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Scottish Parliament

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[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:15]

Housing Support for Young People

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The first item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S5M-04643, in the name of Ben Macpherson, on United Kingdom Government restrictions for 18 to 21-year-olds accessing financial support for housing. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament expresses concern at its understanding that 18 to 21-year-olds in Edinburgh and across Scotland will face restrictions in accessing financial support for housing from 1 April 2017; notes the calls on the UK Government to reconsider what it believes is its ill-conceived and harmful plans that will increase the likelihood of young people being made homeless and undermine the preventative approach to homelessness taken by local and national government in Scotland; believes that these changes are being imposed while discussions continue between the UK and Scottish governments on how the policy can be fully mitigated within existing powers; notes its disappointment with the UK Government's short timescale for change despite assurances that options for Scotland would be considered further, which it believes makes it impossible for full mitigation arrangements to be put in place before this change comes into force; acknowledges the report, *The withdrawal of support for housing costs under Universal Credit for young people: more pain for little gain?*, from the homelessness charity Crisis, and Sheffield Hallam University, which suggests that many of those affected are "likely to be made more vulnerable, less secure and less able to rebuild their relationship with their parents or to keep or find a job than they were before"; notes the research of Heriot-Watt University, which estimates that, if more than 140 young people are made homeless, the policy will cost the UK Government more than the estimated and supposed savings, and believes that not all young people have the option of living with their parents and, for those who may be in a desperate or difficult situation and facing homelessness, housing support can provide stability, security and enable them to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

13:15

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I thank the Presiding Officer for securing debate time on the important issue of UK Government restrictions for 18 to 21-year-olds accessing financial support for housing.

How we as a country support our young people is fundamental to the prosperity of our society and

the strength of our economy. How we nurture the contributions of younger generations will shape the values of our future, the character of our nation, the strength of our commerce and the prospects of our collective wellbeing. That is why we must seek to support and encourage all our young people in their adolescence and on their journey into adulthood.

The UK Government's decision to abolish access to financial support for housing for 18 to 21-year-olds from 1 April this year is a backward step. It is a detrimental measure that will negatively affect the future of the young people who are affected and the future of our country. Although, at present, the policy applies only to new universal credit claims from single jobseekers in the five areas of Scotland where universal credit has been fully rolled out, in the years ahead, the policy will affect all new claimants in Scotland as the UK Government rolls out universal credit across our country by April 2018. Very soon, therefore, the policy will negatively affect 18 to 21-year-olds across Scotland, in urban and rural areas.

The Tories envisage that the young adults who are affected by the policy will be able to return to their parental home or enter employment, but that will not always be possible or beneficial. As Shelter Scotland has stated, this Tory policy will remove an important "safety net" for young adults.

Although I acknowledge that the UK legislation includes certain exemptions from the policy, the overall policy intent of the cut to support for young people remains both nonsensical and punitive. The young people that it will affect will undoubtedly be impaired as a result, and there is no guarantee that the exemptions in new paragraphs 4B and 4C of schedule 4 to the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will be administered accurately or appropriately in practice. What will the costs of assessment be? Will all young people have the necessary wherewithal to seek exemptions and advocacy services? How will vulnerability be proved?

As the homelessness charity Crisis has stated,

"Vulnerability is a dynamic, not a fixed, state. It is affected by many factors which make someone's life more or less difficult over time. Any system of exemptions is going to find it extremely difficult to keep pace with changes in circumstances: young people may have to move in and out of work or training; their relationships with their parents can fluctuate and be prone to sporadic crises or reconciliations; their emotional state and mental health may be fragile. Tracking all of this over time will not only be difficult—it will also be very expensive to administer."

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I am grateful to Mr Macpherson for giving way. Is he giving his speech in favour of the proposition that the Scottish Government should exercise its powers under section 28 of the Scotland Act 2016 to

create a new benefit to support unemployed 18 to 21-year-olds in pursuit of housing?

Ben Macpherson: I will come on to forward actions in due course.

I have no doubt that some Conservative members of the Scottish Parliament will maintain that the effects of their party's policy will be negligible, but they should tell that to the several hundred young people who will be affected in Scotland this year, the estimated 1,000 young people who will be affected each year after that and the estimated 11,000 who will be affected each year across the UK—all for a measly supposed cost saving to the Treasury of 0.4 per cent of the total annual spend on housing benefit. What is more, given the history of welfare reform, I predict that the number of those who are affected will rise.

However, even if the estimates are correct and the exemptions work perfectly, the whole ethos of the policy is wrong-headed. Not only does it stem from a misguided and cynical world view and false assertions about the motivations and circumstances of young people in our communities, but this Tory policy has real potential to contradict the stated aims of UK Government welfare reform—namely, to encourage claimants off benefits and into work. That is because, rather than subsidising young people to leave home for “a life on benefits”, as the Tory 2015 manifesto mistakenly asserts, housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-old jobseekers can in fact provide the platform necessary for individuals to move into employment, especially if they are transitioning out of homelessness, as Shelter Scotland has powerfully argued. In other words, the UK Government's policy not only discriminates against young people but creates barriers to work and diminishes the ability of affected individuals to move forward. It is therefore against the UK Government's principles of welfare reform and universal credit.

The policy creates difficulties for young people in moving into the private rented sector—we already have reports of PRS landlords avoiding younger tenants as a result of it. It also puts social housing tenants at risk of losing their tenancies. The catch-22 is that, in some cases, the policy will prevent access to a tenancy at all because, to make a claim for universal credit housing costs, an individual must have a tenancy agreement but, to access a tenancy, the individual must provide evidence that they will be able to access help with housing costs if they are not in work. The policy makes no sense.

Although the proposed UK Government initiative of a youth obligation might aid employment support, it will not make housing affordable for those who are affected. Not only is the UK

Government's policy unnecessary and discriminatory against young people, but Scotland does not want it. The Scottish National Party manifesto in 2016 committed to opposing the cuts, and the SNP forms the Scottish Government, so the UK Government should honour the democratic wishes of the Scottish people and facilitate the abolition of the policy in Scotland.

The UK Government's decision to implement the policy by changing the eligibility criteria in universal credit rather than the calculation means that the Scottish Government cannot use its power under the Scotland Act 2016 to mitigate the changes in a straightforward way. The refusal of the UK Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to enable a geographic exemption for Scotland is an act of preference rather than necessity. Let me be clear: the UK Government can exempt Scotland from the policy if it wants to—all it needs to do is write it down in statute. I encourage the Scottish Government to keep pursuing a geographic exemption with the UK Government. Scottish Conservatives must face up to the fact that that would be a much more expedient process than introducing a new Scottish benefit to plaster over bad Tory UK Government policy.

The policy is not really about reducing expenditure or the number of claimants; instead, this cut by the Tories is about pandering to false assertions about young people and their housing choices and lifestyles. As well as senselessly harming the individuals who are affected, the cuts will put more and more pressure on local services. Ruth Davidson said at the weekend that she wants to talk about Scotland's young people. Unfortunately, she is not here today but, in a spirit of good faith, I would like to pass on a message to her via her Conservative colleagues who are present. The cuts to financial support for 18 to 21-year-olds will distress and derail the young people who are affected; diminish the prospects for young people to fulfil their potential and flourish; and negatively impact on the society in which young people in Scotland will grow up. Depressingly, the policy panders to cynical and judgmental assertions about young people's motivations—assertions that politicians should challenge rather than legitimise.

I call on the Tories in the UK Government to abandon the wrong-headed policy of restricting access to financial support for 18 to 21-year-olds. I urge the Scottish Government to keep standing up for Scotland's young people, to keep opposing the restrictions and to keep pursuing the sustainable removal of the restrictions and of the cuts and hardship that they will cause. The housing system is already stacked against young people, and this Tory policy does not help.

13:23

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): Before I start, let it be recorded in the *Official Report* that there is not a single Labour member of the Scottish Parliament in the chamber to debate this matter, nor is there any Liberal Democrat MSP—there are Green, Conservative and SNP MSPs only.

I turn to the substance of the issue that Ben Macpherson has brought to the chamber. First of all, it is important to understand the scope of the regulations. One thing that Ben Macpherson failed to say in his impassioned speech was that the policy applies not to all 18 to 21-year-olds but only to unemployed 18 to 21-year-olds. It applies only to unemployed 18 to 21-year-olds who are making new claims for universal credit. It applies only to single UC claimants; it does not apply to anyone who is married. Before we go any further, it is important that members understand just how narrow the scope of the regulations is. The policy also applies only—Ben Macpherson said this—where universal credit full service has been rolled out, which is currently only five areas in Scotland, although that will grow in time.

The policy is also one in respect of which there is a large number of exemptions, which have been—in the words of the Scottish Government—co-produced with a range of stakeholders who have been working with the Department for Work and Pensions to develop the policy. The policy will not apply to anyone who is responsible for a child, so it will not apply to a parent, carer or guardian. It will not apply to anyone who is in temporary accommodation. It will not apply to anyone who was a care leaver before the age of 18. It will not apply to any victim of domestic violence, and it will not apply to anyone who is unable to return home because of a risk to physical or mental health. Those exemptions ensure that the most vulnerable will continue to have the housing support that they need. The policy will affect only those who have no barriers to work and who are able to return safely to their parental home; that is its justification.

The policy removes what was formerly a perverse incentive for young adults to leave the family home and pass the cost of doing so on to the taxpayer. The policy is about stopping young people slipping straight into a life on benefits—the underlying rationale for it is quite the opposite of the one that Ben Macpherson sought to portray.

Moreover, people who are affected by the policy will be helped by a new youth obligation within the framework of universal credit—a form of intensive employment support, backed by apprenticeships, traineeships and work placements. That is exactly the sort of employment support that I would have

thought that all members of this Parliament, whatever their party, would want to support.

Ben Macpherson's motion talks about the UK Government's "short timescale" for the introduction of the policy. That is an aspect of the motion that I do not understand. David Cameron, the former Prime Minister, first raised the issue as a policy in 2012. It was in the successful Conservative Party manifesto in 2015, as Mr Macpherson said, and it was formally introduced in the summer budget of that year. That was two years ago.

I know that Mr Macpherson supports a Government here that is moving as slowly as it is possible to move in the context of the progress of the devolution of welfare, but the announcement of a policy in 2012, its being made formal in 2015 and its introduction with effect from April 2017 does not constitute a "short timescale".

Ben Macpherson: Will the member give way?

Adam Tomkins: I am happy to do so, if I have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you a little time.

Ben Macpherson: I am grateful. Does Mr Tomkins acknowledge that the regulations were laid only a month before the implementation of the policy?

Adam Tomkins: I acknowledge that the regulations were signalled months and months in advance, in the summer budget of 2015. A policy's announcement in 2012, its becoming formal policy in 2015 and its implementation in 2017 should be regarded as a sensible pace of progress on the part of the Government.

My final point is about the power to create new benefits. The reason why the UK Government could not act under section 11(4) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, as the Scottish Government wanted it to do, is that the secretary of state has legal advice that it is impossible—it is legally inept—for him to act under that power. The only power under which he could act to introduce the regulations is the power to change the eligibility.

I fully accept that that means that the top-up power cannot be used in this instance. That is why we who sat around the Smith commission table agreed on not just a top-up power but a power to create new benefits in devolved areas. That power is in section 28 of the Scotland Act 2016. This is a devolved area—we are talking about housing—and if the Scottish Government wants to introduce a new benefit under section 28, it has all the powers that it needs to do so.

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

Adam Tomkins: It seems to me that if the Scottish Government wants to introduce a new benefit, it need look no further than Ben Macpherson's speech for the justification for doing so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I may have to be a bit tighter on the following speeches. I call Maree Todd, to be followed by Andy Wightman.

13:29

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I thank Ben Macpherson for securing this important members' business debate.

Yesterday in the Parliament, we debated the impact of welfare reforms on disabled people, and a couple of weeks ago we debated the callous rape clause policy. We have already heard some members in the chamber defend the, frankly, indefensible. Here we are again, discussing another ill-conceived and harmful Tory policy that we know will have a detrimental impact on the most vulnerable people in our society.

Homeless charities, including Shelter, Crisis and Centrepoint, have been very clear in voicing their concerns. Cutting housing benefit to 18 to 21-year-olds risks increasing the number of rough sleepers. Why would the UK Conservative Government introduce cuts that are known to have that effect, when it also knows that homelessness is on the rise in England for the sixth year running? Does that not undermine the Government commitment to reducing homelessness?

A spokesperson for the Department for Work and Pensions claimed—and Adam Tomkins has repeated—that the move is intended to

“make sure that 18 to 21-year-olds do not slip straight into a life on benefits”.

The Tories talk about people choosing a life of benefits and choosing to claim housing allowances, but that fundamentally misses the point that, for many people, there is no choice.

The idea that removing entitlement to housing benefit will drive all young people to “earn or learn”, to use David Cameron's words, misunderstands many of the people who rely on that part of the social security system. The policy fails to take into account the reality of many young people's lives. The option of living with parents is not a luxury that is open to everyone. I represent a part of the country where youngsters rarely live with their parents beyond school age. Many of us in the Highlands and Islands leave home for work or study at a young age; I was only 17 when I left home, but my family was still able to support me.

These cuts will affect people who find themselves in desperately difficult situations

through no fault of their own. For those who leave home abruptly—be it because of an abusive relationship or their sexual or gender identity—social housing is their sanctuary and their sanity. It provides them with much-needed stability.

Adam Tomkins: Does Maree Todd not accept that, as I said a few moments ago, there is an exemption for anybody who is at risk of mental or physical harm in the parental home? The policy will not apply to exactly the category of people that she spoke about.

Maree Todd: I ask Adam Tomkins: as with the rape clause, how would they prove that? There is no reply.

The policy does not even make sound economic sense. Recent research by Heriot-Watt University found that, once the cost of vital exemptions and the cost to other public services are taken into account, the policy will save a maximum of £3.3 million. It will take only 140 extra young people to become homeless before the policy costs more than it saves. If the UK Government wants to cut the welfare bill, it should address the root cause of the problem and make building homes that people can afford more of a priority.

I am sure that members are aware that universal credit has already been rolled out in Highland, causing huge hardship. Among the concerns that I have heard from constituents who work in housing is that, because 18 to 21-year-olds will seek ways to secure accommodation under the exemptions, this policy will increase pressure on charitable housing associations, local authorities, general practitioners and care providers, all of whom are already working under extreme duress.

I hear that it has always been difficult to get private landlords to take on young people, but this system will, without doubt, put paid to that—that is what constituents who work in housing tell me. Private landlords simply will not take the risk.

The Scottish Government has made it clear that it opposes these cuts. The Scottish welfare fund will mitigate that for now, but the bottom line is that it should not have to.

13:34

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank Ben Macpherson for bringing this debate to the chamber. It is important to stress at the outset that this withdrawal of support for young people is part of a wider failure in housing policy to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing for all. That has led, for example, to the rapid growth in the private rented sector—not a sector of choice for young people, but a sector of necessity.

According to the UK Government's figures, the housing benefit bill is set to reach £25 billion this year. To my mind, that is the price of failure in the housing market. It is also against a historic shift in public support from housing supply to housing demand—a shift from investment in housing to spending to support demand, which is a regressive move that has led to rising house prices, rising rents and growing inequality. As Maree Todd pointed out—it is also mentioned in Ben Macpherson's motion—the policy could easily end up costing the Government more money than it is designed to save.

Young people can be forgiven for thinking that housing policy has not only neglected them but is actively working against their interests. As Mhairi Black noted in her maiden speech in the House of Commons:

"In this Budget the Chancellor also abolished any housing benefit for anyone below the age of 21. So we are now in the ridiculous situation whereby because I am an MP, I am not only the youngest, but I am also the only 20-year-old in the whole of the UK that the Chancellor is prepared to help with housing."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 14 July 2015; Vol 598, c 776.]

That is a rather sad pass to come to. Housing in the private rented sector and in the owner-occupied sector is too expensive, and house prices have soared over the past three decades, exacerbating the growing inequality between a property-owning class and a landless class.

Many of the powers to tackle that—to reduce rents and house prices—lie with the Scottish Parliament. We have the power to design an effective system of housing taxation but we have failed to do so. We have the power to capture land values for the public good but we have not done so. We also have the power to repeal planning legislation that rewards landowners for the granting of planning permission but we have failed to do so. Therefore, although I welcome the Government's commitment to build 35,000 affordable homes, I disagree that those homes will be affordable by any definition that is recognised by young people.

That is the background against which the withdrawal of benefits has taken place. The Scottish Government has now announced that it will provide any affected 18 to 21-year-olds with funding from the Scottish welfare fund on an interim basis. That is welcome, but I ask the minister whether any additional resource will be made available to the fund to meet the extra demand, as opposed to its being met from an existing, already very overstretched, budget. The cost of mitigation is likely to be around £6.5 million over the next three years.

Demand for Scottish welfare fund support rises considerably when universal credit is fully rolled

out, as we have seen in Musselburgh. The Social Security Committee heard evidence that the pressure on East Lothian Council's fund there is unsustainable. The full universal credit service will roll out and the housing cost restrictions will come into play for more and more 18 to 21-year-olds at the same time as there will be a range of other increasing demands for the fund. I hope that ministers have thought about how that will be handled.

Although I have a great deal of sympathy for the position that the Scottish Government has been forced into by the unwillingness of the UK Government to create a better mechanism for mitigating the cut, I stress that doing that through the Scottish welfare fund should be only a temporary measure. It is meeting a statutory entitlement—albeit a *de facto* one at present—through what is effectively a discretionary fund, and that is not a good precedent to set.

Fundamentally, we in this Parliament need to focus on eliminating the necessity for providing housing support by solving the underlying structural problems in the housing market. The powers over most of those are already devolved to the Parliament, and we should use them.

13:38

Mairi Evans (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): Normally we that say it is a pleasure to take part in a debate, but I take no pleasure in taking part in the debate today—just as I did not take any pleasure in taking part in the debate on food banks last week or in discussing yesterday the impact that cuts to social security have had on those with a disability. Nevertheless, here we are again. Although I do not take pleasure in speaking in today's debate, I am glad at least to have the opportunity to do so and to highlight yet another Tory policy that will have a devastating impact on a number of young people in our country. To that end, I very much thank Ben Macpherson for lodging his motion and securing the debate.

No matter which way we look at the policy, it is poorly thought out, does not make sense and—as we have heard—has the potential to cost more money than it saves. Although there are exemptions to the policy, they do not go far enough. As Shelter highlighted in its briefing, the impacts "could be catastrophic".

The draft regulations were laid only one month before the intended implementation date, which did not give organisations and local authorities enough time to prepare for the impact, in spite of what Adam Tomkins would like to admit today.

Although the Scottish Government has committed to mitigating the policy for an interim period through the Scottish welfare fund, the UK

Government has refused to delay the policy's implementation while discussions between the two Governments take place or, as Ben Macpherson highlighted, to give a geographical exemption to Scotland. The Scottish Government estimates that 760 people will be affected by the policy and will not meet the exemptions criteria, so they will have to apply to the Scottish welfare fund. Universal credit is expected to be rolled out from November this year to March 2018 in Aberdeenshire and Angus, the area that I represent, and it is estimated that 23 people in Angus will be affected, while 20 will be affected in Aberdeenshire. That is 43 people too many and 43 people whom we cannot let fall through the net.

The policy will also cost more than it saves if it results in an increase in homelessness. Maree Todd made a vital point that we should remember: only 140 young people need to become homeless for the costs of the policy to outweigh any potential savings identified. The latest cuts to housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds are simply part of a wider attack that the Tories have launched against young people across the UK. Thankfully, under the Scottish Government, there has been some protection in Scotland against the worst effects of the policy.

We can look at the overall picture of what the Tories have done for young people since they came to power. They have denied young people aged 16 and 17 the right to vote that exists in Scotland. That means that young people here who had the chance to have a say in the council elections two weeks ago are now in the bizarre position of not being able to vote in the general election five weeks later; and no doubt the result of that election will punish their generation for another generation to come. Further, a young person in the UK can do the same job as someone older than them but not be entitled to the same pay because of their age—they are not entitled to the living wage.

Young people also have to pay tuition fees to attend university. As of autumn this year, they can be charged up to £9,250 to attend university in England, with degree debt in England the highest in the English-speaking world. Those who graduate do so with an average debt of around £44,000 and those from the poorest backgrounds can expect to graduate with in excess of £50,000-worth of debt because the Tories, while increasing tuition fees, also saw fit to scrap the education maintenance allowance, which 620,000 young people were dependent on.

The amount of debt that is taken on by students in England has more than doubled in the past 10 years because of a Tory policy that is burdening an entire generation and forcing them to begin their lives saddled with debt. The housing benefit

policy is the latest in a long line of Tory policies that are ill-conceived and will ultimately cause harm. The policy is nothing more than another assault on young people, which we in Scotland are again forced to mitigate. The picture for young people in the UK is pretty bleak and I urge all young people to remember all the points that have been raised about that when they walk into the polling booth on 8 June.

13:42

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): It is strange that we have debates on welfare in this Parliament that regard changes to the welfare system as bolts from the blue that are last-minute, nasty Tory broadsides designed to catch out the needy. [*Interruption.*] I thought that some members would like that one.

That is the narrative, but it is entirely wrong. We need to have more considered discussions on such issues in this Parliament.

Before I turn to the issue at hand, raised by Ben Macpherson, who omits to say in his motion that the change concerned applies only to job seekers, I will establish some facts. The removal from last month of entitlement to the housing element of universal credit from young people aged 18 to 21, with some exceptions, was first trailed by David Cameron in 2012 and announced by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, in his summer 2015 budget. Therefore, we have known for nearly two years that this removal of entitlement was definitely going to happen.

The policy's stated rationale is to

"ensure young people in the benefits system face the same choices as young people who work and who may not be able to afford to leave home."

David Cameron said in 2014:

"I want us to end the idea that aged 18 you leave school, go and leave home, claim unemployment benefit and claim housing benefit. We should not be offering that choice to young people. We should be saying to people you should be earning or learning."

Those are laudable aims, because nobody benefits long term from a life on benefits.

Of course, there will be exemptions from the policy, as there should be. The regulations specify the categories of young people who will be exempt, including those who might not be able to return home to live with their parents, certain claimants who have been in work for six months prior to making a claim and young people who are parents. Those in temporary accommodation are also exempt.

Nobody who is currently in receipt of payments will lose out; this relates only to new entrants into the system. The aim is to ensure that young

people do not slip straight from school into a life on benefits. If any member thinks that that would be a positive destination, they should stick their hand up now—nobody has done so.

Young adults who are affected by the policy will be expected to return to the parental home or to enter employment. The UK Government envisages that the new youth obligation will help young people into work, as Adam Tomkins mentioned. In the first year, about a thousand people will be affected UK-wide and only a few hundred will be affected in Scotland.

Earlier, I called for a considered discussion, which means all of us retreating from knee-jerk, partisan positions of the sort that are espoused by the Ben Macphersons of this world—I see Ben Macpherson smiling, which is good.

I want homelessness to be reduced or even eradicated.

Maree Todd: Will the member take an intervention?

Graham Simpson: No, I will not.

As the Scottish Conservatives' housing spokesman, I feel passionately about the issue. As a party, we signed up to Shelter's call for a national homelessness strategy earlier this year. The SNP is the only major party not to have done so, so SNP members should not lecture us on homelessness.

I am involved in the Local Government and Communities Committee's inquiry into homelessness. The causes of homelessness are complex and there are no easy solutions.

