employer participation and the involvement of the Federation of Small Businesses. There is also a call for the Scottish veterans fund, in allocating funding, to prioritise supporting proposals that promote employability and increased opportunities among the veterans community, starting in the fast-approaching 2017-18 financial year.

In keeping with the mantra that veterans and, indeed, their wider families should, rather than simply being catered for, be seen as an asset, it is further suggested that we should be looking to that group in order to help to fill the skills gap. The idea is that we should look strategically at where there are specific shortfalls in skills supply—around education or health, for example—and offer veterans assistance to fill that gap in the same way as the Government has set about retraining

and re-employing skilled workers from the oil and gas sector.

The report also considers how we can improve access to further and higher education, and better recognise qualifications and skills that have been gained during service. However, I will leave it to colleagues to explore those areas in detail.

In conclusion, I say that I very much appreciate having had the opportunity to bring this important subject to the chamber, to highlight the great work that has been done in Scotland up to now, and to explore how we can build on it to ensure that we reach the stage at which we are, as a country, fully utilising and appreciating veterans and service leavers for the valuable contribution that they can make to Scotland's communities and economy.

These past few years have been unsettling for Scotland's services community, with base and deployment changes; it seems likely that that will continue into the future. Tonight provides an opportunity for Parliament and the Scottish Government to send a message and to offer our servicepeople one certainty: that we value their contribution in the services and will seek to demonstrate that in all sorts of tangible ways when they look to return to civilian life.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, Mr Dey. Speeches should now be kept to four minutes.

17:11

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I take this opportunity to thank Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber. Positive outcomes for our former members of the armed forces are extremely important.

Although I do not have a military base, or anything of that kind, in my Paisley constituency, there is quite a large community of ex-forces people and veterans there. As members of the Scottish Parliament, we usually have to deal with the cases that are most challenging: the difficult ones, in which people enter our offices and we are their last, best hope for a positive outcome. I will talk about some such situations and cases. Many of the reasons for that are mentioned in "The Veterans Community: Employability, Skills & Learning". Lack of training and of recognition of the skills gained in the armed forces can lead to ex-servicepeople struggling when they leave the forces. I can understand that: if a young man or woman joins the forces in their teens, it effectively changes their life. They work in an environment unlike any other and tend to be looked after by the service. The culture shock when they come back out to civilian life can, in some cases, be quite extreme.

The people whom I have been dealing with have been young men and women who have left in their mid to late 20s, after doing various stints in Afghanistan and Iraq. They suddenly have to deal with their life in the civilian world—a place where, as the report says, many of their skills are not recognised or, when they are recognised, the person appears, because of their armed forces working practices, to be out of step with other people in their working life.

Those veterans tend to come to us when all else has failed and they need help. For me, one of the biggest problems is that many of the qualifications that veterans get in the armed forces are not recognised in civilian life. I know that work to sort that out is being done by the MOD, but we can surely find a solution to the problem. I could give a list of veterans from Paisley who had to resit their driving tests because their MOD licences were not recognised when they came out of the armed forces. If they are fit to drive Land Rovers through war zones, I think that they will manage okay on our high streets.

There is much to be commended in the report. Recommendation 1—which is the idea of a veterans employability strategic working group—is a great chance for us to move forward. We should provide the opportunity for the Scottish Government, SDS, local government, the MOD's career transition partnership, the DWP and Veterans Scotland to work together to make the transition much easier for many such young men and women. I find that the problem is sometimes this: when the security of being in the forces is all of a sudden taken away, and when they do not get jobs and move forward, is when things start to break down and ex-servicepeople end up by presenting themselves at our doors, in our constituency offices.

I have a very good relationship with the large community of veterans in Paisley. They tend to congregate around the Comrades Club—which, incidentally, Presiding Officer, I do too. It is one of the few members' clubs of Legion Scotland that does not have a branch number, just a name—and that name is important. They always wanted it to be the Comrades Club, because it is a place where veterans—and non-veterans, in my case—can socialise. More important is that it is a place where veterans can get advice and support. That type of organisation is not for every veteran—in particular, the younger people whom I have just talked about, who are leaving the forces now. The people in the local Legion club in my area tend to be middle aged and of my demographic. They are not the type of people whom those young ex-servicepeople want to talk to. I think that recommendation 1 could go a long way towards making sure that we do not lose these young people when they leave the armed forces.