I was at a conference this week in Glasgow that was organised by Crisis, which was formed 50 years ago by the Conservative MP Iain Macleod. It behoves us all to retreat from the kind of hysterical language that is used in the motion and to deal with the subject in a serious and considered way, so that organisations such as Crisis do not exist in another 50 years.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jeane Freeman to respond to the debate. We have a bit of time, so I could give extra time for interventions.

13:47

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): I thank Ben Macpherson for bringing the motion for debate. I am happy for the opportunity to close the debate on behalf of the Government.

Like Mr Tomkins—on what will probably be our only point of agreement in the debate—I record my disappointment that neither Labour nor Liberal Democrat colleagues chose to join us for what is

an important discussion. That was it, Mr Tomkins—it will not get any better than that.

The Scottish Government shares many of the concerns that have been raised by members today about the removal of support for housing costs from 18 to 21-year-olds. In the manifesto on which we were elected to be the Government in Scotland, we made it clear that we wished to retain housing benefit for those in that age group and who are affected by the UK Government's policy—I will come to that in a moment. I assure Mr Macpherson that we will continue to pursue the manifesto commitment on which we were elected and, in particular, to pursue the UK Government on its requirement to honour the Smith agreement, as we do.

I absolutely refute the notion, which we have heard from Conservative colleagues, that a life on benefits is somehow a choice that young people consciously, deliberately and willingly make at the age of 18, as all the evidence points in the other direction. If any Tory member took the time and trouble to talk to young people who are affected, they would know that those young people—like young people the length and breadth of Scotland—have ability and talent but face many challenges. They want to be able to live an independent life, which, in my world, a Government should assist them to do, not actively try to prevent them from doing.

What a contradictory policy we have here—a policy under which the DWP will not allow an individual support to sustain their current tenancy, but if that individual then becomes homeless and, under our legislation, is protected with temporary accommodation, they get that support back. There is no sense in that in terms of either logic or cost.

Adam Tomkins: Will the member take an intervention?

Jeane Freeman: In a moment.

I cannot understand what the point of the policy is. Mr Tomkins said that we should remember the narrow scope of the policy and the long list of exemptions. I remember both, and I am forced to wonder what the point of the policy is.

Adam Tomkins *rose*—

Jeane Freeman: Just a second.

Is the policy based on the notion not that the benefit system is there for all of us in times of need and is something that we all collectively contribute to—something that is part of a social contract between Government and people, like the national health service—which is this Government's view, but, rather, is something from which we should ensure that scroungers, the workshy and those who want to live off the state, and of whom we must be suspicious, get as little

as possible, and so we must curtail their benefit? Is that the ideology? I think so—is that right, Mr Tomkins?

Adam Tomkins: Does the minister think that the taxpayer should pay the rent of an unemployed 18 to 21-year-old? If she does, when will she use her powers under section 28 of the Scotland Act 1998 to introduce such a benefit into Scots law?

Jeane Freeman: I do not accept for one second the binary notion that there is one bunch of taxpayers who are working hard, contributing and gaining little while looking after, shoring up and, in some charitable way, looking after another lot of people who are scroungers and workshy. I do not buy into that notion at all. If Mr Tomkins had listened for one moment to yesterday's debate on disability, he would understand that it is that very fundamental ideological difference between us that produces people who feel stigmatised, vulnerable and afraid to go and ask for what they are entitled to.

Adam Tomkins: Should the taxpayer pay the rent or not?

Jeane Freeman: I am getting to that. I go back to my point, which is that social security is an investment that we make, collectively, in ourselves and each other.

Adam Tomkins: Will you answer my question?

Jeane Freeman: Neither you nor I, Mr Tomkins, know the day when we might need that financial support, so I do not accept what the member says. On the point about when we will deal with the matter in Scotland, let me say this: do not come here and quote legal advice when there is no reason at all why the UK Government could not have introduced the changes that it seeks in a manner that would have allowed us to retain the benefit for those 18 to 21-year-olds.

The two Governments, both with manifesto commitments, came at the matter from opposing sides. We were prepared to honour and respect the UK Government's democratic right; unfortunately, it did not do that for us. As Mr Wightman said, we have been forced into using an interim, not person-centred, unnecessarily bureaucratic solution called the Scottish welfare fund. I give Mr Wightman an assurance that there will be additional funds to support that, because we are determined that, while we argue with the UK Government about its approach and the intransigence with which it has dealt with us, we will not see any young person in Scotland suffer.

I can also assure members that, unlike the UK Government, we do not walk away when do not get our own way; we stay and come up with alternatives. We suggested other person-centred

solutions, only to be met with a Westminster version of what has just been shown—contempt, ignorance and a failure to recognise the democratic mandate of this Parliament and this Government to do the job that we are here to do. We will keep going with the argument and we have put mitigation in place, but let me be clear: the current UK Government's position in relation to 18 to 21-year-olds is not acceptable.

I am grateful to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and officials for the work that they have done to ensure that we have an interim solution. Draft guidance has been written and will be consulted on in the coming weeks. After the election in June, we will continue to engage with whichever UK Government is there to pursue this and other specific areas around the benefit cap, in relation to which the current UK Government continues to set its face against the democratic powers of this Parliament and this Government to pursue its agenda.

We will use the powers that we have at our disposal. As we use the Scottish welfare fund, we will make sure that we learn the lessons that we need to learn. If we cannot enact our manifesto commitment through universal credit, we will consider the alternatives, which might include using our powers for a new benefit.

I am certain that whatever long-term solution we come up with will be less adequate than our being able simply to use the flexibilities in universal credit and the UK Government accepting the better, more person-centred approach of allowing the Scottish Government to meet its manifesto commitment and retain the policy for 18 to 21-year-olds—rather than continuing to penalise and stigmatise young people in our country, whom we should be giving the best possible start.

13:56

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Communities, Social Security and Equalities

Social Security Agency

1. **Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how it reached its estimate of £150 million annual running costs for the new social security agency. (S5O-00979)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): The executive summary of the outline business case for the social security agency Scotland, which was published on the Scottish Government website on 27 April 2017, contains a full explanation. Further detail is also contained in the main content of the document at chapters 2, 5 and 9, and in technical annexe B.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Graham): I forgot to say my usual mantra calling for short questions and short answers. I accept that that is required.

Ross Thomson: In the Finance and Constitution Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution conceded that the cost of the delivery of the 11 devolved benefits will be greater than the present cost. When quizzed by my colleague Adam Tomkins on the matter, Derek Mackay was unable to elaborate on the increased cost.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Quickly, please.

Ross Thomson: Has the Scottish Government quantified exactly what the increased cost will be?

Angela Constance: The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution conceded no such thing. Of course, what he did and did not say in that committee is in the *Official Report*.

The agency's running costs will be around 5 per cent of what we spend on the benefits. The comparable figure for the Department for Work and Pensions is 6.3 per cent. The running costs are estimates from a cost model using activity-based information from the DWP. In a recent statement, Jeane Freeman, the Minister for Social Security, said that the figures would of course be further refined in relation to the nuanced and detailed design of the system, any policy choices that we choose to make and the location of the agency.

The fact that our running costs are estimated at around 5 per cent shows that our figures are credible, that they are compatible with similar United Kingdom Government figures and that they represent value for money.

Dangerous Buildings (Guidance)

2. **Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to review the guidance on what constitutes a dangerous building. (S5O-00980)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): The Scottish Government does not provide guidance on what constitutes a dangerous building. Local authorities are responsible, under the Buildings (Scotland) Act 2003, for dealing with buildings that they consider to be dangerous. Local authorities also have powers to deal with buildings that they consider to be defective.

Alison Harris: Has the Scottish Government made any consideration with regard to buildings that, although they are not deemed to be dangerous, are derelict and in a state of major disrepair, and need security monitoring to, for example, keep out children who are putting themselves at risk? Although I appreciate—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is fine; you have asked your question.

Kevin Stewart: As I said in my initial answer, it is up to local authorities to decide whether a building is dangerous or defective and to take the actions that they feel are necessary, using the legislation that is in place to enable them to do so.

Devolved Benefits (Uptake)

3. **Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will encourage the uptake of all of the devolved benefits to which people might be entitled. (S5O-00981)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Social security is a human right, and we are determined to support everyone to claim all the benefits to which they are entitled. There is a range of reasons why people do not claim such support. It is disappointing, if not surprising, that the United Kingdom Government has taken no recent action to improve take-up. Ensuring that everyone receives the financial support to which they are entitled is one of the first steps towards putting dignity and respect at the heart of social security in Scotland.

We have made a clear commitment to do all that we can to maximise family income, which is a key method of tackling poverty. As part of that commitment, over the course of this parliamentary

session, we will deliver a programme of activity to increase the uptake of social security by encouraging people to exercise their rights and claim the benefits that they are due.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Adam Tomkins is next.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): What assessment has the Government made of the effectiveness of the—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I beg your pardon—I am whizzing on. Alison Johnstone is quite right to frown at me. You can see that I am out of practice at this. Alison Johnstone has the next question.

Alison Johnstone: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Today, the Scottish Parliament becomes responsible for a range of benefits, including the disability living allowance and the carers allowance. Many of the benefits have complicated interactions with one another, making it even more difficult for people to understand their entitlement. When someone does not—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, no—let us have a question.

Alison Johnstone: What work is under way to review how the benefits that are being devolved interact with one another, and what steps are being taken to make this complicated system easier to navigate?

Angela Constance: We know that the current system is complex. It is important for the Scottish Government to help people to navigate their way through that complexity. That includes ensuring that our new social security agency has a duty to maximise incomes. The role of the Scottish Government experience panels is very important, as it will help us to know and evaluate what works in encouraging people to take up the benefits to which they are entitled, whether those are reserved or devolved benefits.

As I said in my closing remarks in yesterday's debate, we will have a round-table discussion with our partners in local government to ensure that the work that we do over the piece in this parliamentary session is consistent and that it is both broad brush and targeted at people who need advice.

Adam Tomkins: Yesterday, I was confused with Jeremy Balfour and now I have been confused with Alison Johnstone—that is probably progress.

What assessment has the Government made of the effectiveness of the campaign that it ran in March, which involved a week-long series of radio

and press adverts to highlight the range of support that is available to claimants?

Angela Constance: That is a fair question. As the member will know, the campaign in March was just phase 1. It was a broad-brush campaign to support the general take-up of benefits. The press activity had the potential to reach more than a million people and the radio activity had the potential to reach 1.3 million people. We know that Citizens Advice Scotland has had an increase in casework inquiries and website activity. Work to produce a more detailed, nuanced analysis of the campaign's impact is still going on.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): What is the value of the unclaimed devolved benefits that the UK Government has failed to encourage the take-up of?

Angela Constance: It is quite difficult to get accurate information in relation to benefits that will be devolved. However, for benefits over the piece—for income replacement benefits and child tax benefits in particular—we know that more than half a million individuals and families are not claiming what they are entitled to. That puts an onus on the Scottish Government to do more, but it also begs big questions about what the UK Government is doing to increase the uptake of the benefits that it oversees and about the tax system.

Carers Allowance (Disability Poverty)

4. **Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment has been made of the impact that an increased carers allowance would have on disability poverty. (S5O-00982)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): The aim of the increased carers allowance, as the member knows, is to recognise the vital contributions that carers make to society. We are currently assessing the impact of the policy on other groups, including disabled people—along with other policies—through our equality impact assessments.

Claudia Beamish: Now that both the powers of top-up and the powers to make changes to disability benefits have been devolved and indeed have commenced, we have the power to legislate to improve the lives of carers across Scotland. I take a keen interest in the issue as a co-convenor of the cross-party group for carers. Before we get to—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, no—before you go on, I want a question.

Claudia Beamish: Right. Before we get to carers, we—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, I want a question.

Claudia Beamish: Can the minister give carers in Scotland greater clarity about the payment of the increased carers allowance, including when and how it will be paid and whether she has considered the possibility of backdating it to September to reflect when the powers of top-up were devolved?

Jeane Freeman: As the member rightly says, we have to bring the legislation to Parliament to give us the legal framework on which to make those additional payments in this area and in others. We will do so before the summer recess. We are considering how we will make those additional top-up payments. If possible, we will do that sooner than we are due to take on full responsibility for the whole carers allowance. In that consideration, we will use the views of our experience panels and our expert group. Of course, if the cross-party group has additional comments that it wants to draw to my attention, I would be happy to receive them.

Benefits Uptake Campaign

5. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government by what date the next phase of its benefit uptake campaign will begin, how long the phase will run, and who the target audience will be. (S5O-00983)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): We will have a rolling programme of activity over the course of the parliamentary session. The next phase will focus on young carers. During carers week, which runs from 12 to 18 June, we will take action to ensure that young carers are aware of the benefits available to them, and to encourage take-up. We are also working in partnership with Young Scot, Carers Trust Scotland and a wide range of stakeholders that will support that activity.

We all know that carers and young carers play a crucial role in our society, so it is vital that we support them in looking after the people for whom they care, which can often be in challenging circumstances.

Anas Sarwar: I welcome the cabinet secretary's comments about young carers. She will be aware of my disappointment about the level of investment in the previous benefits uptake campaign, which I recently raised with the Minister for Social Security.

Across Scotland, up to £2 billion in benefits are going unclaimed, including half a billion pounds-worth of tax credits for more than 100,000 Scots. Has the cabinet secretary considered options for co-location of benefits services? For every pound that is spent advising, it is estimated that £39 is delivered in additional benefits. Will she use the

general practice contract process to consider general practices as places for possible co-location of benefits advice services?

Angela Constance: Mr Sarwar is, of course, aware that in phase 1 of the campaign we made a modest value-for-money investment. Our investment in benefit take-up campaigns will increase over this session of Parliament and will amount to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Co-location is an important issue. We could pick up that topic in our round-table discussions with our partners from local government and elsewhere on how we can work together to increase take-up. Some of the issues that Anas Sarwar raises are for health ministers, whom we could ask to discuss the matter with people who engage with general practitioners.

The member's point on co-location and people being able to get advice where they access other public services was well made. That features in the work that we are doing in and around social security, as well as in our advice services review.

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary confirm how much benefit uptake campaigns have cost thus far? What has the Scottish Government done to ensure value for money in their delivery?

Angela Constance: We are working hard to ensure delivery and value for money. There was a modest investment of £6,000 in the broad-brush phase 1 of the campaign. As I said in my answer to Mr Sarwar, that investment will increase to hundreds of thousands of pounds. The Scottish Government is prepared to invest in benefit take-up campaigns because we have half a million households and families that are not getting what they are entitled to, which begs the question why there is no activity from the United Kingdom Government.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): What work is the cabinet secretary aware of that the UK Government is carrying out to increase uptake of benefits to which people are entitled but are not claiming?

Angela Constance: I am not aware of any recent work that has been undertaken by the UK Government to increase benefit uptake. That is disappointing but, perhaps, not unsurprising.

Planning Appeals

6. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government how many planning appeals determined under ministerial direction in the last year have been contrary to local development plans. (S5O-00984)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): In the past year, nine

planning appeals were determined under ministerial direction. Seven of the appeals determined were for development contrary to the relevant development plan and, of those, two were approved.

Mark Ruskell: I hope that the minister acknowledges that public confidence in the planning system will be low where communities have spent years working on local development plans only to have decisions that were in line with those plans overturned. Why has it taken so long to determine the controversial appeal on the Park of Keir development, given that it has been nine months since the public inquiry concluded and nearly five months since the report landed on the minister's desk?

Kevin Stewart: That is a complex planning application to which ministers are giving full and proper consideration. Every effort is being made to issue a decision as soon as possible.

Scottish Church Census 2016

7. Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Scottish church census 2016, which estimates that the number of churchgoers will have more than halved between 2000 and 2025. (S5O-00985)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Freedom of religion and of the choice to worship is an important right in our society. The Scottish church census paints a useful picture of how that right is being exercised. Although it is not for the Scottish Government to express a view on how individuals choose to exercise their faith, we will continue to engage with Scotland's different faith communities to understand their issues and to listen to their concerns. In relation to that, we would be very happy to meet the church and society council of the Church of Scotland and others to discuss the particular issues raised by the Scottish church census.

Donald Cameron: I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer. She will be aware that the report suggests that Christian denominations are seeing falling church attendances. Given the importance of all faiths to the wellbeing of people and society, what support can the Scottish Government offer to all faith groups at this time?

Angela Constance: Scotland is a country with a strong sense of social justice. All faith communities in Scotland, including Christian ones, play a key part in that. On the support that we give to faith communities, we support interfaith work, in which Scotland is a world leader. Interfaith dialogue and relations are crucially important to

ensuring that we continue to have good community cohesion. Given the challenges that our society faces collectively, it is imperative that there is mutual understanding and respect, which we know have become more important in recent times.

Our promoting equality and cohesion fund supports interfaith work, but our broader third sector work also supports some of the social justice issues on which our faith communities are very active—a good example of which is the work that all faiths have been doing in food justice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind everyone that I would quite like shorter answers and shorter questions. That was not a rebuke to you, Mr Gibson.

Welfare Reforms (North Ayrshire)

8. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the impact of its welfare reforms on communities in North Ayrshire. (S5O-00986)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): The Scottish Government has repeatedly called on the UK Government to halt its welfare reform programme. More specifically, we have called for an immediate stop to the roll-out of both personal independence payments and universal credit, as well as an end to the sanctions regime, until the issues of hardship and stress that are caused by those policies are dealt with.

Kenneth Gibson: It would have been good to have had a more specific answer on North Ayrshire. However, does the minister agree with the evidence that was given to Parliament by Professor Steve Fothergill of Sheffield Hallam University, that Tory social security cuts have

“no relationship with employment growth”

and that the evidence

“provides little support for the view that welfare reform is having important and positive impacts on the labour market in Scotland”?

Does she acknowledge that £540 per working-age adult is being taken from the North Ayrshire economy as a result of those reforms?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was a very long question.

Jeane Freeman: I acknowledge that figure. The figures that I have seen range from £380 per person to £540 per person in North Ayrshire being removed as a result of the welfare reforms. That is, of course, part of the £1 billion that has been removed by the UK Government from people in Scotland in the welfare reforms that have been

and will be introduced between 2015 and 2020, on top of the £1.4 billion that had already been taken up to 2015. I agree with Kenneth Gibson that there is no sustainable evidence that any of the welfare reforms are reducing the national debt—which is increasing—or assisting more people into employment.

Whitehill Incinerator (Planning Consent)

9. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I draw members' attention to my registered interests as a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, and as a former South Lanarkshire councillor.

To ask the Scottish Government whether it will withdraw the planning consent that it issued in August 2015 for an incinerator facility at Whitehill in Hamilton. (S5O-00987)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): The Scottish ministers do not propose to use their revocation powers in that case.

Monica Lennon: I thank the minister for his short answer, but it will come as no surprise to him that I am disappointed by it and that my constituents will also be disappointed, and very angry. Given that the Presiding Officer wants short questions, I simply ask the minister this: why?

Kevin Stewart: When I met Ms Lennon last year, I pointed out that revocation of planning permission would in the first instance be a matter for South Lanarkshire Council. Ms Lennon has already pointed out that she was a member of the council at that point, so I wonder whether during her tenure there she moved for revocation of the planning application.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Incinerator capacity is projected to increase 12 times in the next five years, which means that councils might be contracted to burn and recycle the same waste. Clearly that cannot happen, so will the Scottish Government consider a moratorium on new incinerator construction?

Kevin Stewart: As Maurice Golden is well aware, it would be ill considered for me as planning minister to talk about applications that might be forthcoming. As for the general policy on energy from waste, his question would be best directed to the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

Access to Elected Office Fund (General Election)

11. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether there are plans for the access to elected office fund Scotland to be open

to disabled people wishing to be nominated for the 2017 general election. (S5O-00989)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): Because all aspects of election to the House of Commons are reserved, the Scotland Act 2016 prohibits us from using our fund to assist disabled candidates in the general election. The United Kingdom equivalent of the fund ended in 2015 when the Conservative Party came to power, and repeated calls to reopen it have gone unheeded.

Colin Beattie: Given the fund's success at the most recent local elections in helping 39 disabled people to take part, 12 of whom were ultimately elected, does the minister agree that such funding levels the playing field between disabled and non-disabled candidates? Will she join me in calling on the UK Government to reopen the equivalent UK fund?

Jeane Freeman: More important than what Mr Beattie or I might say is the fact that candidates who used our fund to stand in the most recent local council elections and organisations including Inclusion Scotland, which monitors and delivers the fund on our behalf, say that the fund significantly levels the playing field. It is proving to be successful, and we will continue it for the Holyrood elections. As we said yesterday, we are looking at how we might use the fund and its approach in other areas of public life, and I am happy to continue calling on the UK Government to follow our example.

Building Works (Community Protection)

12. Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what safeguards are in place to protect communities that are in close proximity to extensive building works. (S5O-00990)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): A range of safeguards is in place to protect communities from the impact of extensive building works in their vicinity, including planning, environmental health, building standards and environmental protection regulations.

Gordon Lindhurst: I have been contacted by a constituent in Edinburgh who lives in close proximity to the former Donaldson's school, which is undergoing extensive building works, with regard to concerns about dust pollution and adverse effects on people's health in the surrounding area. Will the minister commit to looking into the issue with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and those in other Government departments to find a solution to the problem?

Kevin Stewart: I suggest that Mr Lindhurst should contact the City of Edinburgh Council and get it to check what is going on at the site. I imagine that that would help his constituent, given that the council has the ability to take action if anything improper is going on at the site.

Affordable Housing (North-east Scotland)

13. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to increase the availability of affordable housing in the north-east. (S5O-00991)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): We continue to make significant increases to our investment in building more affordable housing in the north-east. In 2017-18, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council were allocated £12 million and £19 million respectively for their affordable housing programmes, which in itself equates to approximately double the resources that were allocated in 2015-16. Moreover, the Aberdeen city deal includes a £20 million infrastructure funding commitment from the Scottish Government to unlock housing sites and five-year certainty on £130 million of affordable housing grant.

Gillian Martin: As the minister knows, high house prices in the north-east have an impact on whether vacant posts in the public sector can be filled. Are there any on-going schemes to prioritise the availability of affordable homes for those who work in the public sector?

Kevin Stewart: The Scottish Government has provided an additional £8 million to support a 124-unit key worker housing project on surplus public sector land at the former Craiginches prison site in Aberdeen. That project is due for completion in March 2018, and public sector workers who provide an essential service—national health service staff and teachers in particular—will benefit from that offer. The Scottish Government-funded 100-unit housing project at Burnside in Aberdeen is also in the pipeline, and NHS staff will also be prioritised there.

I am sure that Ms Martin was heartened—as I was—to see in Inverurie last week the new social housing development by Grampian Housing Association, which I think was welcomed by all the new tenants.

Benefits Assessments (Third Sector)

14. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what response it has received from the third sector to the comment by the Minister for Social Security that “the private sector should not be involved in assessments for Scotland’s benefits”. (S5O-00992)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): We have received positive responses from bodies across the third sector, including the Poverty Alliance, the Child Poverty Action Group, Inclusion Scotland and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, and a number of positive responses directly from individuals with disabilities. Our statement was also welcomed by the Public and Commercial Services Union.

Joan McAlpine: Does the minister believe that the model of assessment that the Scottish Government will set up will be better able to deal with claimants’ mental health conditions and fluctuating conditions than the reserved United Kingdom system currently does?

Jeane Freeman: That is certainly our intention. We are working with the disability and carers benefits expert advisory group, with the assistance in particular of Dr Alan McDevitt, who chairs the British Medical Association’s Scottish general practitioners committee, to work with other health professionals and those in the social care sector to devise a much quicker and fairer assessment process that will allow better decisions to be made first time and will allow us to use those with the relevant clinical, medical or social care experience to conduct any assessments that might be required that are relevant to the individual’s condition. Our intention is that that will address the particular deficiencies in the current system, particularly in relation to mental health, fluctuating conditions and other areas in which people from the expert and experienced panels and in our consultation made it clear to us that they wanted improvements.

Scottish Welfare Fund

15. Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to recent figures that suggest the Scottish welfare fund has supported more than 241,000 households, with awards totalling £124 million. (S5O-00993)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): It is correct that, since 2013-14, we have invested £190 million in the Scottish welfare fund and helped more than 241,000 individual households, a third of which include children. Providing that vital lifeline for people in Scotland is the right thing to do for any caring and compassionate Government. However, it is wrong that people in Scotland and the Scottish Government have to continue to use our resources to paper over the increasing levels of hardship and crisis that people in Scotland face as a result of the United Kingdom Government’s ideologically driven welfare agenda.

Linda Fabiani: Does the minister share my concern that that number of households and

amount of money will rise because of the six-week minimum built-in delay in first payments under the UK Government's universal credit system?

Jeane Freeman: There is growing evidence that the built-in minimum six-week delay in the first payment of universal credit is producing additional hardship. I know that my colleague Maree Todd from the Highlands has raised that on a number of occasions. On Monday, I will talk to folks in Inverness about precisely that problem.

The delay produces additional pressures on our welfare fund, and we have allocated specific additional resource to assist in addressing that. However, the bottom line remains that the problem lies at the source. That is the UK Government's welfare agenda and its cuts, which it tells us are there to help with the sound management of public finances, although the public debt continues to rise and I believe that it is now about £1.8 trillion.

Child Tax Credit Changes

16. Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how many households in Scotland will be affected by the changes to child tax credits that were introduced on 6 April 2017. (S5O-00994)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): The Scottish Government remains deeply opposed to the United Kingdom Government's two-child tax credits cap. By 2020-21, around 50,000 Scottish households will be negatively affected, and the impact will fall on those who can least afford it, thereby pushing more and more families into poverty.

Ruth Maguire: What response, if any, has the Scottish Government had from the UK Government to the Scottish Parliament's decisive vote opposing the two-child cap and the rape clause?

Angela Constance: I have to advise members that we have had no response at all from the UK Government. As we all know, the rape clause is a fundamental violation of human rights. It is disgraceful that, despite serious concerns being raised in the chamber and by a wide range of organisations, including Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and the Royal College of Nursing, the UK Government refuses to reverse that shameful policy.

Universal Credit Roll-out

17. Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has received a response from the United Kingdom Government to its request to halt the roll-out of universal credit in Scotland following reports that

the new system is pushing more people into hardship and debt. (S5O-00995)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): Regrettably, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions did not respond directly to the request by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities to halt the roll-out of universal credit. He sent a five-page report extolling the virtues of universal credit, which confirmed that the United Kingdom Government has no intention of halting the roll-out.

Maree Todd: As the minister will be aware, universal credit is causing real hardship to individuals in the Highlands. In addition, arrears are causing real hardship to the local council, and housing associations find themselves in the unenviable position of pursuing tenants through the courts for debt that is not of their own making.

Does the minister agree that the situation is completely unacceptable and must be halted?

Jeane Freeman: Yes, I do. The evidence is stacking up by the day that the roll-out of universal credit, and in particular the built-in six-week delay—for which I cannot yet find any reasonable or credible explanation—is causing additional hardship for individuals.

We will aim, with the support of the Department for Work and Pensions, to apply our particular flexibilities, which will allow for the direct payment of rent to landlords and the choice to make twice-weekly payments. However, even those measures will not get us over the six-week delay.

Again, we ask the UK Government to seriously consider halting the roll-out of universal credit until the serious hardship issues that it is imposing on families in Scotland are considered properly.

Atos Healthcare (Meetings)

18. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when its officials last met Atos Healthcare. (S5O-00996)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): Scottish Government social security officials met with Atos Healthcare on 5 April this year to obtain an understanding of how Atos views the personal independence payment assessment process as it currently operates in Scotland. There are no plans to meet with Atos again.

Richard Leonard: Will the Scottish Government at this stage rule out any involvement—with any involvement—with Atos in the design and delivery of the new Scottish social security system?

Jeane Freeman: I believe that I have already done so in my statement to Parliament on the new social security agency. The Government made it very clear in that statement that we see no place

for private sector companies in the assessment of benefits.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I come to question 19. The member is not in the chamber, but a good reason for her absence will no doubt be given to the Presiding Officer. Question 20 is from John Mason.

Local Government Elections

20. **John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the outcome of the local government elections. (S5O-00998)

I congratulate you on getting to question 20, Presiding Officer. I was not particularly anticipating that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: One thing that you must never do in here is take things for granted, Mr Mason.

John Mason: Absolutely right.

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): The Scottish ministers congratulate all the councillors who were elected and welcome the role that they fulfil for their communities. We are delighted that the local government elections were conducted successfully and that the turnout, at 46.9 per cent, was higher than the 39.6 per cent turnout in 2012. We look forward to working with Scotland's democratically elected councils to take forward our priorities for the people of Scotland.

John Mason: Considerable effort was put in to encourage people to mark their ballot papers 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. However, on looking at a number of papers that were spoiled, it appeared to me that a lot of them had either two or three Xs on them for the parties that had put up multiple candidates. Does the minister have any suggestions on how we can tackle that problem through education or in some other way?

Kevin Stewart: The Electoral Commission already runs information campaigns to inform voters about how to cast their vote. In particular, before any election, a leaflet is delivered to every household that gives people detailed guidance on how to cast their vote at that particular poll. In addition, an explanation of how to vote is sent out with every postal ballot pack, and large-print explanatory notices are exhibited in every polling station, so information on how to vote is available wherever a ballot paper is being completed, whether that is in the home or at a polling station.

Anyone who is unsure about how to vote can contact the returning officer's office to ask for advice, and polling station staff are also available to help if necessary.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The SNP got 32 per cent of the vote—the same as in 2012. It has flatlined. Labour was down on vote share and number of seats, but—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would like a question rather than a party political broadcast.

Graham Simpson: Does the minister agree that, with an extra 161 seats—up 12 per cent—the real winners were the Scottish Conservatives?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that I can guess your answer, Mr Stewart, but go ahead.

Kevin Stewart: No, I do not agree. [*Laughter.*] There was only one winner in last week's Scottish council elections, and that was the SNP. We had the largest number of votes cast and the largest number of councillors and, of course, we are the largest party in 16 councils and joint largest in three others. We won in the four main cities.

Let us be honest. There can only be one winner in elections. Last week, the winner was not the Scottish Conservative Party and it was certainly not the Scottish Labour Party. The party that polled the most was the SNP.

Fisheries

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-05603, in the name of Peter Chapman, on fisheries.

14:38

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to debate this significant topic and highlight that we in the Conservative Party in this Parliament have a positive, forward-looking plan for a more prosperous United Kingdom and Scottish fishing industry following our departure from the European Union. Our positive and optimistic plan is in stark contrast to that of the Scottish National Party, which, once more, has adopted its standard pessimistic and defeatist approach. We are the party that understands the wishes and aspirations of the vast majority of the people in the fishing industry in Scotland, be they skippers, deck hands, processors or merchants, and we have a positive vision of a prosperous, sustainable, expanding and environmentally friendly industry going forward.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Peter Chapman: Not at this time.

The SNP, on the other hand, has nothing to offer other than more of the same. Under its plans, we would remain shackled to the common fisheries policy—

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): No, no.

Peter Chapman: —which is seen by our fishermen as nothing short of a total disaster. The SNP wants to continue to tie us to a system that has been in force for decades—

Stewart Stevenson: No.

Peter Chapman: It is a system that has resulted—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Just a minute, Mr Chapman. Mr Stevenson, you will be speaking later, and you will have every opportunity to make your views known.

Peter Chapman: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

It is a system that has resulted in persistent failure and has caused nothing but frustration, resentment and distress for those involved.

Let us be clear about what the industry wants and expects from our politicians. I voted to remain in the European Union in the referendum, and I have made no secret of that fact. Indeed, I took

some criticism from skippers in the north-east for my stance because, almost to a man, they voted to come out of the EU. They want out of the EU and the CFP, and they want control over our exclusive economic zone out to 200 miles from our shores.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): Given that the EU single market has 500 million people in it and is a key export market for our seafood, with seafood exports being worth £601 million, does Mr Chapman believe that we should continue to have access to that market?

Peter Chapman: I totally agree. We will have access to it. Our fish is in huge demand in Europe, and the buyers want that to continue.

Skippers want out of the EU and the CFP, and they want control over our exclusive economic zone out to 200 miles from our shores. Those are three very clear and simple elements that we in the Conservative party intend to deliver. What can the SNP deliver for our fishing communities? We know that it is desperately trying to engineer a second independence referendum—

Stewart Stevenson: Oh, come on. The Tories are obsessed with independence.

Gillian Martin: Will the member give way?

Peter Chapman: Not at the moment.

SNP members seem to be denying that they want another independence referendum. Thankfully, it looks increasingly unlikely that the SNP would win that but, should that happen, the SNP would immediately reapply to join the European Union, taking us straight back into the detested CFP. However, the SNP has failed to make that clear in its amendment. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Right—that is enough banging on tables and barracking. I want to hear a debate, not a rammy.

Peter Chapman: Out of touch though the SNP is with fishing communities, even it knows that rejoining the CFP would be hugely unpopular, so what does it do? It spins a line that, on the way in, it would renegotiate the CFP and somehow get a better and fairer deal. Not a chance. I have a letter from the EU fishing commissioner Karmenu Vella, which clearly states that any new country accessing the EU must accept the CFP in its entirety. There is no way that the SNP will be able to influence or opt out of that treaty—no ifs, no buts, no renegotiation.

Where does the SNP go from here? All that it can do now is smear and scaremonger and suggest that the UK Government will sell out the fishing industry during exit negotiations. The First Minister tried that tactic just last week. After

getting her hands on a private letter from Andrea Leadsom to the leader of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Bertie Armstrong, she deliberately tried to confuse and misconstrue the content of the letter, tweeting joyfully that here was the evidence of a sell-out. Of course, it backfired spectacularly when the man the letter was written to—the said Bertie Armstrong—retorted that he was perfectly satisfied with the UK's negotiating stance and indeed believed that the letter, if read in its entirety, was very robust and explicit in stating that the UK will come out of the CFP and will have control out to 200 miles. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr Chapman, but Mr Ross and the cabinet secretary are having a private debate while you are trying to speak. That is not appropriate.

Peter Chapman: I totally agree.

That was game, set and match to Ms Leadsom, and it left Nicola Sturgeon looking desperate, misleading and downright wrong. The way forward is clear. As an independent country out of the EU, the UK, under international law passed in 1982 and backed by a United Nations convention, can take control of its waters out to 200 miles. Now, that does not mean that foreign boats will never fish our waters again. However, it means that they will fish under our rules and regulations, and that we will be in control—and that is a huge prize.

That is the sea of opportunity that our fishermen welcome. It will address the unjust situation that exists at the moment, whereby 60 per cent of the fish that are caught in UK waters are caught by foreign vessels. Some 650,000 tonnes of fish, worth £400 million, are caught by EU boats in our waters every year. In comparison, our boats catch only 90,000 tonnes of fish in other EU waters, worth a mere £100 million. To put it another way, between 2012 and 2014, EU boats caught half the demersal fish, two thirds of the pelagic fish and almost all the industrial fish that were caught in our 200-mile exclusive zone. No one can argue that that is a fair division.

The other strand of the disaster story that the SNP tries to spin is that we will lose the EU markets for our fish. We have heard it already. Yes, the EU market is important, and we obviously want to keep it. However, I have spoken to numerous fish processors in Peterhead and Fraserburgh who are very relaxed about keeping their markets. They argue, quite rightly, that their fish are in great demand in Europe—indeed, buyers are queueing up to get the top-quality fish that we supply, which is often unavailable elsewhere.

It is also a fact that our stance in the Brexit negotiations is to get a comprehensive free trade deal. Why should we not get a free trade deal,

given that such a deal is as much to the Europeans' benefit as it is to ours?

Iceland applied to join the EU in 2009 but withdrew its application in 2015, mainly because it would have had to join the CFP and it did not like what it saw. In June 2016, just a year ago, the Icelandic fisheries minister said:

"I would never join the European Union ... There is a life outside it, as we have proven. We have one of the biggest and one of the strongest fisheries in the world that is sustainable without any subsidies from the state. We don't have to share this decision-making with anyone else. It would be difficult for Icelanders to control their economic and fisheries sector having the obligation to discuss it with 27 or 28 other countries."

That is the kind of future that awaits our fishing industry when we leave the outdated, bureaucratic and unreformable European common fisheries policy. I, for one, welcome that future. [*Interruption.*]

I move,

That the Parliament believes that the Scottish fishing industry is vital to Scotland's culture and economy, and is a bedrock of many communities across the country; recognises the opportunity that leaving the EU offers to create a fit-for-purpose and tailor-made fisheries management regime that better suits the needs of Scottish fishing; acknowledges the potential to restore control of access to UK waters, enabling a fairer distribution of fishing opportunities in the future, and believes that Scotland must not return to the common fisheries policy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not like all this banging on desks. Just stop doing it.

14:48

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): When we joined the EU, a Scottish Office paper was written, which remained hidden for 30 years under the UK Official Secrets Act. What the paper said was:

"'in the wider UK context they'—the fishermen—'must be regarded as expendable.'"—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 25 January 2001; Vol 361, c 1138.]

That remark was first referred to in Parliament in Westminster by Alex Salmond in 2001. I was quoting from *Hansard*.

Peter Chapman: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Fergus Ewing: In a moment, after I have made this point. That was the true view of the UK Government when we joined the EU: that the interests of Scotland's fishermen were expendable. It was never intended that that view would be made public, because the document was an official secret, which became public only 30 years later.

I give way to Mr Chapman, but will he apologise now, on behalf of the Scottish Tories, for that betrayal, when we were taken into the EU?

Peter Chapman: We have heard about something that happened 47 years ago, and it was not even a Government minister who said it. It is far more effective to look at what is going on now: Andrea Leadsom's letter says that we will take back all of our waters to 200 miles. That is much more significant than quoting something that was said 47 years ago by a junior official.

Fergus Ewing: I move on to what happened after that. Let us move forward into the 1980s when, under Margaret Thatcher—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry; please sit down for a minute, cabinet secretary. I had people be quiet for Mr Chapman, and people will be quiet for the cabinet secretary. I do not want to hear banging on desks; members can applaud, which is much more reasonable, if they wish—although I certainly do not expect you all to be applauding the cabinet secretary.

Fergus Ewing: They can bang on the desks, but they cannot undo history. They do not have the guts to apologise for something that they must know was wrong—that is the interesting thing.

Let us move forward and provide a little bit of rudimentary education. Under Mrs Thatcher in the 1980s, the UK Government signed us up to the original doomed common fisheries policy. It was the Conservatives' heroine who took us into the common fisheries policy. [*Interruption.*] Perhaps she is not their heroine? If she is not, let me know. The Conservatives say that she is—we have that clear, then.

That was the first thing in the history lesson. John Major's Tories then signed us up to a revised CFP in the 1990s. What did it have at its heart? It scrapped vessels and decimated livelihoods, destroying the economy and wellbeing in many of our coastal communities. Those facts are why feeling about the CFP is so strong. It is not what happened yesterday, last year or the year before—it is what has happened for decades.

Peter Chapman: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Fergus Ewing: Was Mrs Thatcher wrong when she took us in, and was John Major wrong when he took us into a revised policy? This is another chance for Mr Chapman to apologise—a second opportunity.

Peter Chapman: The cabinet secretary makes the point very well that the Conservatives want to be out of the CFP. It is the SNP that wants to keep us in there. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Do not overdo it, please, just to make a point. I know what members are up to. I have been there, seen it and got the T-shirt.

Fergus Ewing: At least they have stopped banging the desks.

In this century, the Tories have attempted to enshrine the CFP in the European treaties. That is the fourth adminicle of evidence, which shows that the Tories, time and again, have not only supported the CFP, but taken us into it, kept us in it and then had it enshrined in the law. That is what the record is.

Let us move forward to the current time, during my period as cabinet secretary over the past year, and look at the monkfish swap issue. Last year, the UK authorities blocked for three months an international swap that would have brought in 200 tonnes—a significant amount of monkfish quota that was worth millions of pounds to many Scottish fishermen. The deal was blocked under instruction from George Eustice, a reasonable and intelligent man, because it swapped out a tiny amount of skate quota targeted by some inshore vessels in England. It took months and my personal intervention to get it through. A deal that should have taken two days took three months, during which fishermen had no choice but to dump high-value catches of monkfish.

In the EU-Norway negotiations, the UK has regularly voted for a swap package that has disadvantaged Scotland, because Scottish blue whiting quota is primarily used to secure an inward transfer of Arctic cod from Norway, of which the UK receives 47 per cent but Scotland receives zero. In 2017, for example, Scotland forfeited more than 20,000 tonnes of blue whiting to swaps worth around £4 million at 2016 prices, but gained no benefit—not even a single kilo of the Arctic cod came back.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The cabinet secretary has used a large part of his speech to explain why the common fisheries policy is so bad. Will he now explain why his party wants to remain inside the common fisheries policy rather than respect the view of the people in coastal communities who voted to leave it and who want to stay out of it?

Fergus Ewing: That is a political assertion; it is not the reality of the matter. I have just described two examples of how, over the past year—not 30 or 40 years ago—I have sought to negotiate with George Eustice, who is a not unreasonable guy with whom I try to have a constructive relationship. On each occasion, Scotland's interests have been betrayed. Those deals were nothing to do with the EU; they were matters entirely within the UK Government's control.

The UK Government says that this will all change once we are outwith the EU. The Conservatives say that we will have total control, but what did George Eustice say? Back in April 2016, he said that everything would be put back on the table for discussion, including access rights. Let me quote Mr Mundell. I presume that the Conservatives support what Mr Mundell says, but I will check. He said:

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

That is the guy whom the Conservatives want to be the secretary of state, and he says that controlling our own fishing is not a realistic scenario.

I think that my time is coming to an end. Is it too much to ask that, during the debate—if it is to be more than just knockabout—one of the Conservatives will say whether David Mundell is right? Or are they devoting this episode to the same political rhetoric and the same treachery of their track record over the past decades, which proves that they cannot be trusted with the future of Scotland?

I move amendment S5M-05603.3, to leave out from “recognises” to end and insert:

“notes that the present common fisheries policy is not delivering a sustainable fishing industry in Scotland; is disappointed at the lack of clarity from the UK Government on future funding to replace the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), its failure to guarantee tariff and customs-free exports to the EU single market and to provide assurances that EU nationals and their families working in the fishing sector may remain in Scotland; regrets that the UK Government’s White Paper makes clear its intention to allow EU boats access to Scotland’s waters as of right, which would be detrimental to Scottish fishing interests; recognises the need to put sustainable development and a science-led, ecosystem approach at the heart of all marine and fisheries policies to create a viable future for fishing in Scottish waters to enable coastal communities and the marine environment to thrive, whatever the future holds; notes that fisheries are best managed at a level closest to citizens and communities, and agrees that all powers on fisheries should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament to enable the design of a management framework best suited to Scottish needs and the interests of Scotland’s fishing industry and sector, including through the commitment to a Fisheries Bill.”

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Is the word “treachery” parliamentary language in the context?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: In the circumstances of this very heated debate, we should all be mindful of the language that we use and of our behaviour. For the public outside who are watching this debate on a serious issue, it behoves nobody in the chamber to have a rammy going on, with shouting, thumping of desks and so on. That does members no credit and it is often

reported to me when I am out and about. I give you all that caution regarding your language and behaviour. I know that you are all passionate, but that does not excuse bad behaviour.

14:57

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

The motion acknowledges that the fishing community see Brexit as providing them with an opportunity. The common fisheries policy has always been a bone of contention for them, with annual negotiations based on horse trading rather than on sensible policies to manage our fishery for future generations. There is now the opportunity to devise a policy to do that. However, fishing is still a political football, as we have seen this afternoon.

The SNP are looking both ways at once, promising to rejoin the EU but come out of the CFP. That is nonsense. If we were ever to rejoin the European Union, either as part of the UK or as a separate Scotland, we would not get a pick-and-mix membership; we would be told to take it or leave it. It has proved impossible to negotiate a better CFP from within the EU, and it would be foolish to think that we could do that while begging to get back in. It is also wrong for the Conservatives to say that a hard Brexit would lead to a free trade agreement with the EU—that simply would not be the case.

Although I do not agree with Brexit, I understand the wishes of the fishing community to come out of the EU. Nevertheless, it would be wrong not to highlight the risks of leaving as well as the potential benefits. Being in the EU means that our fish can be sold in Europe without any trade tariffs or red tape. That means that it can be sold fresh in EU markets. We know that the blockades at Calais meant delays and huge losses of fish that was no longer marketable. Any delay in exporting fresh fish puts the market at risk, and I sincerely hope that such delays will not happen with Brexit.

It is clear from the Prime Minister’s statements that she understands that the EU will want access to UK fishing grounds as part of our future relationship with the EU. Our fishing grounds will become one element of a negotiation that will have lasting ramifications for the fishing industry. The future holds dangers for our fishing community, so while we talk up the opportunities, we must be alive to the risks.

We believe that, after the UK leaves the EU, repatriated responsibility for fisheries should be devolved to Scotland. That will mean negotiating fishing rights and the management of fishing stocks with other countries. Fish do not recognise borders, so we need to work collaboratively to ensure that we have a sustainable fishery. We will still be subject to the United Nations Convention

on the Law of the Sea, which demands the use of quotas and sustainable management. That will require us to negotiate with the EU just as we currently negotiate with non-EU countries.

Access to the single market is also necessary. The fishing community fears bureaucracy more than it fears trade tariffs because bureaucracy could delay exports, meaning that the fresh-fish market could become unreliable. That is an issue for not only our catching sector but our fish farm sector, which is often overlooked when we talk about fish supplies.

When we consider fisheries and Brexit, we would be wrong to consider the catching sector alone; we also need to consider the onshore jobs that depend on a vibrant fishing industry. Many of those jobs are in rural Scotland, where they contribute to fragile local economies. The jobs range from fish sellers and processors throughout the food chain to jobs that provide services to fishing communities—in chandleries and port infrastructure, for example. Not only are those jobs essential to local economies but they provide services to our growing sea-going tourism industry, and, without fishing, those services would disappear from our ports, making catering for the growing leisure boat market more difficult.

It is not just rural communities that will be affected. Many of our fish processing jobs—especially those that add value—are based in more urban communities that are often in areas of high deprivation. Losing that source of employment would be devastating for those communities, too.

Those urban and rural communities also need inward migration to help staff the food processing industry and keep it alive. Migrant labour is also essential for the parts of the industry that are seasonal, and being out of the EU will impact on the supply of that workforce. If it becomes onerous for those workers to gain work permits, they might go where they are more welcome, which again would impact on our industry.