We must also not forget about the older veterans, who have been through everything before and who we may have missed helping at some point. I believe that the MOD needs to do a lot more, but we all need to work together and—as Graeme Dey said—help our veterans to acclimatise to civilian life.

17:15

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Graeme Dey for bringing this debate to the chamber, as it is an extremely important debate to have.

I would also like to comment on what George Adam has just said about veterans and where the vulnerable points are. I agree entirely that it is those who have been in the armed forces for four years or under who are the most vulnerable part of the veterans community when they come out. At the other end, we have the older veterans, who experience a significant amount of loneliness—that is something that we still have not been able to crack.

Having been a member of the armed forces myself, I have seen people in operational areas around the world and in the United Kingdom, and I can understand the problems that they have to deal with. I am currently dealing with two cases where those problems are very prevalent—one in particular is a chap with a four-year length of service who is in a desperate situation. However, I am glad to say that through the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association and other organisations, including the council, we are gradually getting him back on the rails.

Eric Fraser and his team deserve our thanks for creating a well-produced and well-thought-out document that has many good points. There are points that we will probably discuss this evening and that people may have views on. I was glad to see that the Government has decided to extend the commissioner's stay in his post for at least another year, which is great news for the whole veterans community in Scotland.

The cross-party group on the armed forces and veterans community, which I am fortunate to convene, was lucky enough to have the veterans commissioner attend our last meeting in December to talk about his report. I will not go into the report in too much detail, although I encourage members to get a copy and read it themselves; I know that several members of our group have done exactly that. Instead, I will highlight a couple of the key points in the report that I believe are key to the debate.

The commissioner points out in the report—and correctly so—that employment is one of the most important factors in determining whether someone

has a positive transition from a military life to a civilian one. For many veterans, the part of that transition that they will struggle with most is finding employment. However, this is not a group of people who, for the most part, should have any real difficulty in finding work. As the commissioner says in the report,

“this diverse group is largely made up of intelligent, experienced, reliable and motivated people, who are ideally placed to take on many of the highly-skilled and rewarding jobs that are available across Scotland.”

Veterans are an incredibly well-trained group; many in the armed forces now do some form of highly skilled technical work—the sort of skills that businesses are screaming out for—as part of their service, and would be perfect to fill the skills gap that we know Scotland has, which is why I am glad to see that the issue features in one of the recommendations in the report. However, it was worrying to read that the commissioner encountered

“a degree of reluctance to hire”

veterans, particularly among

“public sector organisations and ... small and medium-sized enterprises”.

As those include some of the largest employers in Scotland, that is an important point, and a particular cause for concern.

In my experience, there is a lack of understanding of our armed forces among some levels of management due to families become more divorced from the armed forces over the generations and therefore not really discussing the armed forces or even being supportive of them. That leads to people in human resource management, for example, who are looking at skills requirements and who have a veteran in front of them not quite understanding what he is made of.

There are a lot of things that we need to do. That is why the work of Business in the Community and SaluteMyJob is so welcome—I commend it to members. They are currently creating a toolkit to help businesses tap into this underused resource, which they will launch here in the Parliament in March.

I also welcome the commissioner’s recommendation that veterans issues should receive more scrutiny from Parliament, with the aim of raising the profile of veterans issues among members. I am glad that the cabinet secretary has already welcomed that recommendation, and I hope that he will follow through with an annual report on the implementation of the commissioner’s findings.

The commissioner has set the Parliament and the Scottish Government a series of challenging

recommendations that I hope to be able to play my part in pushing for, because I firmly believe that implementation of those recommendations would deliver massive benefits not just for the veterans community but for wider Scottish society.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I gave you a little leeway with time, Mr Corry, as you convene the cross-party group on veterans and because of your background.

I call Jackie Baillie, who will be followed by David Torrance—if he presses his request-to-speak button. There we go.

17:20

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I wonder whether I will get extra time, too, as one of the deputy conveners of the cross-party group, but I will not push my luck.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You never miss a chance, Ms Baillie.

Jackie Baillie: I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate. As a member of the cross-party group on the armed forces and veterans community, I very much welcome the opportunity to debate some of the issues that affect veterans. The report from the veterans commissioner makes a series of recommendations, some of which have been touched on; I will try not to repeat those comments.

However, at the heart of the report is the recommendation that George Adam mentioned, which is for a veterans employability strategic working group that would bring together all the key partners, such as Veterans Scotland, the Scottish Government, local government, Skills Development Scotland and, importantly, the MOD. The working group’s agenda would be about overseeing and co-ordinating activity to generate opportunities for employment and improve employability and skills. I particularly hope that the Government will take that recommendation on board.