We need to stop the political posturing that turns our fishing communities into pawns in a game. We need politicians to listen to the concerns of fishing communities and seize opportunities from Brexit. We need to make sure that the opportunities are realised, but we also need to guard against the pitfalls.

I move amendment S5M-05603.2, to insert at end:

“; believes that there are challenges to be overcome in order to allow Scotland's fish to be sold in European markets, including the need to ensure that import controls are not bureaucratic in order to allow them to be sold fresh into that market; understands that Scotland must also continue to negotiate management of its seas with the EU, Norway, the Faroes and Iceland to ensure that the whole of

the fishery is managed sustainably, as fish know no borders, and believes that repatriated powers should be devolved.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I call Finlay Carson, to be followed by Stewart Stevenson.

15:03

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): The fishing industry is vital to our culture and our economy, and it is the bedrock of many communities across the country. The United Kingdom leaving the European Union offers us a real opportunity to get fishing right and to create a fisheries management regime that better suits the needs of fishermen in the UK and in Scotland. We have the opportunity to level the playing field so that more of the fish that are caught in Scottish waters are caught by Scottish fishing vessels and processed in Scottish factories, benefiting our rural communities and the wider economy.

We can stop the endless bureaucracy from Brussels and start to work more closely with our fishermen and processors towards a successful and prosperous industry that is fit for purpose and fit for the future. As elected representatives, it is our responsibility to recognise and take hold of those opportunities and use the levers of government to create an environment that works in the best interests of the fishing industry.

What is wrong with the CFP? The fishermen are absolutely right to want out of the CFP, because it lacks any proper regional control and fails to take local factors into account when policy is determined. Its excessive bureaucracy and red tape make fishing an increasingly difficult industry to be a part of. Most important, the way in which quota is calculated is fundamentally unfair because it is based on historical catch figures that do not represent the current situation.

A recent report by Ian Napier of Scotland's north Atlantic fisheries college marine centre revealed the stark reality of fishing opportunities in the North Sea, stating that EU

“boats landed seven times more fish”

in UK waters than UK boats caught in EU waters. That equates to around 650,000 tonnes of fish and shellfish, which is worth more than £400 million each year. We now have the opportunity to redress that balance.

There is absolutely no question of negotiating from within the CFP. That has not worked up until now and I have zero confidence that it would work in the future. The truth is that the SNP has chosen not to use the little influence that it has in Brussels. Recently, the Conservatives' EU spokesman on fisheries, Ian Duncan, has been responsible for

representing his political group on a number of significant reports, including reports on the landing obligation, the cod plan, deep-sea fisheries, the drift-net ban and technical conservation measures. Meanwhile, the SNP fisheries spokesman, Ian Hudghton, has not looked after a single report.

The SNP and Greens are partners in crime not only in Holyrood but in Europe, where SNP MEPs sit with the Greens, who want to ban fishing in huge swathes of European waters and who continuously look for greater restrictions on fishermen.

Fergus Ewing *rose*—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please sit down, Mr Ewing.

Finlay Carson: Is the SNP standing up for the interests of Scottish fishermen? I do not think so.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member give way?

Finlay Carson: I will.

Fergus Ewing: Is the member aware that, at the negotiations that I attended in Brussels in December, all the leaders of the Scottish fishing representative organisations recognised that, thanks to our excellent team of negotiators and our hard work, the Scottish Government achieved a very good deal? What would the Scottish Conservatives do post-Brexit to replace the £33 million from the European maritime and fisheries fund, which has been so invaluable to our fishing communities?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Carson, I will give you time back as that was a long intervention.

Finlay Carson: Thank you.

Even though that funding is very welcome, it is only worth 4 per cent of total landings at Scottish ports, and the Scottish fishing industry does not rely on handouts.

Just last month, I met a group of concerned pelagic fishermen. They are worried that Fergus Ewing has held back 12 per cent of the 2017 mackerel quota in a dispute with fishermen over the number of landings at Scotland's ports. At 30 per cent of the total value of Scottish landings, mackerel is the most valuable fishery to Scotland.

I fully support the ambition to see more fish landed and processed in Scotland. However, holding fishermen to ransom is not the way to achieve that. Instead, the Government should look at why so many fish are landed abroad and at how we can work with the industry to increase landings in Scotland. All that we have seen from this SNP Government is bully-boy tactics.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his final 30 seconds.

Finlay Carson: There has been more flip-flopping from the SNP on its fishing position than from a North Sea haddock. It could be compared to a dog's dinner or, more appropriately, a fish supper. It is misleading, disingenuous and—frankly—insulting to everybody in Scotland with an interest in seeing our fisheries prosper.

I was extremely disappointed that in its amendment the SNP refused to back a commitment to keep fishermen out of the CFP. That will be noted by our fishing communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but you must conclude now.

Finlay Carson: I urge every MSP to support our motion today—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Now means now. Please sit down.

Because of members' bad behaviour, we have lost a lot of time. Speeches will all have to be kept to a very tight four minutes, but that is all members' own fault.

15:08

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): The industry of catching wild fish has been consistently let down by Tory policy and practice over the decades. The contrast with this SNP Government could not be more stark—then, as now. In paragraph 14a, a 1970s SNP policy leaflet talks about

“the right to impose an exclusive 100 mile limit”.

The only change that we have made has been to make it a 200-mile limit.

We are the only party to have consistently, always and invariably opposed the common fisheries policy. Donald Stewart, the then leader of the SNP, spoke in the House of Commons in 1983 against the common fisheries policy when it was a matter for debate. Alan McCartney wrote an excellent paper in the 1990s on the precise point that Finlay Carson addressed—regional control. The SNP has been engaged in those issues from the outset, and it remains engaged.

On 17 January I brought a members' business debate to the chamber supporting the Scottish Fishermen's Federation's sea of opportunity campaign. The motion said, among other things, that it

“considers that full control over fishing in the offshore economic zone represents an opportunity to reinvigorate coastal communities”.

Two Tory actions on that day showed them once again in all their ambivalence towards our fishermen: no Tory signed the motion supporting the campaign, and Tory Prime Minister May made a speech entitled “The government’s negotiating objectives for exiting the EU”. It contained only a single reference to fishing—a reference to Spanish fishermen. There was nothing about our fishermen and nothing about our fishing industries.

On 2 February, the Tories’ white paper stated at paragraph 8.16 that it is

“in both our interests to reach a mutually beneficial deal that works for the UK and the EU’s fishing communities.”

That is a signal in the most unambiguous language possible that there is a deal for fishermen from other jurisdictions: we are being sold out again. At six minutes and 27 seconds into his speech, Peter Chapman confirmed that it is Tory policy that foreign vessels will continue to fish in our waters. The clear opportunity that is available, as we leave the CFP, to reclaim fishing rights in our waters is being traded away again.

If an advantage is being denied to our fishermen, there is an even graver and more disadvantageous impact looming for our processors, much of which Rhoda Grant very eloquently articulated. I will simply quote from the UK Government’s Treasury analysis of 23 May 2016, which says, at paragraph 1.15, that

“businesses that trade with the EU would be uncertain about the UK’s access to the Single Market, not knowing what restrictions could be put on their ability to trade, including tariffs, customs costs or non-tariff barriers”.

Crucially, it goes on to say that

“those that currently benefit from EU funding would not know what support if any they would receive after the UK left ... This includes ... fishermen”.

John Scott: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The member is in his last 30 seconds.

Stewart Stevenson: That is important for small communities around Scotland. Just when we thought that we had escaped from the CFP, we will be hit by a Tory Government that trades away our advantage and sees trade and fiscal barriers erected. Ms Leadsom’s letter does not take any opportunity to rebut what has previously been said.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close.

Stewart Stevenson: Finally, Boris Johnson wrote on 26 June 2016:

“The only change—and it will not come in any great rush—is that the UK will extricate itself from the EU’s extraordinary and opaque system of legislation.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stevenson—you must close.

Stewart Stevenson: That says nothing about leaving the single market.

Abandon isolation. It does not work.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are running way behind time and it will affect the other speakers within your groups if you take extra time. I call Claudia Beamish, to be followed by John Finnie, who does not have another member in his group.

15:13

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I hope that I get my 10 seconds back.

When we talk of stakeholders in the marine environment, we are being indiscriminate. Although fishermen, coastal communities and environmentalists lead the conversation, we are all affected by the health of our marine environment. I hope that we all share the aim of having sustainable and productive fisheries in healthy and biologically diverse seas.

It would be a significant failing in the negotiations for the post-Brexit UK if our fishing regulations were left in a weakened state. The current EU commitments for fisheries management, following the 2013 reform, have sustainability, with measurable results, at their core. Since 2007, the percentage of overfished stocks has fallen by a quarter, from 72 per cent to 47 per cent. Whatever the future arrangements, there must be strong structures for liaison with relevant countries and partner organisations. It is very concerning to imagine our marine resources as a pawn in negotiations, and the sector deserves reassurances.

There are significant issues to be addressed: mechanisms for shared management, sufficient resourcing for data collection and monitoring, and—as Scottish Labour’s amendment states—access to European markets. The longevity of our fisheries truly depends on the scientific foundations on which decisions are based.

Catch limits and quotas must be developed using up-to-date and robust scientific advice, and improvements to technical measures should be supported. That principle is especially important with regard to the discard ban. The estimate from 2005 was that 7 million tonnes of fish were discarded globally. Scotland has made considerable progress, thanks to the efforts of Scottish fishermen: only 16 per cent of all whitefish catches from the North Sea were discarded in 2016. The Scottish Government must—as, I am sure, it will—support continued progress towards banning that wasteful practice. I ask the cabinet

secretary to set out details of how that work is developing.

Scottish Government figures report a drop in the number of boats using remote electronic monitoring since the introduction and tightening of landing obligations. In 2014, 32 boats used cameras to monitor their catches, but that number recently dropped to 15. Will the cabinet secretary comment on that in his closing remarks?

Sustainable development, proper resourcing and clear processes for engagement by stakeholders are absolutely vital for the future. It is immensely important that legislators recognise the level of expertise in the industry, in the science community and in non-governmental organisations, as well as in communities.

It was fantastic to learn of a recently developed Scottish project to tackle entanglement. Alistair Sinclair of the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Association instigated a partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, British Divers Marine Life Rescue and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society to prevent large marine life getting stuck in fishing gear, which is an all-too-common problem that can result in the death of majestic marine creatures such as whales and basking sharks, as well as the destruction of fishermen's equipment. The project has established new protocols and guidance for creel fishermen. It is a shining example of the power of knowledge sharing and co-operation based on science.

Scotland has a proud reputation for spectacular seafood, which will only be enhanced by a robust plan for sustainable fisheries management to bring future work to the range of sectors in the fishing industry and onshore processing, which often support fragile communities. Such sustainable development will also ensure that protection of our marine biodiversity and fragile features and tackling climate change are addressed. I hope that everyone in the chamber and beyond will agree that sustainable management creates a virtuous circle that will facilitate future generations of fishermen and sustain our seas far into the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call John Finnie—do not take advantage, Mr Finnie—to be followed by Mike Rumbles.

15:17

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Our national marine plan talks about having

“clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse ... seas”

being managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people. Rhoda Grant and Stewart Stevenson referred to the EU nationals and their families who work in the fishing sector. It is our

earnest wish that they are able to remain in Scotland contributing positively; they are often in our more fragile communities.

Scotland is a fishing nation. There is consensus that the common fisheries policy is not delivering a sustainable fishing industry in Scotland, which affects our coastal communities. European Greens have suggested reforming the common fisheries policy. Fundamentally, we believe that a whole-ecosystem approach to fisheries management is required. Fish stocks will recover for the long term only if we also protect spawning and nursery grounds, which will, as members have said, require designating large areas of water—between 20 and 40 per cent of EU marine areas—as out of bounds to fishing.

We are also keen to see restraint in the expansion of aquaculture. As someone who represents the Highlands and Islands, I recognise the valuable role that aquaculture plays in communities, but it is not the solution to the problem of overfishing the oceans. Greens demand high environmental and health protection standards for aquaculture production, including organic aquaculture, because we believe that aquaculture can be more environmentally damaging than exploiting wild fisheries.

The Government amendment states that:

“the UK Government's White Paper makes clear its intention to allow EU boats access to Scotland's waters as of right”.

Whatever happens, fishing nations will experience long-term benefits only by adopting ecosystem-based management approaches. Fish are not concerned about our structures, whether they are EU, UK or common fisheries policy structures. There must be shared management and co-operation within the UK and neighbouring countries, because we must be custodians of our resources and give due regard to science. That involves understanding the risks that fishing has posed and putting in place mechanisms to ameliorate them.

I am concerned at some of the things that I have heard—not necessarily in the chamber today—about the free-for-all bonanza that we will have once we get out of the EU. Overfishing poses a significant risk—discards have been mentioned, in that regard. One anticipated benefit of the discard ban is the potential to increase fisheries revenue and resilience, which is to be welcomed. That will mean more fish remaining in the sea due to improved selectivity in terms of how and where fishing is undertaken.

However, without sensible management, there is no realistic future for fishing at all, and sensible management means setting sustainable levels in order to restore biomass to above minimum safe

yield. That will be relevant with regard to the challenge to the choke species. All vessels must have selective gear and be able to fish in the most selective way in order to avoid choking. That has been touched on in the debate.

In the period 2014 to 2020, Scotland was due to get 46 per cent of the UK allocation from the European maritime fisheries fund—€111 million over seven years. That will be a significant loss.

All powers over fisheries should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. That will require co-operation, however we do things. It will involve protection of spawning and nursery grounds. A whole-ecosystem approach to fisheries management is absolutely required and, as was touched on eloquently by Colin Beattie, we need robust monitoring, as well as robust enforcement.

15:21

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I thank Peter Chapman for bringing the motion to the chamber, because there can be no doubt that, as it says,

“the Scottish fishing industry is vital to Scotland’s culture and economy, and is a bedrock of many communities across the country”.

The Liberal Democrats have long criticised the European Union’s common fisheries policy as being remote, overly centralised and bureaucratic. We believe that the industry and other stakeholders must be involved in developing a plan for sustainable fisheries that works for our Scottish fishermen. That is why we lodged an amendment to the Conservative motion. The amendment was not accepted for debate but, if it had been, members would have seen that it would not have taken anything out of the Conservative motion. Instead, it would have added at the end of the motion the point that I just made in order to strengthen the motion where it needs to be strengthened. The Labour amendment seeks to do a similar thing, so we shall support it.

That does not mean that we are not critical of the Conservative Party’s decision to put at risk our access to the markets that our fish processing businesses dearly need. Taking us out of the European single market and the customs union—that is the important one—will, if Mrs May has her way, threaten the markets that our fishing industry heavily relies on. I will give just one example. If we are taken out of the customs union, our fish processing businesses may face tariff barriers at our borders.

However, the financial barrier is not the main barrier that our fish processors face. They have coped remarkably well with the fall in the value of the pound against the euro as a consequence of the vote last summer. Although no one likes to pay

more taxes, our fish exporting businesses have coped with a fluctuating price for their goods and could cope similarly well with increased costs at the border if they have to. What really worries them is the delay that will occur at the border if they have to go through added bureaucracy and consequent delays as their goods are processed through customs. We are talking about worries about delays in getting fresh produce to markets.

Peter Chapman: Does the member realise that 10 of the 20 biggest markets for our fish are not in the EU at all?

Mike Rumbles: That question indicates that the Conservatives are not really concerned about the European markets that are so important to our fishing industry. I am sure that Peter Chapman realises that all the markets are important to us and that to threaten our exports with added delays and bureaucracy in relation to one of them is just not on, to be frank.

In recent years, we have all seen on our TV screens the long lines of lorries parked up on motorways in the south of England because of ferry delays or Channel tunnel blockages. Do our fish exporters have worries about being outside the customs union? You bet they do.

I am conscious of the time. I turn to what seems to be the main point of conflict between the Conservatives and the SNP in the debate—I have listened carefully to the barracking, the shouting and the exchanges. The fishing rights of our Scottish fishermen must not be traded away against other policy issues. It is right to take part in negotiations with our neighbours in the European Union, but those negotiations must be about fishing and access to markets. They must not be about using our fishermen as a bargaining chip in more general European negotiations.

15:25

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Our fishing industry is a vital part of the Scottish economy. As someone who grew up in Ullapool, which is still one of Scotland’s busiest fishing ports, I understand and value the cultural contribution that fishing communities make to Scotland. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the Conservative motion recognised that; it is unusual for me to find anything to agree with in Conservative motions.

It is plainly obvious—and has been so for a long time—that the common fisheries policy is not fit for purpose; it is not a good deal for our fishing industry. That is why the SNP has consistently argued for it to be scrapped or fundamentally reformed. That is our party’s record on standing up for fishing and it goes a long way back.

We can contrast that with the position of the Tory party, which took Scotland into the EU and described the fishing industry as “expendable” as it did so. I find it astonishing that the Tories have the audacity to bring the debate to the chamber, given their appalling record on Scotland’s fishing industry. Their signalling on the issue so far indicates that they are preparing to barter again.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, said last year before the EU vote that Brexit would not lead to an end of UK involvement in or with the CFP. In her first major Brexit speech, in Lancaster house, Theresa May said:

“I do not believe that the EU’s leaders will seriously tell German exporters, French farmers, Spanish fishermen, the young unemployed of the Eurozone, and millions of others, that they want to make them poorer, just to punish Britain and make a political point.”

In the Brexit white paper, the Tories made it clear that fishing will be just a negotiating chip in the Brexit talks. The paper says:

“Given the heavy reliance on UK waters of the EU fishing industry and the importance of EU waters to the UK, it is in both our interests to reach a mutually beneficial deal that works for the UK and the EU’s fishing communities.”

Let us continue. More recently, the letter from the Tory environment secretary Andrea Leadsom to the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation signalled that the UK Government is preparing to reach a deal over the CFP. It reads:

“No decision has yet been made on the extent to which the EU legislation governing the Common Fisheries Policy will be incorporated into domestic law.”

The letter also states that the UK Government

“are committed to ongoing co-operation with other countries over management of shared stocks ... and ... ending discards”.

It seems that the much-hated common fisheries policy could be the only EU policy to survive the Tories’ hard Brexit.

We know that the Tories called the fishing industry “expendable” on our way into Europe. When I worked in psychiatry, we used to say that the best predictor of the future is what has happened in the past. Folk in our fishing communities are not daft.

Finlay Carson *rose*—

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

Maree Todd: Those folk know that the Tories are consistent in selling out our fishing communities. My party is consistent on standing up for our fishing communities.

15:29

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): When it comes to fisheries, the Scottish National Party claims to have a new vision for the future of Scotland that will be beneficial for all. Sadly, that vision is based on destroying the best from the past while clinging to the discredited EU policies over which the UK has had little control. The SNP’s position on the common fisheries policy epitomises that vision. It is a muddy position that is delivered with the slipperiness of a fresh fish and the glazed, dull and unseeing eyes of a fish that is not quite so fresh.

Last year, the UK democratically voted to leave the EU. As parliamentarians, we should accept that decision and focus our energies on implementing the changes that will come as a result. I do not often quote Socrates, but he said:

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

That is what we should do when it comes to our fishing policy; we should not pretend that the only way is to cling on to the old common fisheries policy and unrealistically claim that Scotland can single-handedly change it.

Post-Brexit, Scotland will be in the interesting position of negotiating with the rest of the UK to come up with a strategy that suits us all. The Scottish Government has constantly called for that, but now it seems to want to reject that approach.

As Maree Todd said, the UK Government has, via Andrea Leadsom and George Eustice, made it clear that Scotland will be fully included in the discussions about the new policy but, for the SNP, the appropriate saying appears to be, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.” It is time for the SNP to stop playing politics with spin and to engage with the UK Government on the future, instead of clinging to the past.

As we heard from John Finnie, the UK’s policy must be based on sustainability and collaboration. We need to talk to the EU about how to manage universal stocks from their breeding grounds to the place where they are captured.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Edward Mountain: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

That is not only good and sensible management; accepting that will bring, as Bertie Armstrong has said, a sea of opportunity. That is not visionary, but simple common sense.

When the UK leaves the EU, we will regain control of our coastal waters to the 200-mile limit. We can say who does what, where, when and

how. [*Interruption.*] Cabinet secretary, you do not allow me to interrupt you when you are in committee, so please do not interrupt me now.

Taking back the levers of power might be another SNP clarion call when it comes to the UK Government but apparently it is not one when it comes to the EU, for it is clear that, as the EU fisheries commissioner has said, those who are in the EU are in the common fisheries policy. It is not possible to be in and out, which is the view that Whiteford and Weir peddle. That is a truly disingenuous flip-flop.

No one doubts the importance of fishing to the UK and especially to Scotland, but it could be worth so much more. Currently, EU boats land from UK waters a catch that is worth £400 million. That represents 58 per cent of the total catch. Something tells me that we are being short changed.

I will focus briefly on the Highlands, where fishing is an important industry for us. In rural areas, it creates jobs that are often critical to the local economy. I know that the Presiding Officer will press me to keep to my time, but I mention that the fisheries sector in Ullapool, Lochinver, Kishorn and Scrabster is important not only to fishermen but to the services that support them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now, Mr Mountain.

Edward Mountain: For the reasons that I have given, I support the motion and call on the SNP Government to do the same. There is no flip-flopping on the Conservative side of the chamber when it comes to fishing, and it is time for the Government's slippery approach to come to a halt and for it to support our fishermen.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I say to members that they should not have conversations across the chamber. Mr Mountain, you should always speak through the chair and not directly to the cabinet secretary as you did.

15:34

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): For all their professions of support for our fishing industry, I am surprised that it has taken the Tories 40 long years to recognise how vital fishing is to our culture, economy and communities.

My constituency covers both coasts—east and west—and I unequivocally assure the Conservatives that they signed up for, and have presided over, a common fisheries policy that has been damaging to our fishermen and our coastal communities.

Peter Chapman said that history is irrelevant, but it is totally relevant when it highlights the hypocrisy and the empty rhetoric of Mr Chapman's party. It was a Conservative leader who signed us up to the CFP, knowing full well that it would lead to a

"weaker and less efficient national fleet".

All the predictions in the secret briefings of the 1970s and 1980s have come true: we have weaker fleets; small-boat fishing has been damaged; and there are fewer fishermen.

The Tories knew it then—and they pressed ahead. They claim to know it now, but we cannot even get an assurance from the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, that we will be in control of our own fishing after Brexit.

I will remind Conservative members of the much-needed history lesson from Fergus Ewing. On the Conservatives' watch, fishermen were deemed non-essential under a Tory leader in the 1970s, sold out to the original CFP by a Tory leader in the 1980s and betrayed by a revised CFP under a Tory leader in the 1990s.

Leaving history behind, now we have a Tory leader whose first major Brexit speech mentioned the potential plight of Spanish fishermen, but nothing about Scottish fishermen. Mrs May talks a lot about deals with Europe that are "mutually beneficial" for the UK and for the EU's fishing communities, but she cannot give us any detail on how much of the CFP will still apply after Brexit. She can give us no clarity on future funding to replace the European maritime and fisheries fund, no guarantees on tariff-free and customs-free exports to the EU single market and no assurance that EU nationals and their families working in the fishing sector can remain in Scotland. That is not political spin; that is what I have heard by speaking to fishermen on the east and west coasts of my constituency. The Conservatives claim that they are standing up for the fishing industry; but they have had 30 years to do so, and they have failed.

In sharp contrast, the SNP has been utterly consistent and vociferous in condemning the CFP and pressing the UK Government to negotiate a better deal for our fishermen. That is not a new vision, as Edward Mountain said, but a longstanding commitment to end the CFP.

As evidence of that, in 2007, our manifesto pledged to

"continue to work for withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy".

In 2011, our manifesto stated:

"The CFP is well past its sell-by date".

In our paper “Scotland’s Place in Europe”, which was published in December 2016 and dismissed by the Conservatives in Westminster, we stated that our preference was that

“we would not remain within the Common Fisheries Policy”.

Today, Fergus Ewing’s amendment notes that again.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
rose—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last minute, Mr Ruskell. You must be very quick; you cannot have more than four minutes.

Mark Ruskell: I thank the member for giving way. Does she not acknowledge, though, that, had we not had the CFP in place for the past 40 years, we simply would not have key fish stocks such as cod?

Kate Forbes: What I recognise is that the Conservatives have had ample opportunity to negotiate a better deal for our fishermen but have failed to do so. Rhetoric is one thing, but the Tories have had decades in which to support our fishing industry. Only when it becomes politically expedient to do so do we see them lift a finger for it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now come to closing speeches. We have run over time, which will eat into the time available for the next debate, so I ask closing speakers to take shorter times than were allocated. I call Rhoda Grant. You have less than four minutes, please.

15:38

Rhoda Grant: So far, this debate has contained more heat than light and political posturing has played a large part in that. However, we all agree on some points, one of which is about access to the European single market. In his opening statement, Peter Chapman suggested that it would be quite simple to get a free-trade deal with the rest of Europe. However, that is not in keeping with a hard Brexit, because Europe will want something back. If we are not going to trade with it at all, it is very unlikely that it will give us a free-trade deal for our fish. Therefore, it is very important that we work with the EU to find a deal that suits it and also suits us and our fishing community.

We also need to be wary of the red tape that surrounds imports to the EU. As Mike Rumbles and, indeed, the fishing community have made clear in the past, that is the community’s biggest fear. If it is difficult to import, regardless of the tariffs that are in place, access to the market will be damaged, which will make things very difficult for our community and, indeed, for those who

might want access to our fish in that market as well.

There has been a lot of talk about the CFP, but again it has given off more heat than light. I understand the concerns that have been expressed and the need to rebalance, but the fact is that if we leave the EU, we will not be subject to the CFP, unless we agree some access to the market.

Stewart Stevenson gave us a history lesson about the CFP, quoting a leaflet from back in the 1970s in which the SNP made it clear that it did not agree with the policy. I have to say that he makes my point: he and his party have been arguing against the CFP since the 1970s and where are we? We are still in it. Given that anything that the SNP has done has been an absolute failure, how on earth is it going to negotiate changes to the CFP from outwith the EU when we could not do so when we were in it? Maree Todd made the same argument as him, but I am afraid to say that if we are in the European Union, we will be in the CFP—that is why the fishing community voted out. Those outwith the fishing community are looking for a more balanced response, but I do not know how on earth we can get back into the European Union without going back into the CFP.

Others have made the point that not everything is wrong with the CFP. I note the concerns about access to our fishing grounds, but other aspects of the policy such as management and protection of stocks and the environment will, as everyone agrees and as John Finnie, Mike Rumbles and Claudia Beamish have mentioned, need to be replicated in domestic policy. Claudia Beamish went a wee bit further, alluding to other issues such as the science and the shared expertise that we gain from the EU and which we stand to lose if we cannot work with it in the future. Of course, the EU itself stands to lose our expertise in technical measures, which are something that our fishing community has led on.

We cannot simply say, “CFP bad”; we need to ensure that some of the good things in it are replicated in future and that we keep them as part of our local management. After all, we have to protect things such as the shared spawning grounds that John Finnie and Edward Mountain talked about. I think that all of us agree that repatriated powers should be devolved, but that does not mean that we should not work with others. We have to do so in order to make that a reality.

I know that we are short of time, Presiding Officer, so I will conclude by saying that we have to protect our fishing industry, our stocks and our marine environment. That is what we should be

looking at and it is, I think, something that we can agree on and unite around.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Mike Russell. It would be appreciated if you could take less than five minutes.

15:42

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

There is no doubt that, in comparison with its importance to the UK, the Scottish fishing industry is much more important to the Scottish economy and Scottish life; indeed, it is much more important than the English fishing industry's relative importance to England. As a result, I want very briefly to quote three things that indicate some words that are missing from this debate.

The first quotation is from the Tory motion, which

"acknowledges the potential to restore control of access to UK waters".

The word "potential" is interesting, as it is not a word of commitment; and I also note that there is no mention of Scottish waters. The person who has been talking to the SFF about Scottish waters and Scottish control is not a Tory, but the cabinet secretary beside me.

The second quotation that I want to highlight is from Theresa May herself, in her Lancaster house speech, in which she talks about "Spanish fishermen"—not Scottish fishermen—in the context of guaranteeing income and access.

The third interesting Tory quotation is from the Brexit white paper, which says:

"Given the heavy reliance on UK waters of the EU fishing industry ... it is in ... our interests to reach a mutually beneficial deal".

At the outset, Mr Chapman said that the key issue was control, citing Iceland. I agree with him; who will have control? It will not be Scotland, the Scottish Parliament or Scottish fishermen; it will be the UK. This is about UK Tory interests, not Scottish fishermen's interests. I see the Tories acknowledging that and agreeing. That is what they have said—this is about UK Tory interests.

The reality is that, like agriculture, fishing will, if we allow it to happen—

Peter Chapman: Will the minister give way?

Michael Russell: No, but I will come to Mr Chapman's role in this in a moment.

If we allow it to happen, fishing will be grabbed by the UK and traded away. The reality is that that has happened for the past 40 years and will go on happening. The Tories have always traded away,

and will always trade away, Scottish assets for their profit.

Alas, the reality is that Mr Chapman understands little of that. [*Interruption.*] I am only going on the evidence of his speech. For Brexit, the UK needs things to trade. Fishing access will be the key ask from some EU partners, so it will be needed to trade. It is interesting—Mr Chapman might want to note this—that the key ask in non-EU countries will be agricultural access. There is Brazilian beef, for example. I predict that Mr Chapman will have a lot of explaining to do to his farming friends in future months as they realise what is happening. Holding on to agriculture and fisheries is about holding on to assets at Westminster in order to trade them away.

The second thing about Brexit that is not understood by the Tories is that Scottish membership of the EU will be a matter of negotiation and priorities, and the Scottish fishing industry is much more important to Scotland than it is to the UK.

Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Michael Russell: No, I will not. We have heard too much on these matters from the Tories that is, unfortunately, not accurate. It is important that we put on the record the reality of what is happening, and the reality is that the Scottish fishing industry is important to Scotland and will be an important part of our negotiation.

Thirdly, the Tories have ignored the role of the European Parliament, which will have a yes/no vote on Brexit. The historic rights of other countries have already been referred to in the European Parliament's initial motion, and the reality is that the people who will vote on the matter in the end have already declared their position. What is about to happen is that the Tories will be destroyed by that—they will trade away those rights.

We have a list of seven points on which the Tories are wrong. They are wrong on the history. Unfortunately, the fishing industry was sold out by the Tories at the beginning, and it is still sold out. The Tories are wrong about the CFP. As Stewart Stevenson pointed out, the SNP has opposed the CFP again and again. The Tories are wrong about access to markets, and Scottish fish processors will suffer from their attitude, just as inshore fishermen will. I represent a considerable number of inshore fishermen who know that that is the truth. The Tories are also wrong about the future prospects for Scotland negotiating reform or changes to the CFP. It is ironic that the people who tell us what Europe will do are the ones who want to get out of it.

The Tory position is wrong on the Brexit processes and the UK intentions, as the Tories will sell out the fishing industry. The Tory position is wrong in its politics, as the Tories should be apologising, not exploiting. Finally, it is wrong for Scottish fishing.

I say to the Scottish fishermen: do not be fooled by the Tories—they are wrong in every regard.

15:48

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I know that, for many people, the EU referendum vote last June was a difficult one. The United Kingdom as a whole voted to leave and, in my own area of Moray, we came closer than any other part of Scotland to voting leave. Much of that vote came from the coastal communities—from Burghead across to Cullen and everything in between. Those communities have a rich history of fishing and still fish today, even if the number of boats and of those directly involved in the industry has reduced.

I have had a lot of conversations with local people since the vote last June. Those from the fishing community who supported leaving the EU did so because of the opportunity to leave the common fisheries policy—that is what persuaded them to vote to come out of the EU.

Leaving the European Union and the common fisheries policy will mean that the Scottish fishing industry has a bright future ahead of it. Control over Scotland's waters will be restored, the Scottish fishing industry can be rebuilt and our many coastal communities can be revived. We can create a fishing regime that best suits the needs of the fishing industry only when Scotland and the UK are back in control. Peter Chapman was right to point out that such a vision of prosperity is not possible under the current constraints of the CFP.

Fergus Ewing: Douglas Ross says that the Tories believe that Brexit will mean the restoration of control. What would he say about what David Mundell said in June? He said that the idea that we would just go back to Scotland or Britain controlling British waters is wrong.

Douglas Ross: I will come on to some other points from SNP members in a moment. The most recent letter from Andrea Leadsom, which the SNP has tried to portray as being against the fishermen and against our coming out of the CFP, has been supported by the fishing industry. The industry is happy with what the Conservative UK Government is doing and unhappy with what the SNP is doing.

We have heard from many members on the Conservative and SNP benches that the CFP is

unfair and works against the interests of the Scottish fishing industry. I will take an intervention from any SNP MSP who will stand up and say that they will support the Scottish Fishermen's Federation sea of opportunity pledge, which I and other Conservatives have supported. Will any SNP MSP support the pledge that Eilidh Whiteford and Mike Weir have supported?

Stewart Stevenson rose—

Douglas Ross: I give way to Stewart Stevenson to get confirmation that he has supported the pledge.

Stewart Stevenson: I am obliged to the member for giving me the opportunity to be unambiguous in stating my support for the SFF's sea of opportunity campaign. On 17 January, I brought to the chamber a motion and a debate in support of the SFF, and no Tory signed the motion.

Members: Oh!

Douglas Ross: The question was clear: will any SNP member stand up and say that they have signed the pledge that the SFF is asking all general election candidates to sign? None of them has signed it, which is telling, both for this Parliament and for the fishing communities.

Our fishing communities know that the Scottish Conservatives have a positive vision for a prosperous, sustainable and environmentally friendly Scottish fishing industry. We are committed to leaving the EU and the CFP and taking back control of the 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone. That is the message that our fishing communities in Moray and across Scotland want to hear. They know that the Scottish Conservatives are backing them and that—as we have just seen—the SNP is not. The SFF is right to highlight the sea of opportunity that awaits the Scottish fishing industry once the UK exits the European Union.

Moray fishermen will benefit if we break from the constraints of the common fisheries policy—*[Interruption.]* Moray's coastal communities know that the fishing industry will thrive without the straitjacket of the CFP.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Ross. My colleague started the debate by asking members to stop shouting at each other across the chamber. I ask members to close it in the same spirit.

Douglas Ross: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Finally, as Finlay Carson pointed out, the SNP has not done enough to support the fishing industry. In recent weeks, the SNP's position on the CFP has become ever more confusing, and

the contributions from SNP members today have made that very clear.

The First Minister has demanded a second independence referendum and has said that that is at the heart of her general election campaign. If the SNP is successful in separating Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom, its policy is for Scotland to join the EU as an independent state. As we have heard, the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries has made the position of Brussels absolutely clear on the matter: a new country that joins the EU cannot opt out of the CFP. There are no halfway measures—the SNP would take Scottish fishermen straight back into the common fisheries policy.

The SNP Government faces a simple choice today: it can stand either with Scotland's fishermen or against them. As Rhoda Grant said, the SNP cannot have it both ways.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

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

Douglas Ross: Exiting the common fisheries policy is incompatible with the Scottish National Party's commitment to EU membership. The Scottish Conservatives are unequivocal in our support for Scottish fishermen and their desire to exit the common fisheries policy.

Our motion makes it clear that we recognise the importance of the fishing industry in Scotland and the crucial role that fishing plays as

“a bedrock of many communities”.

Brexit offers an opportunity to leave behind the CFP and provide Scotland with a fit-for-purpose and tailor-made fishing policy. Perhaps most important of all, it provides an opportunity to deliver what the sector wants.

At decision time, MSPs can stand with the fishing communities in Moray and across Scotland and vote for a positive future for Scottish fishing by supporting the Conservative motion, or they can vote with the SNP, cast off the benefits of leaving the CFP and support an independent Scotland going straight back into the EU. I urge members to vote for a bright future for Scottish fishing and to reject the SNP's dangerous plans for Scotland to be taken out of the United Kingdom only to go straight back into the European Union.

Teacher Training Programme

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): As I said earlier, we have cut into the time for the next debate, so I ask for a quick turnaround, please.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-05595, in the name of Liz Smith, on the teacher training programme.

15:55

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, which intimates that I am a member of the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Last Wednesday, the members of the Education and Skills Committee heard evidence from five trainee teachers and seven fully qualified teachers including one head of department and one headteacher. At the start of that committee session, it was refreshing to hear those individuals' passionate belief that teaching is a vocation that can make the biggest impact on young people and bring rich rewards, including when measured against the other professions.

The wealth of talent of those teachers and trainee teachers was plain for all to see, and I am sure that they are exactly the kind of people into whose capable hands parents would like to deliver their children at the start of each morning. They were caring, courteous, articulate, determined and ambitious for their profession, and we should acknowledge that they all had some very positive things to say about teaching and about their coursework and placements.

However, the rest of their message could hardly have been more blunt and, in delivering it, they echoed the views of many of the 700 respondents to the committee's call for evidence. Indeed, some aspects of that message were shocking. They said that there is a complete inadequacy within some teacher training programmes for teachers to learn how to teach literacy and numeracy effectively—something that was confirmed by the report that the Scottish Government published only this morning.

They said that there is very limited support for teachers to learn about additional support needs—which about 25 per cent of the school population now have—and how to help children to stay safe with the growing problems on the internet.

They said that the organisation of some aspects of school placements is chaotic and that trainees have a huge range of experiences, with some trainees describing them as outstanding and others describing them as demoralising or a

complete waste of time. They said that, in some schools, trainees are asked to do little more than cover classes or do the photocopying, that a growing number of departments are not taking trainees at all because staff are too busy, and that no one ever sits down with some trainees to go over the feedback. It is little wonder that so many trainees have been asking questions of the teacher training establishments and the Scottish Government.

If last week laid bare the problems in teacher training, it also gave us yet another set of stark statistics that tell us just how badly many of Scotland's pupils are doing when it comes to basic literacy. If teachers are not being given the necessary professional training, how can we expect our pupils to come out with good results?

Even worse, those problems were identified several years ago. Research that was done six years ago by Sangster, Anderson and O'Hara from the University of Edinburgh's institute of education identified that there were issues with the knowledge of language of people who were training to be teachers in Scotland. I will give just one example. They found that only 41 per cent of the trainees could correctly define the term "adverb". In other research, Henderson and Rodriguez uncovered the fact that two thirds of first-year BEd students failed to reach 80 per cent competence at the numeracy level expected of primary 7 pupils.

Likewise, Graham Donaldson's 2011 report on teacher training was clear that teacher selection should be much more rigorous with reference to literacy and numeracy and that much more work needed to be done to provide an effective continuum between universities and schools. He said that teachers needed to be skilled in their own subject knowledge as well as being successful imparters of that knowledge to their pupils, and he recommended that there should be a more effective mechanism of teacher mentoring, which is something that the Scottish Government acknowledged when it published its interim report on Donaldson last year.

The important point here is that many trainee teachers have not been getting formal knowledge-based training in mathematics and language and learning how to deliver that, as distinct from having to study abstract theories about how mathematics and language could be taught. Our witnesses backed up that point, with one saying that she did not feel that trainees had

"sufficient skills in numeracy to be able to teach it to 11-year-olds at a reasonable standard."

On the practical support that helps modern-day classroom management, one panel member said:

"very little of what we work on at university seems to have any relevance to what happens in the classroom."—*[Official Report, Education and Skills Committee, 10 May 2017; c 8, 5.]*

He said that "next to nothing" was being taught about classroom management. Parents will be horrified by those aspects of the evidence.

Those problems are bad enough, but there are others relating to the organisation of school placements which, although they might not impact on every trainee, impact on a great many. For those of us who have been through the teacher training programme—several members who are in the chamber have done so, albeit many years ago—the school placements were not only the best part of the course but the part that defined whether one could cut the mustard and be a teacher. Therefore, it is deeply worrying to be told that quite a large number of placements are not working out well. That is yet another way in which we are not giving trainee teachers a fair chance. We cannot have a student telling us that he found out only very late on a Friday evening where his Monday morning placement was to be, or hear that someone was told that they would be used only as a cover teacher. How on earth can we motivate and encourage teachers if their introduction to the classroom is the chaotic mismanagement of their placement? Surely that can easily be sorted.

Being a teacher is the best job in the world—even better than being in politics at times—or it should be. However, that is not the case at the moment. The evidence that we heard—just like that which we have heard on literacy and numeracy, the mismanagement of the curriculum for excellence, teacher shortages and problems with subject choice—is deeply worrying. Not only are our trainees encountering major problems with their professional instruction but, in watching some of the more experienced people in the profession that they want to enter, they are seeing frustration, poor morale, stress, exhaustion and anger.

The Scottish Government published a report on the issue this morning. Although I have not been able to read its full detail, it clearly flags up many of the issues that we have heard in the committee and makes plain that there is not nearly enough effective communication between the teacher training institutions, the GTCS, local authorities and the Scottish Government. On top of the huge issues with teacher shortages, the situation is putting significant stress on the profession. I therefore call on the Scottish Government to bring forward with the most urgent priority the necessary changes that will make all aspects of teacher training fit for purpose. I repeat: if we cannot train our teachers properly, what hope have we got for our young people?

I move,

That the Parliament is concerned by the recent evidence presented to the Education and Skills Committee by trainee teachers, which revealed some serious concerns about the teacher training programme in Scotland, specifically about the organisation of teacher trainee placements and some perceived gaps in the programme regarding supporting trainees in learning key skills for the classroom; believes that these problems are, in some key areas, having a detrimental impact on the preparedness of trainees to meet the challenges of the curriculum for excellence and their ability to deliver better teaching in literacy and numeracy, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the teacher training institutions and the General Teaching Council for Scotland to take urgent action to implement the necessary improvements to the teacher training programme in Scotland.

16:02

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): There are a number of important issues in the debate, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss them in Parliament. I confirm that my amendment is complementary to Liz Smith's motion and that the Government will support the motion because of the importance of the issues that are raised.

A number of core components are required in a world-class education system. They include a flexible and child-centred school curriculum; a wider policy framework to meet the diverse needs of all young people at every stage of their journey through life; modern and accessible buildings that create the right environment for children to learn in; and an evidence-based approach to improvement. However, perhaps the most crucial component is to ensure that children get the right support to learn at the right time, and teachers are crucial in that endeavour.

Teachers are key to children's achievements at school and to our ambitions to raise the bar for all and close the attainment gap. I therefore begin my speech by putting on record my thanks to each and every one of Scotland's new and existing teachers for all that they do for our children in our schools. Their role and contribution is immense, and I want them to know that the Government values them and is committed to investing in them and their skills and expertise to give them the confidence to teach while giving them the right environment in which to do their jobs. Teachers must be, and must feel, free to teach our young people.

We must also ensure that our teachers have the tools to teach. I, too, am concerned by the evidence that trainee teachers presented to the Education and Skills Committee about their experience and the perceived gaps in that education. That led to the Parliament agreeing last week to do more to equip teachers with the

appropriate skills and knowledge to teach about online safety for young people.

The committee has also identified, in its report on additional support for learning, a lack of focus on that issue in teacher education and training. I am also concerned by the findings in the research that the Government has published today, which analysed initial teacher courses and found variations in the time that is spent on key components of the curriculum, with the widest variation in the crucial area of literacy.

In saying all that, I acknowledge the issues that exist in initial teacher education. In the delivery plan last June, the Government committed to investigating the issues, and we have done exactly that and reported to the Parliament.

I am sure that Liz Smith would be the first to acknowledge that there are important issues to do with responsibility for the delivery of initial teacher education. The Government does not control universities, despite what some people might allege. Universities have a responsibility for the quality of the education that is delivered, and if issues are raised—by witnesses who present evidence to the committee, in evidence that is marshalled by the Government, or through feedback from other aspects of the profession—I look to everyone in the system to fulfil their obligations to address them properly.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): On that principle, a factor that was mentioned in the Education and Skills Committee today is placements in schools. The representative from Moray House told the committee that this is the worst year in 15 years for finding school placements across the Lothians. Is the cabinet secretary aware of that? It was argued that the diversity that is looked for in placements is one of the issues that need to be confronted. Does he recognise that? What is the answer to that point?

John Swinney: The answer to that point is that there must be in place an efficient system for ensuring the timely delivery of placements for young people who are going through teacher training. The General Teaching Council for Scotland holds the student placement system, and the Government has requested that the GTCS, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland—directors of education are crucial in the interaction with local authorities—and the universities jointly review the system and take action to improve the process at national level.

When it gets to the point at which I must intervene in the GTCS to ensure that young people can get placements, that is unacceptable. There is an obligation on the profession to recognise the educational opportunities not just for trainee teachers but for the profession to learn in

an interactive way when schools around the country receive and welcome new trainee teachers, to ensure that the interests of young people can properly be taken into account.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): The Deputy First Minister is aware that the committee heard that the experience of trainee teachers was that they were welcomed by staff who wanted to support them but were unable to fulfil that mentoring role, simply because of the scale of the workload. The issue is not that the profession does not recognise the importance of that role but that people are finding it difficult to meet the challenge of it.

John Swinney: As Johann Lamont knows, I have been tackling workload in schools. I was discussing the issue this morning, at Kirkton primary school in Carlisle, where I spoke to teachers who positively welcomed the impact of the benchmarks that the Government has put in place to significantly clarify the curricular experience for young people in our schools.

I need to bring my remarks to a conclusion. Before I do so, let me put on record some of the strengths of our initial teacher education system, because it is important that the Parliament hears all the data. The recently published *Complete University Guide* rated four Scottish universities in the top seven in the United Kingdom for teacher education. In 2016, we published “Evaluation of the Impact of the Implementation of Teaching Scotland’s Future”, which found that 64 per cent of survey respondents felt that their initial teacher education was “effective” or “very effective” and that 83 per cent felt that the support that they were given on their placement was “effective” or “very effective”.

I ask the Parliament to reflect on all the data that I put on the record, along with the Government’s acknowledgment that the measures that we have taken and which I announced today as part of the review will be pursued, to ensure that we have the strongest possible approach to initial teacher education, to create the foundations for good teacher training in Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-05595.2, to insert at end:

“, and, in acknowledging and valuing the vital role and contribution that new and existing teachers make to children’s education, agrees to engage with local authorities, as teachers’ employers, to ensure that all teachers are confident in teaching literacy and numeracy.”

16:09

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Talented, inspirational teachers can transform a student’s experience of school and their ability to learn and achieve. I am sure that we will hear

many such stories in this afternoon’s debate, but I want to go further and say that the importance of teachers is not just about individual experience and that collectively, as a profession, teachers are critical to our education system. We need capable, knowledgeable teachers who can consistently and effectively impart knowledge and understanding. Inspirational and effective teaching should not be the exception; such teaching should be consistent in every school and classroom.