There are numerous suggestions in the report, from improving literacy and numeracy to making transitions easier, and I commend them all to members. It is right to highlight the importance of transition. We should not fail veterans, who have served our country so well. When they are able to plan their exit from the forces, that planning should ensure that they have a career destination at the end of the process.

I will highlight one project that does not impact directly on veterans, although it has merit and has had positive results. It is the Women’s Enterprise Scotland business creation project, which is about inspiring and motivating armed forces spouses and partners to start their own business. With a

small sum of £20,000 awarded to it from the armed forces covenant, the project is also supported by the Royal Bank of Scotland, the business gateway, the Army Families Federation and HIVE, the information network for all members of the service community. The results have been fantastic. I had the pleasure of meeting two of the dozens of women who have been on the course. They each took a hobby that they did not think had much merit and turned it into a business. Both are now trading successfully and contributing to the local economy, never mind the household income, and both businesses are growing rapidly. Let us see imaginative projects such as that for veterans and their families.

I want to ask about the process that will follow. The report was published in November or December last year. Although the Scottish Government clearly needs time to consider the detail of the recommendations, I had hoped that we would have seen early acceptance of the principles. I am ever hopeful that the minister will say something positive tonight about the timescale for so doing. In particular, I highlight the idea of reporting back to Parliament annually. I ask the minister to encourage the cabinet secretary to consider committing to an annual Government debate, rather than simply laying a report. That debate could look at the range of issues affecting veterans—including health, housing and employment—and take a holistic view of what is working well and what needs to improve. I suspect that there would be support from across the chamber for such an initiative. I believe that it is only by having a sustained focus on veterans issues that we will see the necessary improvements.

Like many of us, I tuned into “Good Morning Scotland” this morning, and one of the lead items on the news bulletin was that Scottish veterans are at greater risk of deprivation than veterans elsewhere in the UK. Combat Stress, the mental health charity for veterans, surveyed around 3,000 people and found that half of Scottish veterans live in the most deprived three areas of the country. We have long understood that a lack of employment and low income are the main causes of poverty. In recognising that, we need to accept that, if we are to change the statistics, we need to invest in raising skill levels and improving employability. Getting a job is the best way out of poverty, and we owe it to our ex-servicemen and women and their families to do all that we can to ensure that they have access to employment when they leave the services. That is not too much to ask, given their courage and selflessness in serving their country.

I thank Graeme Dey once again for bringing the debate to the chamber.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You gleaned a little extra time for your deputy convener role, Ms Baillie.

I call David Torrance. Mr Torrance, do you have some position to declare?

17:25

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): None at all.

I thank Graeme Dey for bringing the motion to Parliament for debate, and for raising awareness of the significance, strength and qualities of Scotland’s veterans.

The veteran-civilian relationship is complex and often challenging. Throughout history, veterans have served their country and returned with an expectation that the country would ease their transition back into civilian life. That has not always happened, of course. The UK Government spends billions of pounds a year on the military—2.7 per cent of its gross domestic product—but only a tiny fraction of that is spent ensuring that veterans are employed, or, if they are not employed, that they build skills or receive training to ease their transition back into society.

I welcome the publication by the Scottish veterans commissioner, Eric Fraser, of the report, which studies the crucial issue of veteran employability in Scotland. I hope that the Scottish Government and my fellow MSPs embrace the report’s findings and recommendations, as we have an obligation as policy makers to invest in programmes that will help veterans adapt to social, political and economic life. The area in which that can most powerfully and successfully be demonstrated is employment, as the report on employability, skills and learning clearly exhibits.

I highlight the paradox that veterans are able to provide us with protection but struggle to secure employment at an acceptable rate upon returning to the civilian world. The Ministry of Defence recently published statistics that highlight the problem and show that former military personnel are less likely to be in work and more likely to be unemployed than their counterparts among the general Scottish population. Although the numbers show a significant improvement when compared to studies conducted in 2014, they continue to highlight the gap between veterans and non-veterans.

I make special mention of some of the organisations and programmes that help veterans and support them back into employment: SaluteMyJob, Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce, Veterans Scotland, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish veterans employment and training service, to name a few. It is crucial that those partners not only secure

meaningful and sustained employment for veterans but aid personal fulfilment and development. In my constituency, veterans first point Fife, which was established only last year, consists of veterans along with peer-support workers, clinicians and therapists, who provide information, support, social networking and understanding to promote wellbeing.

I also highlight the importance of addressing the challenges that many female veterans face. We need to recognise that women veterans experience military service in different ways from men. Without intervention, those and other issues can put women veterans at greater risk of unemployment. Therefore, we need to address the individual needs of women through specialised programmes.

The Scottish political agenda emphasises that education is a tool for ensuring a certain level of veteran employability, as barriers to significant and sustainable employment are intensified by the absence of educational attainment. Veteran higher education is often met with resistance due to monetary challenges, lack of acceptance and stress about competing with younger students. In most cases, opting out of higher education is an economic decision. As a response, the Scottish veterans fund has provided crucial financial support in the form of grants. Apprenticeships, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities are not only available but actively encouraged to help to establish networks, while our sense of community allows for an ambitious and generous charitable sector on which many veterans rely.

Although the Scottish Government is supportive of veterans, there remains work to be done to shift the stigma surrounding them that still exists among employers, the media and the public. There are often assumptions and stereotypes regarding veterans that can make some employers reluctant to hire them. However, veterans are assets. Their skills can easily be transferred into a variety of different employment opportunities. I am confident that we can mend the veteran-civilian relationship by guaranteeing that the credentials and talents of veterans are more extensively acknowledged not only by employers but, as importantly, by Scottish society in general.

I again thank Graeme Dey for securing this important debate. I hope that the Scottish veterans commissioner's recommendations are taken on board.

17:29

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Before I thank Graeme Dey for bringing this debate to the chamber, Presiding Officer, I would just like to say how much I enjoyed your

attendance at the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee the other day. I hope that that gets me another minute of speaking time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have just lost a minute.

Edward Mountain: Before I go any further, I would like to declare an interest. Despite my youthful looks, I classify as a veteran because I spent 12 years in the Army. My son, in time, when he has completed his service, will also be a veteran. The label of veteran is one that I wear with pride, and I believe that it gives me the right to hold strong opinions on the subject that we are discussing.

Before I turn my comments to the report prepared by Eric Fraser, I would like to look at an important issue facing veterans that does not form part of the report. I want to take members back in time to London in 1982, and specifically to 20 July. My regimental colleagues, who had served with distinction in the Falklands, had returned to the UK and life had started to follow a more normal routine. Soldiers from the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, wearing uniforms from the 19th century, riding Irish horses, set off from Hyde Park barracks to change the guard. Little did they know that a man watched them with but one intention: their destruction.

He and his fellow terrorists had packed 25lb of gelignite into the boot of a car on the route that the guard took. To add to the blast, he had packed 30lb of 6in nails around the device. When he detonated it, he instantly killed three of my fellow soldiers—another died three days later. The explosion also killed seven horses. Those were not the only murders that day. Seven bandsmen playing a concert in Regent's Park were also killed.

Danny McNamee, a member of the Irish Republican Army, was convicted and served time in jail for the bombing until he was released under the Good Friday agreement. However, he was not alone. John Downey, another IRA member, was charged in 2013, but his trial collapsed as the Police Service of Northern Ireland had sent him a letter, in error, assuring him that he would not face criminal charges.

Why do I tell that story? It is because, today, Northern Ireland veterans are still facing investigations and I believe that it is time that the UK Government stopped those actions, which are often no more than witch hunts supported by ambulance-chasing lawyers. Our soldiers, sailors and airmen are not criminals; they are normal people—people who would defend our country with their lives, if necessary. Stopping that persecution would allow those veterans to live productive and full lives.

I welcome Eric Fraser's report. I know that the most difficult time for service personnel is when they leave. Many are unclear about what they have to offer and have lost the discipline, routine and support that the services provided them with. To that end, recommendation 6 in the report is important, and I urge the Government to ensure that all opportunities are made known to service leavers as early as possible in order to allow a seamless and supported transition from service to civilian life.

The recommendation recognises that veterans' partners also bring skills, such as teaching and nursing, which are in demand across Scotland. They should not be forgotten. However, as has been mentioned before, to make that approach really work, it will be important to ensure that housing is available in the areas where job vacancies are identified.

Turning to the section headed "Looking to the Future and Leadership", I am sure that we all agree with recommendations 17, 18 and 19. It is important that Parliament monitors the issues facing veterans and reaches out to ensure that Scotland uses the skills that veterans undoubtedly have.