For all the talk of buildings, equipment, curricula and class sizes, none of those things counts unless we have able teachers in every school. I echo the words of the Deputy First Minister and go further to say that they are the vital infrastructure of our education system.

The importance of initial teacher education—ITE—is clear. It provides the baseline from which our teachers commence their professional lives. That is why the Education and Skills Committee’s work on workforce planning is so important, and why I welcome the motion this afternoon. Last week, our committee heard from a panel of student teachers and benefited from their insights and experiences. Their commitment and enthusiasm for teaching was inspiring. I was left with no doubt of their passion and focus to ensure that young people meet their potential. Despite that, they raised a number of key issues regarding their training. Theirs were a handful of voices, but they were echoed by many of the survey responses that the committee received.

I focus on two key issues: placements, and the effectiveness and relevance of course content. Placements are a vital part of teacher training—perhaps the most important part—where what has been learned in the lecture theatre is tried and refined in the classroom. However, we heard that trainee teachers sometimes find out where they are going only two to three days before a placement. When they arrive, they are not always expected by schools. Students often travel significant distances, yet reimbursement for expenses is inconsistent and not always complete and can take time to come through.

Without exception, each of the trainee teachers told us that they wanted more practical preparation and technique. They described an emphasis on theory, with the importance of areas described but without the methods to tackle them.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does Daniel Johnson accept that in all subjects—including mine, accountancy—the teaching at university tends to be a little on the theoretical side, and that the practical side often comes later?

Daniel Johnson: The trainees’ evidence was that the emphasis on the theory was too heavy, and that it was not until they were in the classroom

that they learned anything of relevance to their teaching—that is the key concern.

Those are serious issues because they have a clear bearing on the two overarching issues facing our school system: recruitment of teachers, and literacy and numeracy. With 700 unfilled teacher vacancies, we need to attract new people into the profession. We must do better on teacher placements. Problems arising from reimbursement only exacerbate issues of affordability of study, especially for those who are changing careers and who have families and prior financial commitments. Chaotic placements can only deter people from entering training, which we can ill afford.

The evidence from the programme for international student assessment and the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy is that we have seen a decline in literacy and numeracy standards, both relatively internationally and on our own measures. That is a concern not just for parents but for us all, so the comments about the adequacy of core literacy and numeracy in ITE must ring alarm bells.

I welcome the sober and earnest response that we have had from the cabinet secretary in his previous statements and today in his comments and in the amendment that he has put before Parliament. However, we must also be frank about where we are and what we need to do. Seeing curriculum for excellence through means ensuring that it is properly supported in ITE. The only way we will address the declines in literacy and numeracy is by equipping our teachers to tackle them. The only way we will recruit teachers into the profession is if the courses are well run and students are adequately supported throughout them.

The cabinet secretary has delayed his governance review. I hope that that enables consideration of the Education and Skills Committee's recent evidence and examination of the effectiveness of ITE. We have an opportunity ahead of us, as the teacher qualification programme's accreditation is due for renewal. We should ask the General Teaching Council for Scotland to reflect on those issues as it does so. Given Education Scotland's role in inspecting and evaluating ITE programmes, we must look at whether it makes sense for accreditation and inspection to be carried out by different bodies and look at what impact that has had. Our education system must be built on secure foundations, with initial teacher education at its very cornerstone.

I move amendment S5M-05595.1, after "literacy and numeracy" to insert:

“; further believes that more initial teacher training in the support of pupils facing particular challenges, such as living

in care or with adoptive families, could help close the attainment gap”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to open speeches. Speakers will be cut out unless everyone is very disciplined. I ask speakers to go for three and a half minutes, please.

16:14

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I declare an interest in that I am married to a primary school teacher and have two children at primary school. The issue of the standards of teaching in our schools is, therefore, deeply personal to me.

There are few people in Scotland who do not have some concerns about what is happening in our schools. To be fair, the case for change and improvement is explicitly supported by the Scottish Government in its agenda for reform, albeit that that agenda is being pursued only now, after 10 years in office. Although we, on these benches, might have pursued a different approach from some of the Scottish Government's proposals, we at least share a recognition that the status quo is untenable.

We must recognise that curriculum for excellence was introduced with the best of intentions. Behind it lay a philosophical approach that said that creativity and problem solving were the vital skills that young people needed to acquire in order to address the challenges of the modern world. The approach to acquiring knowledge was as important as, if not more important than, the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. There is nothing wrong with that general approach to education, provided that the basic skills in reading, writing and counting are still being taught. However, somewhere along the way, we seem to have gone wrong. Somewhere along the way, there has been a loss of focus on the acquisition of those basic skills.

The evidence of that is all too starkly seen in the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy, in which the latest figures, which were published just last week, make sobering reading for the Government, for the whole education system and for pupils and parents. The percentage of children in secondary 2 who are not at the required level of literacy has more than doubled in four years, from 7 per cent in 2012 to 16 per cent in 2016. The proportion of S2 pupils who can write well or very well has fallen dramatically from 65 per cent in 2012 to 49 per cent—less than half—in 2016. It is not only on that measure that we are falling back. The international PISA results show that Scottish education has gone backwards in reading and mathematics, with pupils in England and Northern Ireland now outperforming Scottish pupils in every category. We must do better.

In opening the debate, my colleague Liz Smith made some important points about the evidence that was heard last week in the Education and Skills Committee. I will not repeat everything that she said, but it is clear that, when it comes to teacher training, there is a lack of focus on how to teach literacy and numeracy effectively; there is very little support for teaching those with additional support needs; there is very limited guidance on classroom management; and there is a sometimes chaotic organisation of classroom placements, which many would agree are the most vital part of the process of learning to be a teacher. All of that matters, because if our teachers are not gaining the skills that they need, how can we reasonably expect them to pass those skills on to their pupils?

Six years ago, in his report on teacher training, Graham Donaldson told the Scottish Government what needed to be done. He said that teacher selection should be more vigorous with reference to literacy and numeracy, and he recommended a number of other improvements. Sadly, too little has been done in the past six years to address those concerns. It is now up to the Scottish Government to push through the reforms needed to improve the quality of teacher training.

That matters because, if we are to have a successful nation, we need to have the highest possible quality of education. If we really are concerned about reducing inequalities, we must make improvements in our schools. The reality is that children who are fortunate enough to get support at home will usually do well under any system. It is those who do not get support at home who rely most on what happens in the classroom. That is why, if we are serious about fairness in society, we have to get this right and the Scottish Government must start upping its game.

16:18

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer for the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

My youthful appearance may dissuade members from believing this, but a decade ago I was preparing to take up my place at Jordanhill, which was then the University of Strathclyde's teacher training campus, to study for a postgraduate qualification in modern studies teaching. CFE was in its infancy. On my course was a former police officer by the name of Colin, who told me that, by the time the police had arrested someone, the damage had already been done. To him, criminality was cyclical but he felt that, as a teacher at the chalkface, moulding minds in the classroom, he could really make a

difference. It was an observation that has stayed with me.

Last week, my colleague James Dornan posed perhaps the most pertinent question that someone could ever be asked in teaching: "What made you want to become a teacher?" The panel in the Education and Skills Committee answered with a variety of responses. Some stood out, such as that teachers could make a difference and change lives. The one that I liked best was:

"I really wanted to be there for the light-bulb moment when a child ... just gets it."—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 10 May 2017; c 3.]

We should not lose sight of the reasons that pull people into the profession, particularly given the current climate in Scottish education.

The Government's amendment to the motion does not hide from the very real challenges that we face in Scottish education. The narrative of challenge has been quite clear since the 2015 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review. Last week the SSLN data was published and the Government's report into initial teacher education was published today. There is a robust rationale for reforming Scottish education, but reform should not come at the expense of the morale of those working hard in the system right now. As a headteacher in my constituency put it to me: "We need to attract the best of the best."

The Conservative motion raises issues regarding the teacher-training placement process. In August 2015, I was called by the deputy head in my school and asked whether I could take a student teacher. I thought about it and decided that, with a wee bit of rejigging of the timetable, yes, we could probably accommodate a student teacher. A few days later I was told "Actually, Jenny, there's another one. Could you take two? The university has nowhere to send them." Course choice for pupils in our secondary schools kicks in after the exam diet, so by June of every academic year our high schools know how many pupils they have in every department and our primary schools know what the intake is for the new primary 1. Universities should therefore be proactively engaging with local schools far earlier to establish suitable student placements. I never thought that I would hear myself saying this, but I absolutely agree with Daniel Johnson on that point.

The teachers who gave evidence at last week's Education and Skills Committee meeting commented to my colleagues that teaching cannot be learned until it had been seen and that placement was the real benefit and highlight. However, anecdotal evidence is disparate, as we would expect in any profession, so I carried out my own homework. A teacher who qualified in 2013 and completed the bachelor of education degree

told me that he had had some fantastic placements. In one school, he spent time visiting specific teachers who were focused on certain areas, observing Mr McDonald's co-operative learning strategies, Miss Somerville's use of effective tracking and monitoring and Mr Swinney's behaviour management strategies, for example. Another friend who is a secondary headteacher told me that, yes, there was a real need for our teaching universities to focus on literacy and numeracy, but she also flagged up the importance of the health and wellbeing of pupils as a fundamental in teacher training. The last person I spoke to is a principal teacher in an additional support needs school with straight-through provision, and she said, tellingly, "You learn how to teach well if you get a good mentor on placement."

So, yes, there is work for our teaching universities to do on course content, but if we accept that the majority of student teacher learning happens on placement, we need to address radically how our schools timetable that student teacher experience.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):

Thank you very much for your time-keeping. Next is Johann Lamont, to be followed by Fulton MacGregor.

16:22

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): In response to Jenny Gilruth's comments, I am sure that all members will be shocked to realise that my youthful appearance belies the fact that I started teaching in 1979. There will be a few people in here who remember that very long time ago world.

I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate, but I say gently to the Scottish Government that I regret that, again, education is being debated in Opposition time. The issues are so important that the Government should be providing time for full consideration of all the challenges in education. I know that the Government is focusing on delivery, but the fact of the matter is that we are not delivering and we cannot ignore the figures and evidence that come before us.

Of course, there are many challenges. The work of the Education and Skills Committee is instructive because we have explored on a cross-party basis what is happening in education and have provided an important opportunity for those who care passionately about education and have an awareness of what is happening in the real world to breach the walls of the Parliament. It is essential that their evidence is not simply explained away or used to justify other action, but that it shapes our thinking.

The scale of the response to our committee's call for evidence tells its own story. In every instance and on every issue there has been a deluge of people wanting to share their concerns and experiences. I note the tone of the debate to date and I welcome the shift to agreement that the Deputy First Minister's motion presents. I say gently to John Swinney that I welcome that tone and I trust that it represents a step away from what has too often been an ill-judged approach by the Scottish Government, whereby it has sought to shoot the messenger, question the motives of those speaking out or simply ignore the evidence. The Government needs to give proper recognition to the significant concerns shared by students, parents, teachers, support staff and academics. I acknowledge that no party in the chamber has a monopoly of wisdom on understanding why we are where we are and how we must move forward, and that is true for the Government's party as well as any other. It is not good enough simply to say "We've decided to take this approach and if you don't support us, then you're not concerned about those challenges."

I hope that the Deputy First Minister, with his new approach, will reflect on the way in which he and his colleague Angela Constance responded to the Education and Skills Committee report on additional support needs. I was deeply and genuinely offended that that cross-party work, which gave voice to those who represent vulnerable young people, support workers and teachers and that described the barriers to inclusive education, was utterly dismissed.

The issues in that report, which reflected the lack of support and the pressure in schools, are not separate from the issues of achievement in literacy and numeracy; they are interlinked and interconnected. The Scottish Government must move on those issues and understand that we need to move beyond individual policy approaches, as there is a much bigger question here.

Literacy and numeracy are important for young people, so we have to understand the impact of cuts to local services that provide support to vulnerable families and children with disabilities, and recognise that our budget choices are making some circumstances worse. What support is there in and outwith schools for young people, to ensure that that gap that starts very early in young people's lives is not ignored? For example, we should understand the importance of further and adult education not only to enable individuals who have been failed in the past to achieve their potential, but to tackle adult illiteracy and enable those individuals to support their children in the future.

I urge the Government to make good its commitment to see literacy and numeracy in the broader context of the right to education for all our young people.

16:26

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I congratulate Liz Smith on her motion, which seems to have brought a degree of consensus to the chamber. As others have done in their opening remarks, I thank all the teachers and staff in our schools who are involved with additional support needs for the work that they do for our children. That work is invaluable, as most speakers have said.

There is good performance in education in Scotland, but we recognise that there are areas in which we need change. This SNP Government is getting on with the job of taking the actions to deliver improvements. We are investing record amounts in schools to close the attainment gap and £120 million will go direct to schools in the most deprived areas this year alone. As I have said in the chamber before, in a constituency such as Coatbridge and Chryston, where some of the schools will receive fairly significant sums of money, that is very welcome. It should not be downplayed or undervalued in any way and I have enjoyed speaking to headteachers during my many visits to schools about the inventive ways in which they plan to use the money. As members can imagine, literacy and numeracy have come up in those discussions.

The evidence that the committee received is concerning, as members have acknowledged, and the Scottish Government knows that there is room for improvement. The evidence highlighted inconsistencies with working practices between different establishments and the analysis of initial teacher education courses found variations in the time that is spent on key components of the curriculum, with the widest variation in the crucial area of literacy.

Johann Lamont: Will the member take an intervention?

Fulton MacGregor: I do not have time, Johann. Sorry.

No one would disagree that, to ensure quality teachers, education programmes need to be of the highest quality in all the key areas—literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing. An example was given of additional support needs being covered well in one university but not in another. A newly qualified teacher from my constituency whom I spoke to said that there were pretty big differences in the expectations of students from different universities and that she felt that courses should be standardised to address that.

She also expressed concern about the length of the postgraduate course. She said, “It is far too much to cram into a year; it was the most stressful year of my life.” She felt that more time on literacy and numeracy would have been beneficial. Also, she was given only theoretical lessons on behaviour management and ASN, but no contextualisation, which was an issue that was raised by Mr Johnson and Jenny Gilruth. With one in four children in schools having ASN, trainees should be well prepared.

The teacher went on to say that her probation year helped to fill the gaps and that there is also the option of continuing professional development. She felt that, if the course had been a bit longer, it would have been beneficial, but it goes without saying that financial implications would then come into play.

There was a lot of praise from both that teacher and another to whom I spoke for the fact that the Scottish Government paid for their postgrad training. They would not have been able to undertake the course without the tuition fees being met—something that is worth mentioning.

I support the Government amendment’s reference to the work of local authorities, which should encourage teachers to be inventive in how they go about ensuring that they feel able to teach literacy and numeracy. I have a quick example from Coatbridge high school in my constituency. It held a literacy festival recently, which the Deputy First Minister attended, and it was a big success. Schools should be given the scope and permission to do that more often. All the children and teachers were involved in it. It is our job as MSPs to encourage and promote such activity.

In conclusion, we have an opportunity for us all to work together to get the best result.

16:30

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Over the past few months, the Education and Skills Committee has held meetings on teacher training and on wider related issues—namely, additional support needs and personal and social education. The evidence that has been presented to us is stark and cannot be ignored. In many cases in which young people who have an identified additional support need are not being supported, the problem has started with issues in teacher education.

We have heard some infamous examples—for example, how one member of staff was told to watch the sitcom “The Big Bang Theory” in order to learn about Asperger’s syndrome. That is a single incident, but unfortunately it is not entirely unique. Fully qualified teachers and people in training tell us that they do not have the training

and resources that are needed for them properly to support young people with additional support needs. They have told us what the problem is—where the weak links in our education system lie. We can all hear what they are asking for, and I have to say that it is not a governance review.

Teacher training courses at universities vary greatly when it comes to covering additional support needs; sometimes, it is even optional. I accept, as other members have, that it is not our role to instruct universities what should and should not be in their courses, but that does not leave us entirely powerless.

ASN training is heavily reliant on cascade learning, whereby trainees learn through observing teachers in the classroom. It should be of little surprise that that has resulted in something of a postcode lottery. If a student is fortunate enough to do their placement with a teacher who has the time and the experience, that is great. However, for many trainee teachers that is not the case. One teacher told us clearly that

“The current cascade model of skills transmission is... inadequate”

and said,

“I believe this to be a direct result from budget saving cuts”.

It is not difficult to see why.

Since 2010, we have lost one in seven ASN teachers, and we are well used to hearing the statistic that since 2007 more than 4,000 teachers have gone. In the evidence that the committee received, we learned that many trainee teachers just do not receive the support that they need from their mentors. I make it clear that those trainees were not blaming the teachers with whom they were placed; they recognised that the teachers have an unsustainable workload, so teacher workload today is having a direct impact on the quality of training of the next generation of teachers.

That lottery of experiences does not affect only ASN, but its effects are felt particularly in that area. The Education and Skills Committee has called for more co-ordination between education authorities in order to ensure consistency in design and delivery. We also called for a review into how funding limitations have impacted on the number of specialist-trained ASN teachers and assistants. With one in four pupils now being identified as having an additional support need and many more having not yet been identified, it is clear that all teachers must have a baseline of expertise that is drawn from the theory and practical elements of their course.

Obviously, the support that is required will vary greatly depending on the condition—from a little bit of extra time with the teacher to high-intensity

support and a requirement for specialist staff. We should not, and do not, expect every teacher to have comprehensive knowledge of every kind of additional support need, but baseline knowledge is essential. Initial teacher education—especially postgraduate teacher education—is already crammed full of essential topics, and we cannot expect every teacher to have absolutely every element of training. However, as the committee heard this morning, with that clear baseline they will at least know where to start, and with access to proper support and high-quality training opportunities throughout their career, teachers can continue to develop their skills as needed.

Teachers need more consistent high-quality training and they need adequate resources—and so do our young people.

16:34

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The essence of the evidence that has been given to the Education and Skills Committee in the past two weeks on teacher education—we were reminded today to call it “teacher education”, not “teacher training”—has been about preparing teachers for an unknown world. I agree broadly with many of the remarks that have been made by colleagues from across the chamber, including the cabinet secretary.

At today’s committee meeting, the context was set out by Jane Peckham from the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, who explained why people are being put off teaching. She told us that 75 per cent of her members are thinking of leaving their current post—some of that relates to promotions and some to a lack of ability to go through the profession—and she gave us the worrying statistic that 62 per cent are considering leaving the teaching profession altogether. It is, however, only fair to point out that her union represents only 15 per cent of Scotland’s teachers. The important question is this: Why? She told us that the reason is that teachers’ workload has increased, not fallen. She cited the example of removing the national 5 unit assessments. That was the right thing to do, but it was done too late in the year. The complexity of what has been happening in classrooms is clear to parents, teachers and pupils.

Jane Peckham also cited, as members have done this afternoon, the on-going issue of curriculum for excellence and changes to it. The northern alliance’s submission to the committee outlines a number of issues that are creating challenges in schools in my constituency and across the Highlands and Islands, as well as in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. It states:

“Considering one of the major elements of CFE was to declutter the system, we have actually re-cluttered it and then added some more to it and this has had a significant effect on the perception of teaching among those who may have considered it as a viable career option.”

That is an important observation about why there is concern, which we have discussed in the chamber many times, and the need to keep tackling bureaucracy in the system, which the cabinet secretary mentioned.

The cabinet secretary’s answer to the question that I asked earlier in the debate cemented for me the need to change the central structure of education in Scotland so that the responsibilities that sit in Education Scotland at the moment sit with the cabinet secretary, and not in some external organisation. That point was made best by Walter Humes, who is an honorary professor at the University of Stirling, who said the other day that classroom teachers’ voices

“need to be conveyed more directly to government, not filtered through agencies such as Education Scotland and SQA.”

That is a powerful argument in the context of teacher training.

I have two final points to make, the first of which is on workforce planning. Moray Council’s director of education made a strong argument to the committee today about the regional approach and the council’s work with the University of the Highlands and Islands and with Aberdeen’s education institutions on what he referred to as “smarter mapping” of needs—in other words, how to recruit locally for local teaching need. That appears to me to be a strong argument that the cabinet secretary would be well advised to heed.

My final point is on resources, which Johann Lamont and Ross Greer rightly cited. What came through as clear as mustard in the evidence today was that—as we parents know—cutbacks in classroom assistants have had an enormous impact on the ability to deal with ASN, which Ross Greer cited, and on other aspects in the classroom. That is having an impact on how people perceive careers in teaching. We must change that to ensure that teachers truly are the future of Scotland.

16:38

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest in that my wife is an additional support needs teacher. Like Ross Greer, I feel that one of the most concerning issues that has been raised in oral evidence and submissions to the Education and Skills Committee is the suggestion that there is a significant lack of training in additional support needs. The record shows that one in four children in schools in Scotland

identifies as having such needs, yet according to a panel that the committee heard from, teachers receive

“no specific training on autism, dyslexia or dyspraxia”

and are

“not prepared in the slightest”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee, 10 May 2017; c12-13.*]

for how to deal with children who require further assistance in the classroom.

The committee heard that in most degree programmes, ASN courses are elective, rather than compulsory—they are something that people choose to do if they are interested. It would not be so bad if there were enough specialist ASN teachers to ease the pressures on those who are not specialists, but between 2010 and 2015 the number of ASN specialists fell by 13 per cent and dropped in 22 of Scotland’s 32 local authorities. ASN teachers have indispensable skills and experience that allow them to play a crucial role in helping pupils to achieve their potential and to overcome learning challenges. We do not have enough trainee teachers with that experience coming through. Submissions from teachers to the committee show that those who are graduating are simply not receiving the encouragement, support and practical training that are required to teach pupils with such needs adequately.

This is real: it is about real people and real pupils. Just last week, a constituent told me of her grave concerns about the lack of additional support for her autistic son. She said:

“my son is ... being abandoned to the ideological commitment to inclusion. He is bright; he just got the highest score in a maths test in the whole year ... but spends at least 4 periods a day without support and without education which has ... meant a whole year wasted ... getting no education and hardly any socialisation.”

Another parent, who contributed to the study and has direct experience, said that

“It is very upsetting to see how many children are ... being disadvantaged from not being properly educated”

and that those children

“are being made desperately unhappy to the point of ... developing serious mental health problems.”

Another parent said:

“Mainstream doesn’t suit but as the clinical psychologist said, there is nothing for kids that are bright but have complex needs.”

The point about inclusion is interesting. I note that a recent report concluded that

“The policy of an inclusive education for children with additional support needs is not functioning properly in many local authority areas due to a lack of support for these children.”

We hear much about what will happen going forward. The cabinet secretary is on record as saying that the figures that have been spoken about by others in this debate are “simply not good enough” and show that education reforms are “now imperative”. Why has it taken this long and why has it required the results that we are talking about to make it “imperative”?

It is the children who are really losing out. They cannot afford to wait until the next session of Parliament for things to get better. We are talking about their future; it is time that this Government started focusing on Scotland’s priorities rather than on its own.

Perhaps, in its closing speech, the Government will address the fact that not one of the SNP members today has said to the teachers who have been sent less equipped into our schools, to the parents who are despairing at preventable outcomes and, most important of all, to the pupils who have been failed by the Government’s decisions and governance over the past 10 years, one simple word: “Sorry.” That is shameful.