I commend the report, and I reiterate my plea that all of us remember that service personnel are team players; they played for our team and often put their lives on the line. It is right that we stand up for them and it is necessary that we protect them, as they protected us when they were asked to. We should protect them from those who seek to hound them. We should all support the recommendations in the report and work with the UK and Scottish Governments to do the best for our veterans. They deserve no less.

17:34

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I warmly congratulate Graeme Dey on securing this debate and Eric Fraser on his excellent report.

I stand as someone who, like a previous speaker, has been nominated as vice-convenor of the cross-party group on the armed forces and veterans community and as the MSP for Moray, which I suspect has more Scottish veterans per head of population than any other part of the country, given the concentrated nature of the bases—RAF Lossiemouth and the Kinloss barracks, formerly RAF Kinross—and the size of the area.

Everyone who lives in Moray knows Scottish veterans. I have many friends who have served in the forces and we all know people who are either still serving in the forces or who have done so. Our veterans play a huge role in the community—they are an integral part of it. They help to underpin the

local economy and they contribute to life in many other ways.

I welcome what the report says about the role that our veterans can play in plugging skills gaps. We should view our veterans as an enormous resource and we should help every man and woman who has served in the forces to fulfil their potential. The report refers to the fact that oil workers are being recruited as teachers. In Moray and elsewhere in north-east Scotland at the moment, there is a shortage of teachers. As highlighted in the report, I would like to see more done to attract veterans to retrain as teachers, which is one way in which they could help to plug some of the skills gaps in their local economy.

When we talk about Scottish veterans, we should also speak about their spouses and partners, who play a huge role in the local community. As Jackie Baillie said, if we give people the opportunity to work, train or develop their employability, it is a way of giving them self-worth and self-esteem and of allowing them to contribute to society and the economy and to lead productive lives. That is why this debate is so important.

Combat Stress was in the news today, talking about the deprivation experienced by many veterans. Scottish veterans are more likely to experience deprivation than veterans elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I am sure that Scottish ministers will want to look into that. Factors such as that vindicate the decision to create a Scottish veterans commissioner, who will address many of those issues. Parliament should take pride in that. On Combat Stress's website, there is a long list of the difficulties that people can have in making the transition from military to civilian life. People can have work and relationship problems; they can feel numb and empty; they can feel suicidal; they might avoid people and places; and they might have panic attacks or feel isolated. That is why it is so important to support training and employment opportunities.

This month, Sacro is starting a veterans mentoring service in my constituency. Debi Weir, who has been employed by Sacro to run the project, sent me an email listing her new responsibilities. She says:

"The service is for military veterans who are currently in or are on the periphery of the criminal justice system. The service will work closely with the veteran to put an intensive support plan in place where strategies can be developed to cope with their specific needs. The aim of the service is to enable the service user to enjoy sustainable, independent living."

There are many good projects out there. I am sure that the Scottish veterans commissioner will want to look at those in more detail in future and that ministers will want to learn more about

projects such as the one in Jackie Baillie's constituency, the one that I mentioned in my constituency and those in other members' constituencies, so that we can help to encourage people to have productive lives and deal with the challenges that they face in making the transition from military to civilian life.

The veterans commissioner says in the foreword to his report:

"with the right leadership, attitudes and investment, we can do the very best by our veterans community. As its members come to be more fully recognised as valuable contributors to our society and economy, the benefits—for all of us—will be significant and worthwhile."

That is a laudable aim that we all share. I hope that the minister will continue to do all that he can—it is also the responsibility of the UK Government to help and support Scottish veterans—to bring that vision to reality, and to help people to move on with their lives and contribute to society.

17:38

The Minister for Employability and Training (Jamie Hepburn): I join other members in thanking Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber, and thank colleagues throughout the chamber for their considered and thoughtful contributions. I see that we have some veterans in the chamber.

There can be few families in Scotland without the experience of someone who has served in our armed forces. Graeme Dey said that he is the grandson of someone who served as a major in the armed forces. I am the grandson of Private Hamish Hepburn, who served in the Seaforth Highlanders in North Africa, Italy and France during the second world war.

George Adam rightly made the point that there is a strong veterans community in his constituency. I think that that would be true for all of us. Richard Lochhead made the important point that certain communities, such as his Moray constituency, have particularly strong veterans communities.