16:42

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I am not on the Education and Skills Committee, but I am happy to take part in today’s debate, because I hold education as a whole, and our education system, in high regard.

I have visited schools during the 20 years or so in which I have been elected member, and schools have visited Parliament, council buildings and various other places where I have met them, and I have to say how impressed I am when I see young people nowadays. They are much more confident and have a much healthier relationship with their teachers than was the case when I was at school. The teachers whom I meet are enthusiastic and extremely capable. When I was at school, many of us lived in fear of our teachers and were regularly belted for various offences. As a result of that, we could certainly spell well and we knew the difference between gerunds and gerundives, but I am not quite so sure whether we turned out to be complete human beings. [*Laughter.*] You spotted it—well done. At that time, presenters on the BBC spoke using received pronunciation; regional accents were certainly not allowed.

We moved away from that approach to education and deliberately decided that we wanted better-rounded individuals. We say that we want confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors, but I am not sure that that was the case 50 years ago when I was at school. At that time, the “successful learners” aspect seemed to be somewhat overemphasised. It is true that I squirm a bit when

I hear someone say, “I have went to the football game,” but does it actually matter, if that person is a good engineer with the potential to set up a successful business?

Please do not think that I am suggesting that literacy and numeracy are not important. They are. What I am suggesting is that we, as a society, want rounded individuals and that we need to be careful when we compare ourselves with other countries, because we might not be comparing like with like.

I think that the Government accepts the main thrust of the Conservative motion, and that there is room for improvement in teacher training, literacy, numeracy and other areas. However, we must be realistic about what we expect schools to do. Workload has been mentioned, and we expect our schools to deal with a variety of background problems with our children, including alcohol and drug abuse, poor diet, insufficient exercise, awareness of politics and Parliament, the environment and sectarianism. The list goes on.

Individual teachers may have gone into those issues in the past, but we expect a lot more nowadays from our teachers and schools. On the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, we are looking at the gender pay gap and at how to encourage more girls to move into traditionally male areas of employment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. The thinking is that we should get the schools to do that as well.

I could mention other things, but I am running out of time. I mentioned information technology to the cabinet secretary last week. I believe that Scotland is now leading in terms of the amount of time that young people spend on phones, tablets or whatever—at about two hours per day. Mr Swinney said that that could have an impact on literacy. When I was younger, we read a lot of books and that is where I got most of my ability with words, reading and writing. That is clearly not happening so much these days.

I am an accountant—I like numbers and I like counting things. I prefer numbers to words—numbers are definite. Surely, however, when it comes to educating our young people, we should value not only what we can measure: it cannot be about just the number of exam passes and the boxes that have been ticked. It should be about the value that is added to each life: where did people start from and what has the school added? That is hard to measure, but I think that it is really important.

16:46

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I join Johann Lamont in welcoming the tone of the debate,

which has perhaps been more measured than some of our other education debates—it has certainly been more measured than the rather fraught fish fight that, by all accounts, preceded it. She is right that that is partly because the debate has come about, not for the first time, because of good work by the Education and Skills Committee in identifying a particular problem, although in fairness, work has also been undertaken by the GTCS and the Scottish Government. It is important that we have had a chance—albeit a short chance—to discuss some of the teacher training issues that are being considered. Mr Swinney is right that that involves a number of people and bodies and not just the Government.

A lot of speeches have focused on the capacity and preparation of teachers to teach literacy and numeracy. I suppose that that is not surprising given the recent poor results in literacy and numeracy, which Murdo Fraser certainly did not resist revisiting.

Others made the important point that this is not just about literacy and numeracy. Liam Kerr and Ross Greer referred to the need for better training for teachers on supporting pupils with additional support needs. Like Mr Scott, I acknowledge the work that the NASUWT has done in recognising that, as we have fewer ASN specialists in schools, the obligation to carry out that work and for it to be better falls across the spectrum of all teachers.

In fairness to the Scottish Government, that issue is not new. I have spoken before about how, in my early days of teaching at Gracemount high school, we also taught pupils from Kaimes school for the partially sighted, and I did that with no preparation in teacher training at all. My teaching experience was just as long ago as Johann Lamont's experience and I think that things should have improved since then.

The lack of confidence among most primary teachers in teaching science has not been spoken about. Developing that confidence is important for our economic future, too.

I will take just a few minutes to speak about our amendment. It refers to the need for more teacher training on working with pupils who have particular challenges, such as being looked-after children or living with adoptive families. Although people might think that that is a relatively small number of pupils, they face particular challenges, especially around attachment, and they are very much at the wrong end of the attainment gap that we talk about so often.

I raise the issue because of a small Adoption UK project in my constituency of East Lothian. The attachment ambassador programme is a grass-roots project that was started by an adoptive parent who is an Adoption UK volunteer. In a

single cluster, the programme has recruited in each school an attachment ambassador who has significantly improved the educational experience for looked-after children and those who live with adoptive families. We need to see much more of such projects. However, one problem that was identified through the project was the lack of training in initial teacher education on dealing with pupils with such backgrounds.

I agree with Jenny Gilruth's important point that initial teacher training is not just about how good people are at carrying out their job but about the attractiveness and status of the profession. I remember my placements when I was in teacher training, but what I remember more than anything else was a particularly inspirational contribution that was made by an Educational Institute of Scotland activist called Alex Wood. His politics went slightly wrong later in life, but he became a well-regarded headteacher. I have never forgotten his description of why teaching is such a worthwhile profession. We certainly need to do all the work that we have talked about so that we can do exactly what has been described for more people.

16:51

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Teachers play a critical role in our society and it is vital that they receive training that allows them to enter the classroom with confidence. That is especially true of the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy, which have been mentioned a great deal. For that reason, the Scottish Government is pleased to support Liz Smith's motion and Iain Gray's amendment.

Today, the Government published the content analysis of initial teacher education. We took forward that work as part of the national improvement framework, and I hope that it will aid the Education and Skills Committee in its inquiry on workforce planning.

Our national improvement framework, with its focus on teacher professionalism, is helping to shine a light on the particular issue of initial teacher education. Like Liz Smith and others who are in the chamber, I have been concerned by some of the evidence that has been submitted to the committee, and I welcome any recommendations that the committee might make to ensure that teacher education programmes effectively prepare students to become successful teachers.

We must remember that there are thousands of excellent teachers in Scotland who are passionate about their job and passionate about helping

children and young people to achieve. If we want to attract the most talented graduates into the profession—Jenny Gilruth cited a headteacher who called for the “best of the best”—we need to talk about teaching as a challenging but hugely rewarding job. I am sure that the committee is well aware of that issue.

We must and always will be mindful of the concerns that teachers and students raise, but I remind members of the statistics that the Deputy First Minister mentioned. The “Evaluation of the Impact of the Implementation of Teaching Scotland’s Future” showed that 64 per cent of survey respondents felt that their initial teacher education was effective or very effective in preparing them for their first post as a teacher.

Although we must express concern, we have much to celebrate. We have a solid core from which to work and to improve. Teaching in Scotland is a graduate-level profession, degrees are offered by some of the best universities in the UK—and the world—and we continue to invest in a teacher induction scheme that allows teachers to continue their education. Teaching as a career is underpinned by a set of nationally agreed professional standards that emphasise key skills and values that all practitioners should have.

When discussing student teachers, I remind members that newly qualified teachers are just that—newly qualified. Initial teacher education should prepare teachers for the classroom, but that is only the start of what should be a career of reflection and further learning. We need to be ready to support new teachers to build their skills and to grow.

A number of members talked about the importance of having good-quality placements—Liz Smith, Daniel Johnson and Jenny Gilruth all mentioned the need to respond to that challenge. The Government takes the issue seriously. We know that there is a need for high-quality placements. Fundamentally, local authorities, schools and experienced teachers have a responsibility to take that forward. The GTCS is reviewing the operation of the student placement system. That is already showing improvements in moving to an opt-out system in which all schools will be expected to take students.

Inevitably, there are still issues in the system that must and will be addressed, but in 2016 it secured 18,000 placements. We know that it can work and provide good-quality placements, but there is much more to do. The Scottish Government is taking action on that and is encouraging others to do the same.

Fulton MacGregor mentioned the content analysis of ITE that the Government published today. It is essential that literacy and numeracy

are taught widely, so the variations in that analysis are concerning. The evidence that the Government commissioned as part of our NIF plays very much into our development of initial teacher training. We will discuss its findings with the GTCS and with universities. In the next few months, further work is due to gather views of probationary teachers and ensure that their experience, together with the views of their managers, leads to preparedness for teaching. The Scottish Government has commissioned the GTCS to work with universities on a research project to develop the means to ensure quality in ITE.

We have had a great deal of discussion about the content of initial teacher training, and we need to look carefully at what is taught in that. All teachers must meet the standards for registration before taking up a post. The standards are—rightly—being reviewed by the GTCS, and that gives us an opportunity to change the content of ITE and to set a new baseline. The discussions today and, I am sure, in the Education and Skills Committee will feed into that debate and into the challenges that members have raised.

A number of contributions from members were about initial support—

The Presiding Officer: Minister, please begin to wind up. You are supposed to have five minutes.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Among those members were Ross Greer and Liam Kerr. Initial support is being taken seriously as part of our work to continue to review professional standards.

The motion, the Education and Skills Committee’s work and the analysis that the Scottish Government has published are shining a light on a very important area. I am happy to support the motion in the name of Liz Smith as we work with our universities and the GTCS to ensure that teachers are confident in the classroom.

16:57

Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con): Everyone in the teaching profession should be in no doubt as to the value that we attach to it—not simply for young people but for the country as a whole. It is difficult to put into words our gratitude to the hard-working and dedicated teachers who work across Scotland.

From the submissions to the Education and Skills Committee that I have heard and from the contributions in the chamber today, it has become abundantly clear that the content and quality of teacher training programmes in Scotland are failing our teachers and trainees.

The message that is coming from trainee teachers about their experiences as they enter the profession should concern us all. We have heard them express the need to go back to basics because they do not have sufficient skills in numeracy to teach 11-year-olds to a reasonable standard. What is more, the balance between learning abstract theory and putting that knowledge into practice in the classroom appears to be disproportionately weighted towards the former.

We have heard that, across a range of training programmes, there is a shocking lack of ASN training. A statement from a former trainee teacher that struck me at the committee's meeting last week was:

"We had all these wonderful theories thrown at us, but there was no contextualisation and no specific training on autism, dyslexia or dyspraxia—there was absolutely nothing. We were told that we would probably come across two or three children in our class with an additional support need, but such needs are not included in the course unless you elect to study a professional specialism such as autism, additional support needs or dyslexia."—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 10 May 2017; c 13.]

When approximately 25 per cent of the school population has ASN, it is nothing short of absurd that our trainee teachers are not mandated to study, in some form, the provision of ASN teaching. The need for a rigorous analysis of that issue is evident, and I ask the Scottish Government to look into it urgently.

I turn to the contributions that have been made. In his opening remarks, the cabinet secretary spoke about the action that he is taking to address workloads. As Tavish Scott rightly pointed out, the evidence of Jane Peckham of NASUWT at this morning's committee meeting was clear that, in recent times, bureaucracy and workloads have increased. She said that, in a current survey, 62 per cent of teachers said that they would leave the profession because of the workload.

Daniel Johnson outlined the inconsistencies in and problems with placements. He highlighted trainees' desire for a greater focus on practical skills and their view that there is too much of a focus on theory. Many trainees feel that they are—in their own words—ill equipped to go into the classroom.

My colleague Murdo Fraser talked about the lack of focus on literacy and numeracy and the limited time that is spent on ASN. He is absolutely right to say that we cannot expect our teachers to pass on the necessary skills to our young people if they do not possess those skills, and it is time for the Scottish Government to up its game.

In a very good—in fact, terrific—speech, Johann Lamont made the important point that education is

again being debated in this place only in Opposition time, although it is the Government's defining priority. She also highlighted the clear need from committee evidence to refocus on literacy and numeracy.

Ross Greer is correct that committee evidence cannot be ignored and that the training and resources to support pupils with ASN are just not there, and he was right to highlight the fact that there can be a postcode lottery on student placements and the support that students receive. My colleague Liam Kerr expanded on that point by highlighting teachers' concerns about being ill equipped to deal with pupils with additional support needs. Finally, Tavish Scott highlighted the increasing burden of the workload on teachers and the need not only for action to address that but for the reform of Education Scotland's structures.

The period of training to enter a profession should be one of learning, inspiration, hope and optimism. Trainee teachers should be brimming with enthusiasm about the opportunities to mould young minds and to prepare our children and young people for the future that lies ahead of them; they should be dreaming about the impact that they can make in the profession; and, above all, they should have the tools to make those dreams a reality. However, that is not the case; instead, we are seeing mass frustration and, in some cases, even anger.

It is time for the Scottish Government to stop lurching from crisis to crisis in education, and it is time for urgent and fundamental reform to improve the quality, content and professionalism of teacher training. The teachers have spoken, and the Scottish Government must listen.

Point of Order

17:02

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I wish to raise a point of order under rule 7.3, "Order in the Chamber". At 15:48 today, Douglas Ross MSP said in his speech,

"in my own area of Moray, we came closer than any part of Scotland to voting leave. Much of that vote came from the coastal communities—from Burghead ... to Cullen and everything in between."

I note that rule 8.1.4 of the code of conduct for MSPs states:

"An MSP must not deal with a ... constituency issue outwith the member's constituency or region ... unless by prior agreement."

As the constituency MSP for Cullen and many other coastal communities—but not quite as far as Burghead—I would like to indicate to you that I have not been approached by Douglas Ross for an agreement that he can raise a constituency issue relating to Cullen and other communities in my constituency, that area being in the region of North East Scotland, not the Highlands and Islands region that Mr Ross represents.

Furthermore, Presiding Officer, rule 8.1.5 states:

"Regional MSPs have a responsibility to all those in the region for which they were elected. It is important therefore that they recognise this ... and therefore work in more than two constituencies within their region."

It might be that I have missed a reference by Douglas Ross to work in any constituency beyond Richard Lochhead's Moray. Also, rule 8.2.2 says:

"Regional members must not"

exercise

"particular interest in ... only part of the region for which they were elected."

Finally, rule 8.4.1 says:

"Any complaint against a member ... should in the first instance be made to the Presiding Officer."

I note, however, that my potential actions are covered by rule 9.1.2, which says,

"Members must not disclose, communicate or discuss any complaint or intention to make a complaint to or with members of the press or other media",

so I am making it only to members here.

Will the Presiding Officer advise whether he would see a letter of apology from Douglas Ross to me and the regional members who represent Cullen as sufficing to close the matter? Finally, perhaps in addition, will he advise Mr Ross that it would be inappropriate to make any media statement that suggests that he represents

communities in my constituency in the light of his comments and participation in the fisheries debate today?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I thank Mr Stevenson for the advance notice of his point of order.

I encourage Mr Stevenson and all members to keep matters that are best kept on the election trail on the election trail and not to bring them to the chamber. I am sure that all members know not to misrepresent themselves. However, Mr Stevenson drew attention to the fact that

"Members must not disclose, communicate or discuss any complaint or intention to make a complaint to or with members of the press or other media".

I encourage Mr Stevenson to follow that example himself.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Mr Stevenson was absolutely correct that this is about the code of conduct of the Parliament; it is not to do with electioneering. Mr Stevenson raised a point of order on that, so I just want clarification on that.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Stevenson said that he would not make a complaint, so there is no matter for me to rule on whatsoever. It does not do us any favours to complain about each other in the chamber; that reflects badly on the whole chamber. Keep these matters on the election trail.

Business Motions

17:07

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-05637, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 23 May 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Member's Oath/Affirmation
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 24 May 2017

1.15 pm Members' Business
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Economy, Jobs and Fair Work;
 Finance and the Constitution
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Safe, Secure and Prosperous: Achieving a Cyber-resilient Scotland
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 25 May 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Stage 1 Debate: Contract (Third Party Rights) (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 30 May 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 31 May 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Rural Economy and Connectivity;
 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 1 June 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-05638, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a timetable for stage 2 of the Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 9 June 2017.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:07

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S5M-05640 and S5M-05641, on the designation of lead committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Decision Time

17:08

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-05603.3, in the name of Fergus Ewing, which seeks to amend motion S5M-05603, in the name of Peter Chapman, on fisheries, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

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

Against

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

Abstentions

Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 27, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-05603.2, in the name of Rhoda Grant, which seeks to amend motion S5M-05603, in the name of Peter Chapman, on fisheries, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)

McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

Abstentions

Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 27, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-05603, in the name of Peter Chapman, on fisheries, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

Abstentions

Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 83, Against 27, Abstentions 1.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that the Scottish fishing industry is vital to Scotland's culture and economy, and is a bedrock of many communities across the country; notes that the present common fisheries policy is not delivering a sustainable fishing industry in Scotland; is disappointed at the lack of clarity from the UK Government on future funding to replace the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), its failure to guarantee tariff and customs-free exports to the EU single market and to provide assurances that EU nationals and their families working in the fishing sector may remain in Scotland; regrets that the UK Government's White Paper makes clear its intention to allow EU boats access to Scotland's waters as of right, which would be detrimental to Scottish fishing interests; recognises the need to put sustainable development and a science-led, ecosystem approach at the heart of all marine

and fisheries policies to create a viable future for fishing in Scottish waters to enable coastal communities and the marine environment to thrive, whatever the future holds; notes that fisheries are best managed at a level closest to citizens and communities, and agrees that all powers on fisheries should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament to enable the design of a management framework best suited to Scottish needs and the interests of Scotland's fishing industry and sector, including through the commitment to a Fisheries Bill; believes that there are challenges to be overcome in order to allow Scotland's fish to be sold in European markets, including the need to ensure that import controls are not bureaucratic in order to allow them to be sold fresh into that market; understands that Scotland must also continue to negotiate management of its seas with the EU, Norway, the Faroes and Iceland to ensure that the whole of the fishery is managed sustainably, as fish know no borders, and believes that repatriated powers should be devolved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-05595.2, in the name of John Swinney, which seeks to amend motion S5M-05595, in the name of Liz Smith, on the teacher training programme, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-05595.1, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend motion S5M-05595, in the name of Liz Smith, as amended, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-05595, in the name of Liz Smith, on the teacher training programme, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament is concerned by the recent evidence presented to the Education and Skills Committee by trainee teachers, which revealed some serious concerns about the teacher training programme in Scotland, specifically about the organisation of teacher trainee placements and some perceived gaps in the programme regarding supporting trainees in learning key skills for the classroom; believes that these problems are, in some key areas, having a detrimental impact on the preparedness of trainees to meet the challenges of the curriculum for excellence and their ability to deliver better teaching in literacy and numeracy; further believes that more initial teacher training in the support of pupils facing particular challenges, such as living in care or with adoptive families, could help close the attainment gap, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the teacher training institutions and the General Teaching Council for Scotland to take urgent action to implement the necessary improvements to the teacher training programme in Scotland, and, in acknowledging and valuing the vital role and contribution that new and existing teachers make to children's education, agrees to engage with local authorities, as teachers' employers, to ensure that all teachers are confident in teaching literacy and numeracy.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-05640, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-05641, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

Point of Order

17:12

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Further to the point of order that my colleague Stewart Stevenson raised in relation to Douglas Ross's contribution to the fisheries debate, in which Mr Ross indicated that he represents the Moray area and mentioned communities that straddle two Scottish parliamentary regions, is the matter deserving of guidance being brought to the chamber on how members should properly describe themselves in the chamber with regard to the areas that they were democratically elected to represent?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I thank Mr Lochhead. The issue has been highlighted not just today but a number of times. In the extract that Stewart Stevenson read out, Douglas Ross did not misrepresent himself. He just talked about an area—he did not claim to represent it or to represent an area outwith his own.

Furthermore, Mr Stevenson did not make a complaint. If he or Mr Lochhead did wish to make a complaint, the proper procedure would be to do so privately to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee and not in the chamber.

Again, I urge all members, first, not to misrepresent the places that they represent and, secondly, not to bring these sorts of complaints to the chamber. It does all members a disservice to complain about each other in this manner. These are political matters to be fought out in the election campaign.

Neurofibromatosis Awareness Day

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Now, after a rather febrile afternoon, we have a calm and sensible debate. Thank goodness.

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-04137, in the name of Ash Denham, on neurofibromatosis awareness day. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

We have a large number of people in the public gallery. I am delighted to see you, but I say in advance that it is not permitted to applaud from the gallery no matter how much you want to do it, so please desist.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament appreciates that 17 May 2017 is Neurofibromatosis Awareness Day; notes that neurofibromatosis (NF) is a genetic disorder that causes tumours to grow on the nerves and that tumours can develop anywhere in the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord and nerves; further notes that there is no known cure for the condition, which people are born with due to a genetic mutation; recognises that, while 1 in 3,000 people are currently diagnosed with the condition, many go undiagnosed due to a lack of awareness; considers that, despite NF being one of the most common genetic disorders, people, including many parents, often find themselves telling GPs what their condition or that of their children is; notes that NF is a progressive condition and can cause a variety of problems, including physical and learning difficulties and mental health issues, and is also linked to autism; appreciates that people have concerns that, due to lack of awareness, those affected may not receive the correct treatment in time, and notes hopes that across all UK NHS boards, including NHS Lothian, NF patients will receive regular routine monitoring by specialists, in memory of the incredibly determined, Beth Beattie, who sadly passed away on 4 November 2016, aged four-years-old.

17:15

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): I extend my thanks to all the members of the Scottish Parliament who have joined me today in recognising world neurofibromatosis—or Nf—awareness day. I begin by paying tribute to Beth Beattie, who sadly passed away on 4 November last year at just four years old. I draw members' attention to the fact that Beth's parents, Roger and Eva, are here in the gallery, as are representatives from the Neuro Foundation and the Scottish children's charity Funny Lumps.

What we say today, we say in honour of Beth. It is my hope that, by shedding light on this genetic condition, each of us can help to raise awareness, ensure that diagnoses are made early and direct people to resources for what can be a devastating disease. I hope that, by remembering Beth and

how hard she fought, we will help to set a better path forward for the nearly 30,000 people in the United Kingdom who are affected by Nf.

Many of us will have heard of Huntington's disease, cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy but not Nf, yet 2.5 million people worldwide are impacted by Nf, making it more prevalent than those conditions combined. Too many people remain unaware of what Nf is and what it entails. To put it simply, Nf is a gene mutation that can develop spontaneously or be inherited. It causes tumours to grow in the nerve tissue throughout the body, and it comes in three forms: Nf1 is a mutation on chromosome 17; Nf2 is a mutation on chromosome 22; and there is a very rare condition called Schwannomatosis—I apologise if I did not pronounce that correctly. The conditions allow for uncontrollable cell growth, and people of any age can suffer from Nf, with complications developing at any stage of life.

In bringing awareness to the disease today, I feel that it is important to point out the signs of Nf, so that individuals and medical professionals alike can be vigilant and recognise it. Signs of Nf1 are apparent at birth or shortly after and include six or more flat, light-brown spots on the skin, which are often called cafe au lait spots; clustered freckles in skin folds; tiny bumps on the iris of the eye and soft bumps on or under the skin; and/or bone deformities. Signs of Nf2, which is much less common, include gradual hearing loss, ringing in the ears, poor balance and headaches.