In February last year, the veterans minister Keith Brown published "Renewing our Commitments", which highlighted many of our successes in supporting our military communities and veterans, and set out future priorities, including the ambition to make Scotland the destination of choice for service leavers.

I contend—I think that this view is shared by members across the chamber—that veterans and their families are a true asset to our society. We have set out in our labour market strategy a vision of a strong labour market that drives our country's economy. Veterans clearly have many of the

transferable skills that civilian employers can draw upon to help meet that ambition.

In 2014, the Government appointed the UK's first veterans commissioner, Eric Fraser. I echo Graeme Dey in thanking Eric Fraser for the work that he has done in that role. Since his appointment he has produced three very useful and informative reports to help us shape policy thinking. His most recent report, which is on employability, skills and learning, highlights a number of good examples and offers suggestions for how employers can use the talents and skills of those who have served in the armed forces.

We know of the need to support those who have served. The outcomes for many are good, but for far too many they are not so good. We know the many benefits of employing veterans. David Torrance rightly said that veterans should be seen as an asset and Richard Lochhead rightly said that veterans should be seen as a resource. Graeme Dey highlighted those points when he described his experience of employing a veteran in his office. He suggested that mentioning that member of staff might lead to the need to offer him a pay increase. Graeme Dey might want to reflect on that. I am sure that members across the chamber could perhaps exert some pressure to achieve such a positive outcome for that member of staff.

Members raised a number of specific issues. Graeme Dey, Maurice Corry and George Adam talked about the need to better recognise qualifications that have been accrued during the time of serving and make them applicable in civilian life. We are examining that at a strategic level and discussions are under way now on how we can better ensure the transfer into civilian life of skills that have been acquired while serving.

Graeme Dey and Maurice Corry raised a point about encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises to recruit veterans. I very much concur with the point that Mr Corry made—doing that is essential. We know that 85 per cent of employers across Scotland are SMEs, so if we are not working with that sector we are certainly missing a trick. Of course, the Scottish Government funds Scotland's employer recruitment incentive, which provides employers with funding to take on young people, and early service leavers and veterans who are aged 16 to 29 are eligible for support through that mechanism. Perhaps we need to make sure that that is better understood.

An issue was raised about employers being better supported more generally, so that they could have the confidence to take on employees. David Torrance mentioned that SaluteMyJob and Business in the Community are developing a toolkit to support employers to recruit. We expect to launch that towards the end of March.

Maurice Corry mentioned the public sector. The report has a specific recommendation on the national health service. It is worth putting it on record that NHS Lanarkshire has developed a comprehensive framework to help recruit managers and candidates from the armed forces. Work is under way and we need to see how it can be spread further.

I reassure Maurice Corry and Jackie Baillie that, since the publication of the commissioner's latest report, the cabinet secretary has accepted the commissioner's recommendation to report to Parliament on an annual basis on progress towards the recommendations made in all the reports. I heard very clearly a request from Ms Baillie for an annual debate. That is an innovative suggestion and I will take it back to the cabinet secretary for him to reflect on it.

In response to the clear concern that we respond timeously to the report, I can let Ms Baillie know that a response is indeed imminent. The cabinet secretary has agreed to respond to the recommendations in this latest report before the next meeting of the cross-party working group on the armed forces community and veterans on 8 March. Generally, we have received the report very positively and welcome its tenor.

Many of the points raised in the report reflect work that is already being undertaken within the Scottish Government. For example, since 2008 the Scottish Government has committed over £830,000 in grants to 125 projects working with veterans across Scotland, through the Scottish veterans fund.

Over the next three years, the fund will provide £600,000 to help a wide range of projects to support veterans, including ones on employability. The fund includes a three-year £240,000 contribution from Standard Life, to whom we are very grateful, to support a specific stream on veteran employability.

We are engaging with employers across Scotland. We have been working with Business in the Community and SaluteMyJob to encourage businesses of all sizes, right across the country, to consider employing service leavers and veterans. I am also aware that there are a number of employers who are already engaged in good practice. I have been able to visit some. I am also aware, as Ms Baillie knows because we debated the Women's Enterprise Scotland initiatives more generally, of the particular work that she mentioned.

There is much good work under way. I recognise the importance of the report and assure all members, and Mr Dey especially, given that he brought the debate to the chamber, that we are looking at the report very seriously and will do all

that we can to make sure that Scotland is indeed the destination of choice for service leavers and their families.

Meeting closed at 17:47.

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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