The severity of Nf varies for each person, but for many the struggle is physical, mental and emotional. For example, a young boy or girl with Nf1 may face challenges in school. For the majority of children with the disease, reading, writing, maths or even just staying focused in the classroom can be difficult. They might have trouble processing information and then communicating what they have learned. For these kids, putting things in order and making sense of words can be extremely difficult, and when they are called on to answer a specific question, they might freeze up. Similar tendencies can occur for adults with Nf in the workplace.

Getting through a class or the work day with Nf is hard in and of itself, but that difficulty is increased tenfold if a child's teachers or classmates, or an adult's workplace supervisors, are not familiar with the disease. When children with Nf are misunderstood, they can feel confused, anxious and frustrated, and their performance in the classroom may suffer. As such, it is important for teachers to be aware that as many as 66 per cent of children with Nf will have some form of learning problem and one in four will display autistic tendencies.

Nf also comes with numerous physical complications. Skin lumps and disfiguring tumours can grow all over the body including on the optical nerves, which can impact on sight, and on the curvature of the spine. Scoliosis, epilepsy, malformation of long bones and brain and spine tumours are all possible. Women have a fourfold risk of breast cancer, and children who are affected have higher instances of brain cancer. Those physical ailments are often compounded by feelings of embarrassment or insecurity due to the visible lumps and bumps on the body.

As yet, there is no cure for Nf, which is why we should support organisations such as the Neuro Foundation, a charity that works directly with families experiencing Nf. It funds the Neuro Foundation specialist network, which is a small group of hospital-based professionals who provide care and guidance for those who are diagnosed with Nf. I encourage anyone who is looking for a resource on Nf to visit the Neuro Foundation's website at nfauk.org.

The charity Funny Lumps works specifically to support children with Nf and their families. Family-centric support is especially important since Nf is genetic. If someone or their partner has Nf, there is a 50 per cent chance that their child will develop Nf as well. Imagine being a parent and trying to explain your and your child's symptoms to those who know little about Nf while facing the learning and communication barriers that I described earlier. That can make it very difficult to talk through education or healthcare options.

Funny Lumps states:

"every child with Nf is different, and ... we believe that each child should have a tailored prescription of information to assist the teachers in helping the child achieve their full potential."

Funny Lumps also holds events for families and children with Nf to meet, connect, talk about their experiences and support one another. Members can learn more from its website, which is at funnylumps.org. Representatives of the Neuro Foundation and Funny Lumps are here today, so I encourage anybody who wants more information to join us in room Q1.03 after the debate.

Truly, one of the greatest challenges of Nf is the uncertainty of the disease coupled with a lack of public awareness. I have seen that myself, as one of my staff members has an eight-year-old son with Nf. She has often had to deal with medical professionals who have never even heard of the condition. A constituent of mine, Shirley Stanners, wrote to me and told me about her son Thomas, who has Nf and who has gone through three major surgeries. A lack of full understanding from the family's general practitioner has been a bit of a barrier, particularly when Thomas needed to be

cleared to go back to work after he was medically discharged from his apprenticeship.

Because of a lack of awareness, children and individuals with Nf may not be properly diagnosed and children and families may not get the proper resources and support that they need. That is why today's debate highlighting world Nf awareness day is so critical. Awareness is a core solution to effective support for those who have Nf. If each of us simply listens, learns and passes on what we know, that will help.

I am grateful to my fellow members of the Scottish Parliament who will speak today and so help to bring much-needed awareness of Nf.

17:23

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I thank Ash Denham for lodging the motion and for securing parliamentary time on an issue that undoubtedly deserves the increased awareness that is offered by the debate. I also thank her for explaining in detail exactly what Nf is and how it manifests itself.

Neurofibromatosis affects one in 2,500 people, which means that more than 2,000 people here in Scotland are affected. It is an unpredictable and variable condition that is caused by mutation in one gene. As a progressive multisystem condition, it impacts on many areas of a sufferer's life—not just their health. In that respect, over 60 per cent of patients with Nf1 will have learning difficulties and may struggle at school, especially as awareness of the illness is comparatively low.

Nf is one of the most common genetic disorders, but it remains relatively unknown even among the medical profession, with sufferers often having to explain their condition to general practitioners. Because of that lack of awareness, there is concern that people who are affected may not receive the correct treatment as soon as they ought to. That is, of course, true of four-year-old Beth Beattie, whom Ash Denham mentioned and who sadly passed away on 4 November 2016 due to brain tumours that had been caused by the condition. As Ash Denham said, Beth's friends and family, including her parents, Roger and Eva, are present today. I offer my sincere condolences to them and will do my utmost to do their daughter's story justice.

In the first 10 months of Beth's life, doctors failed four times to diagnose Nf1. Due to the condition's unpredictability, there is very little research into how severely the condition can present itself. In addition, in Beth's case there was no family history of Nf, which meant that there had been a spontaneous mutation. It is understandable that her parents had never heard of the condition prior to the eventual diagnosis, when Beth was 10

months old. About half the people who suffer from Nf have, like Beth, no family history of the condition, so it occurs out of the blue, with no one else in the family being affected. That increases the likelihood of the condition not being diagnosed.

Despite her condition, Beth's six-monthly visits to a paediatrician remained relatively positive. However, after a trip to accident and emergency in November 2015, she had a magnetic resonance imaging scan. An MRI scan had previously been deemed unnecessary, given the lack of physical symptoms. The scan revealed two large brain tumours. I will quote Beth's parents directly; they said:

"Devastated doesn't cover it. Heartbroken doesn't touch the physical pain you feel when you receive news like this."

Indeed, I doubt that there are any words that can accurately describe such feelings. Despite four operations, a routine MRI scan later revealed that the tumours were growing, and doctors gave Beth just weeks to live. After a long and brave battle, Beth passed away at home, seven months later. She was only four years old. As her parents rightly said, "This should not be."

In many cases, that is the harsh reality of Nf. When we discuss such conditions it is all too easy to focus on facts and figures. It is important that we remember that behind each figure is a face—a personal account of someone who is suffering from Nf, with a support system of family and friends, who are also feeling the effects of the unpredictable condition.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that we raise awareness of the condition, if we are to foster hope in the Nf community, not only for sufferers but for the families and carers who provide support. A group of dedicated volunteers who have been fundraising in Beth Beattie's name are doing just that. They call themselves team Beth and they keep her spirit alive in one of the best ways possible—by helping others. Earlier this year, I was delighted to present, along with team Beth, a cheque for £13,300 to Memories are Better than Dreams, which is a charity that aims to fulfil the end-of-life wishes of children and their families in Ayrshire, and supports families who have lost a child. Team Beth are continuing their fundraising efforts; the current total on their mydonate.bt.com page is more than £16,500 and counting.

Although as yet there is no known cure for Nf, as people are born with it due to a genetic mutation, that does not mean that nothing can be done to aid those who suffer from the condition. Before her eventual diagnosis, Beth was seen by numerous medical professionals who failed to identify Nf. I hope that this debate promotes increased awareness among medical

professionals and the public alike. Beth's story of a repeatedly missed Nf1 diagnosis is all too common.

However, awareness alone is not enough to save a life. We must also call for regular MRI scans to be offered to everyone who lives with Nf. Only a scan would potentially have given Beth a greater chance of survival. In addition, access to the specialist centres in Manchester and London that deal with Nf is increasingly difficult to obtain. Although charities such as the Neuro Foundation seek to extend an Nf support network, there is no such United Kingdom-wide network.

We should honour the memory of the incredibly determined Beth Beattie and many others like her who have struggled with Nf, and we should honour those who continue to struggle with the condition. I call for patients to receive regular routine monitoring by specialists. We cannot afford to overlook this condition and its devastating impact.

17:28

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank Ash Denham for bringing this debate on a condition that very few people know about, as her motion says.

I certainly fall into the category of people who do not know about the condition—or, rather, I did before the debate. I have learned that it is estimated that around 1 in 3,000 people have been diagnosed with the Nf1 variant and that many people remain undiagnosed, so the number of people with the condition might be greater. I have learned that the Nf2 variant is less prevalent and that the rarest variant, Schwannomatosis, affects about 1 in 40,000 people. I also discovered that the Neuro Foundation estimates that around 2.5 million people worldwide have a form of Nf. That is a significant number.

As members have said, lack of knowledge of the condition is an issue for medical professionals. As the motion acknowledges, people who suffer from a form of Nf or have children with the condition often find themselves having to explain the condition to their GP. I do not want to criticise GPs, given the important and difficult job that they do. However, it is important for our medical professionals to be aware of such conditions, particularly their early signs and symptoms, so that they can provide swifter treatment and improved quality of life for the patient.

That is why a debate such as this is so critical; it is one way in which Parliament can act for the greater good of the country. By discussing Nf in the chamber and, I hope, in the media, we can raise its profile among the public and within the medical professions, Government and health policy organisations. One of the most important

aspects of the debate is that by highlighting the condition in its varying forms we can urge health boards to ensure that all medical professionals be made aware of the symptoms. Ash Denham's speech gave some of those details.

Raising awareness of the different organisations that offer support and advice to people with the condition and their families is also fundamentally important. I, too, pay tribute to the Neuro Foundation, which enables

“people concerned about neurofibromatosis to find solutions appropriate to them”

and, importantly, facilitates research. Its “New Friends Wall” webpage is a superb tool for people who live with the condition and their relatives and friends to share experiences and meet others with Nf.

Looking closer to home, I pay tribute to the Scottish charity Funny Lumps, which supports children with neurofibromatosis and their families. Its engaging approach to the condition is particularly remarkable; it offers home visits to support families and school visits to support teachers who have in their classroom a child who suffers from the various side effects of the condition. It also hosts family events that allow children with the condition to meet one another. Those events are fundamentally important not only as social opportunities but because they let children with the condition know that they are not alone or unique.

One aspect of the motion that I have not yet touched on, but would like to close with, is mention of Beth Beattie—the brave young child from Ayr who was one of the children who lived with a form of Nf. I was very saddened to hear that she passed away last November, so I add my condolences to those that have already been offered. It is testament to her short life that more than £13,000 has been raised for charity by her family and many volunteers. I also acknowledge the work of Kenny Gibson for his role in promoting the fundraising. Beth's memory should not be forgotten—in fact, it should remind us that there are hundreds of people in Scotland living with a form of Nf and many others who remain undiagnosed. The challenge is to raise awareness, so I hope that today's debate will help to achieve that.

17:32

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I echo the comments of others in congratulating and thanking Ash Denham for lodging the motion about neurofibromatosis awareness day and also securing the debate on awareness day itself.

I have reflected on Ash Denham's opening comments and Kenny Gibson's very moving

reflections. At the weekend, like most members, I was back in my constituency with my family. I spent part of the time at home planning a party for a few weeks' time to celebrate the birthday of one of my two daughters, Hannah. She has decided that she wants to have her party at Drummuir Farm Ice Cream—I do not know what the attraction is of a farm that produces hundreds of different types of ice cream. On her birthday, Hannah will be four years old, the same age as little Beth when she passed away in November last year. I cannot begin to imagine how devastating and heartbreaking that must have been for Beth's parents. To lose your little girl at such a young age is unimaginable, and I add my condolences to those of others today.

When we listen to Kenny Gibson's comments and we read the local newspapers in Ayrshire, I suspect that, through the heartbreak and devastation, there must also be a lot of pride for Beth's parents when they see the amazing fundraising that Beth has inspired. Such fundraising not only raises badly needed funds for good causes, it raises awareness of Nf, which is incredibly important.

Until recently, I was largely unaware of Nf. Prior to being elected to Parliament, I worked for a charity called Parkinson's UK and had come across reports asking whether there were links between different neurological conditions, including Nf and Parkinson's, but I was unaware until this week that Nf is one of the world's most common neurogenetic conditions. Nf1 affects one in every 25,000 people worldwide, including around 2,500 in the UK, and Nf2—although less common—affects one in every 30,000 people worldwide, with more than 1,000 people affected in the UK. I also was not aware of the different ways by which Nf1 manifests itself, with tumours that grow on the nerves inside the body and on the skin often leading to severe disability, pain, itching, cancers, epilepsy, high blood pressure, bone abnormalities, speech and language problems, dyspraxia, learning and behavioural difficulties and mental health issues.

The problem with a lack of awareness is that it leads to a lack of understanding not just among the public but among health, education and public service professionals—the very people who need to know how to respond to those with the condition who require help and support. As Ash Denham's motion highlights, that can mean people going undiagnosed until many of the disadvantages of the condition have become entrenched. If people are not diagnosed until after they become parents, they may have unwittingly passed the condition on. I hope that, in replying to today's debate, the minister will inform members how the Government thinks it can raise awareness of Nf among our healthcare professionals.

I also hope that the minister will outline the Government's thoughts on one suggested solution to the problem of diagnosis—the use of the personal child health record, the so-called red book, which, as members will know, is the national standard health and development record that is given to parents at a child's birth. Parents retain the red book and health professionals update the record each time the child is seen in a healthcare setting. I am sure that adding checks relating to birthmarks to the content of the record and providing appropriate awareness to healthcare professionals would help when it comes to diagnosing Nf more accurately at an earlier age. I therefore hope that the minister will lend her support to that suggestion.

I hope that the minister will also respond to the call—which has been made by Kenny Gibson and others—for a centre of excellence in Scotland. Although there are two fantastic specialist centres in England—in Manchester and at Guy's and St Thomas's—there is none in Scotland, and there have understandably been calls for a specialist Nf clinic to be established here, in Edinburgh.

Although, like other members, I have used my short speech to highlight the lack of awareness of the condition, I will end by paying tribute to the doctors, nurses and other clinicians in our NHS who play a critical role in providing help to patients who are affected by the condition. I also pay tribute to the work of the organisation that Ash Denham mentioned, the Neuro Foundation, and Funny Lumps, which are two small charities that are punching above their weight when it comes to championing the cause of people with Nf. I pay tribute to the families and carers of those with Nf, who are truly dedicated to supporting their loved ones. Most important, however, I pay tribute to all those who live with, or who have lived with, the condition and have borne it with bravery. I am sure that, as a result of today's debate, we are all a bit more aware of their cause.

17:37

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I have no doubt that there is pretty much nothing that I can say in the chamber that will ease the pain of losing a child. Parliaments often get caught up in the sheer politics of it all—today was a good example of that—but we are brought back down to earth by real-life stories that cross our path. In one of the most difficult surgeries that I have held in my one year as an MSP, I sat and heard Beth Beattie's story through the words of her mum, Eva. I am here today primarily because of Beth. A lack of knowledge of the condition contributed to the fact that it took 10 months for Beth to receive a full and proper diagnosis. Opportunities were missed and time was lost. I echo the condolences that

were offered to her family by Kenny Gibson, but I do so in the hope that, out of this tragedy, some positive actions can come.

We are here to debate and raise awareness of the disease so that those who are watching in the gallery or at home know that we are taking it seriously. We will all be aware of the complications that neuro conditions can bring. As for any condition, the quicker the diagnosis, the better the patient's chances of receiving the correct treatment. The problem is that the symptoms of Nf are not always obvious, and that can be a challenge for doctors and nurses, who might diagnose them as the symptoms of something else.

However, today is not about laying blame in any way; it is about raising awareness. I am thankful to Ash Denham for lodging the motion, which highlights the fact that parents often find themselves in the position of telling their GPs what the condition is despite it being the world's most common neurogenetic condition, as Colin Smyth pointed out. Neurogenetic conditions typically require specialist medical training but, with more common conditions such as Nf, we need to consider how we can better educate medical practitioners about the simple, everyday signs to look out for. After all, they are the front line in diagnosis.

I will reiterate three simple observations that arise from the debate. First, why is Nf not included in the so-called red book, or personal child health record, which is used to keep a record of a child's health details and includes information about, for example, growth patterns, routine reviews and immunisations? Having something as simple as a list of the possible causes of symptoms in the red book could go a long way to reaching a diagnosis sooner rather than later. Secondly, It is worth reiterating that, although there are two Nf centres in England—in Manchester and in London—there is no dedicated centre in Scotland. The charity Funny Lumps has suggested that, rather than children under 16 having to be seen by medics who might have little or no knowledge of their condition, it might make more sense to have a Scotland-wide Nf clinic. There is food for thought in that suggestion.

My third observation is on research. Many millions are spent on research into more well-known diseases, but so much more can be done on Nf. The aim of organisations such as the Neuro Foundation is to support and promote medical research, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. What additional focus can we place on research?

Unfortunately for Beth, her condition was discovered late and her story is one of the most severe that the Nf community has encountered. However, there are many others in Scotland and

across the UK for whom we can make a difference. Many of them will not know that they have Nf and many sufferers of Nf will not even have been born yet.

Again, I thank Ash Denham for bringing the debate to the chamber and I also thank her parliamentary aide, Abigail Lawson, who has worked tirelessly to co-ordinate the debate, provide briefings and get enough cross-party support to allow us to have this discussion. I wish team Beth the very best in its fundraising efforts, and I might be persuaded to walk over hot coals in the forthcoming fundraiser—I will do it if Kenneth Gibson does it.

Kenneth Gibson: I have already said that I will.

Jamie Greene: Okay—that is agreed, then. However, I am sure that I will find an excuse between now and then not to do it.

I hope that the Scottish Government will reflect on many of the comments made in the debate and from that formulate some action plans, so that we can increase awareness of the important issue of Nf.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Neither you nor Mr Gibson can back out now, because we have many witnesses to your promising to do it and it will also be in the *Official Report*, so I look forward to seeing the video.

17:42

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): I am happy, like other members, to take part in this debate and to close for the Government. Again like other members, I offer my condolences to the family of Beth Beattie, who was clearly a very brave little girl who had a very difficult fight in her too-short life. I commend her parents, Roger and Eva, for their tireless fundraising work for Memories are Better than Dreams, a charity that helps families make special memories with their children towards the end of their life.

As a mother of two wee boys, I cannot imagine, like Colin Smyth, the pain of seeing your wee one going through so much. I put on record how inspiring Roger and Eva are and how brave and courageous they are in sharing the experience that they have gone through. To honour wee Beth, we as a Parliament must resolve to ascertain where we can make improvements. As Kenny Gibson rightly stated, behind every figure and statistic in this area there are people and their experiences of pain, suffering and grief. We need to make the situation better and make improvements where we can.

I commend Ash Denham for bringing the debate forward, especially as today is neurofibromatosis

awareness day, and I am incredibly encouraged to see so many people across the Parliament showing their support. The Scottish Government continues to be supportive of the charities that do so much important work to raise awareness of the rare disease of neurofibromatosis. Funny Lumps and other organisations have been mentioned in the debate, and their innovative work is greatly appreciated by the Scottish Government.

Ash Denham is right to seek to raise awareness of Nf and to outline the condition's physical impact and emotional and mental impact, whether for a young child struggling at school or an adolescent coping with how the condition makes them look. We must ensure that the structures that we have in place kick in, to ensure that families feel supported and that our national getting it right for every child approach to children's services is true for children who have Nf.

Our health and social care delivery plan, which was published in December last year, sets out our aim to provide high-quality services for Scotland and includes a focus on early intervention and supported self-management. Alongside that, our approach to personalised care was outlined by the chief medical officer in her report "Realising Realistic Medicine". The approaches that we take to ensure that people feel empowered and supported must work for those with Nf, and we need to ensure that awareness is raised and that appropriate and timely intervention happens when it is most needed.

The Scottish Government published the rare disease implementation plan, "It's Not Rare to Have a Rare Disease", to deliver commitments in response to the UK rare disease strategy. The plan aims to improve diagnosis and access to co-ordinated service provision and to facilitate work with research communities.

More specifically in relation to Nf, the NHS National Services Scotland division—NSD—commissions access to specialist services through service agreements with NHS England. Accordingly, there is free access to specialist treatment for all residents of Scotland with complex Nf1. However, not all people who are diagnosed with Nf1 require highly specialised care. In Scotland, genetics services make the diagnosis of Nf, provide the patient with information and make arrangements for follow-up and on-going management. The need for annual follow-up and information about what is required and who to contact with queries is recorded in a letter to the patient's GP, as well as in correspondence to the patient.

We recognise that a young person living day to day with neurofibromatosis needs support outwith the highly specialised services, and I understand that periodic genetic reviews are offered so that

any issues—including education issues—can be recognised and addressed. At every stage, clinicians in primary and secondary care are also made aware that if they or the patient have any concerns, they can request a genetic review.

Awareness raising about the condition is very important so that our medical professionals, particularly general practitioners and others with a general knowledge of healthcare, have a heightened awareness of Nf. Taking cognisance of everybody's views and contributions this evening, we recognise that that awareness raising needs to be felt more keenly and we will look to see where improvements can be made.

In relation to Nf2, genetic testing for Scottish patients is available from the Sheffield diagnostic genetics service. NSD has an agreement with NHS England that enables access to the specialist Nf2 service for clinicians and patients, and the clinic can advise on disease management and treatment options. Additionally, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde hosts a specialist Nf2 clinic. The clinical team is interested in providing a nationally designated service for Scotland, the feasibility of which is currently being considered by NSD with the help of the managed service network for neurosurgery. The hope is to form a patient pathway to improve access to specialist support and co-ordination of care for that group of patients. We will ensure that NSD has a close understanding of the issues that members have raised and that their contributions feed into NSD's considerations.

Members have raised the issue of research, and research into rare diseases is vital to learning more about them, including how they occur, how to diagnose them and how to treat them effectively and correctly. It also helps with the awareness raising that our medical professionals require. Through research, we also learn people's views on how they want to manage their disease and where they want to do that.

On rare disease day, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport announced the launch of the rare disease genomics study by the Scottish genomes partnership in collaboration with Genomics England. The study will offer more than 300 people with rare, genetic or difficult-to-diagnose diseases—and their close family members—the opportunity to have their entire genetic code sequenced. The study, along with other on-going work, is a significant milestone in achieving quicker diagnoses for people. That important work is the key to ensuring that we deliver the best possible care and support for people with rare diseases, including Nf.

The European Commission is required to support member states in the development of European reference networks. The purpose of

ERNs is to provide better access for patients to highly specialised care and to improve and to pool knowledge for clinicians, which will aid diagnosis and care in an area in which expertise is rare. Such collaboration will enhance the adoption of innovations in medical services and health technologies and will enable the sharing of knowledge in the UK and across Europe as a whole. It will help to enhance our knowledge of how conditions such as Nf manifest themselves and how we respond to that knowledge. The European Union has approved 24 ERNs covering areas such as rare bone disorders, paediatric cancers and genetically inherited conditions. Seven hospitals in Scotland and 102 in the rest of the UK will be participating directly in those networks.

On calls for more routine MRI scans, we will follow up on specific matters with members. Our understanding is that because this type of condition can manifest itself in different ways and, therefore, different investigations or treatment options may be appropriate for different patients, the decision to undertake an MRI scan is one for the clinicians involved, based on the needs of the patient. We will take on board the points that have been made, but clinical decision making is so important. We need to make sure that the understanding and knowledge of the condition are much more visible and keenly felt, so that we have the right support at the right time.

Beth's story, her bravery, which has inspired the raising of so much money, and the great joy that she brought in her four short years are the inspiration that we will all use to ensure that there is greater awareness and understanding of the condition. We will continue to explore ways in which we can make the difference that I am sure Beth's parents want us to make and which will honour Beth's memory as well.

I thank Ash Denham for bringing the debate to the Parliament, the members who contributed to it and those in the public gallery, whose support is clearly felt. We will continue to work with everyone to make the difference that we all want.

Meeting closed at 17:51.

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