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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 15 June 2017

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

General Question Time

Police Scotland (Estates Strategy)

1. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with Police Scotland regarding its estates strategy. (S5O-01119)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson): The estates strategy is the responsibility of Police Scotland with oversight by the Scottish Police Authority. The Scottish Government is in regular contact with Police Scotland and the SPA on a range of issues.

Richard Leonard: Can the cabinet secretary confirm that Shotts police station has been removed from the list of stations that might face closure? If so, what other stations have also been removed from that list?

Michael Matheson: My understanding from Police Scotland is that the estates review is still being taken forward by local divisional commanders, including those responsible for the police station in Shotts. The member raised the same issue in November last year and the situation and Police Scotland's position have not changed since then. Police Scotland has made it clear that the facility in Shotts is too large for its purpose. It would like someone else to join it in that facility or, if that is not possible, to look at having a joint facility somewhere else in Shotts. Police Scotland is not talking about ending any presence in Shotts but about having a facility that is fit for purpose and meets the needs of local policing. Police Scotland will continue to take that work forward and engage with local communities, including local elected members, and their views about the proposals for the estate within their immediate area.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Given the criticism that the creation of Police Scotland is leading to the centralisation of policing at the expense of local policing, will the cabinet secretary now support the abandonment of the closure of local police stations, such as those in Larkhall and Hamilton, which play an important role in collecting local intelligence and combating serious and organised crime at the national level?

Michael Matheson: The member is completely wrong about the estates review. The police estate

has built up over 100 years and Police Scotland is looking at it to make sure that it is fit for purpose and that it reflects the new and emerging demands that the service faces. It is not about diminishing policing. As Assistant Chief Constable Andy Cowie made clear, the review is about enhancing the service that Police Scotland delivers and making sure that the facilities are fit for purpose, not doing less in local communities. If the member thinks that the best way for the police to collect intelligence is by having police stations, she has no idea about how modern policing is done.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that if Police Scotland feels that the changing nature of crime and the way in which it is reported means that it is necessary and sensible to change its estate portfolio, it should be able to do so and should be supported?

Michael Matheson: The work that Police Scotland is doing reflects the fact that the police estate has evolved over 100 years. The way in which police stations are used today has changed dramatically from the way in which they were used 100 years ago.

I would have thought that members would welcome the fact that Police Scotland is looking at its estate to make sure that it is using it as effectively as possible and, in doing so, enhancing the way in which it can deliver local policing, particularly by working in collaboration with a range of other agencies that are essential in view of the new and changing nature of crime in our society. That is exactly what Police Scotland is looking at doing and it will continue to do that by engaging with local communities and by giving local divisional commanders a key role in the decisions about any changes to the police estate in their divisions.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Young Scot National Entitlement Card

3. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its most recent figures are for the uptake of the Young Scot national entitlement card. (S5O-01121)

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): The Young Scot national entitlement card is available free of charge to anybody aged 11 to 25 living in Scotland. As at 31 May, there are approximately 655,000 Young Scot cardholders and, of those cardholders, 151,000 are aged 16 to 18 and qualify for concessionary travel on bus, rail and ferry through the Scottish Government's concessionary travel scheme for young people.

Pauline McNeill: The information that I obtained from the Scottish Parliament information centre shows that the last figures available were from 2009, when approximately 30 per cent of the population aged 16 to 18 in Scotland held the relevant entitlement card. In view of that, does the minister not think that it is time for a review of the uptake of the card, which seems to be extremely low?

Is it not also time for a review of discounted travel for young people? The promotion of it is extremely poor. The discounts are confusing and restrictive—people have to travel off-peak and they have to spend more than £12. I think that Scotland's young people deserve better investment in discounted travel.

I hope that the minister will, in time, be able to support my member's bill on transport discounts for 16 to 18-year-olds but, if not, does he agree that people in that age group are entitled to a better promotion of discount travel across the country?

Humza Yousaf: I disagree slightly with the member in that I think that the uptake of the card is fairly good, but of course I will look at the figures that she says that she has obtained from SPICe. Young Scot is an excellent organisation, which I think is respected across the chamber. Wherever we can work with it to further promote the concessionary travel scheme, we certainly will do that. However, the discounts that are provided by the scheme are excellent and make a real difference.

Of course I know about the member's view in relation to her member's bill. I met her and told her that the Government would look with an open mind at any piece of legislation that she chooses to introduce. Any extension of the scheme would undoubtedly have to be costed and therefore we will no doubt be going back into that period that everyone in the chamber enjoys—the spending review. No doubt the member's party could put forward proposals on what the cost of that would be. Those proposals would have to be costed within a budget that is quite constrained.

I will certainly speak to the member and look at whether the promotion of the concessionary travel scheme for young people can be made more visible.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Has the minister ever considered encouraging the extension of the use of the Young Scot national entitlement card to other areas such as access to local facilities?

Humza Yousaf: Some local authorities choose to tinker with the scheme to, for example, allow Young Scot cardholders access to local facilities. That is for local authorities to decide. Within the

budgetary constraints that we have, we have looked to maximise our budget and use it in a way that benefits the most people.

The member might know that we have plans to extend the concessionary travel scheme to modern apprentices under the age of 21 but, again, if Opposition parties make costed proposals, we can discuss them. At the moment, the only plans to change the national concessionary travel scheme are going to be put forward in a consultation, and we are looking to extend the scheme to modern apprentices.

CE Mark

4. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it will ensure that products covered by the Conformité Européenne, or CE, mark that are manufactured or sold in Scotland will continue to meet such standards post-Brexit. (S5O-01122)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): As we have made clear since the vote to leave the European Union last year, maintaining Scotland's membership of and access to the single market is the best way to protect our interests. That is the policy that we will continue to pursue and we will not accept a position where consumers or businesses in Scotland have inferior rights and protections compared with those in other EU countries.

Clare Adamson: The CE mark is recognised worldwide and many consumers across the globe who are not familiar with the European Economic Area recognise the confidence that a CE mark on a manufacturer's products can give—products that can range from toys to electrical equipment to smoke alarms. If we find ourselves outwith the EEA, how will our manufacturers be able to show compliance with the standards that are recognised throughout the world and will there be additional costs in doing so?

Keith Brown: Clare Adamson's question highlights yet another of the complexities that surround Brexit and also yet another benefit that may be lost to Scotland as a non-EU state. It is likely that Scottish manufacturers would need to pay an EU broker a fee to obtain a CE mark. That serves once again as a demonstration of how vital access to the single market is for Scottish businesses and consumers.

In a few days, the United Kingdom will apparently be starting its negotiations with the rest of the European Union. We have no indication whether consumer protection even features on the UK Government's agenda for discussions with the EU. We do not even yet have the strong and stable Government that we were told that we were going to have. What we are facing, of course, is a

shambolic exit—a shexit; I cleared my throat before I said that—from the EU under the Tory Government.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Industry bodies in the UK issue guidelines on EU certification on a sector-wide basis. Will the cabinet secretary therefore work with his counterpart in the UK Government to ensure that matters are taken forward on a UK-wide basis, especially as 65 per cent of Scotland’s trade is with the rest of the UK?

Keith Brown: I apologise, Presiding Officer—I could not hear the start of Dean Lockhart’s question, as there was some mumbling from members on the Labour benches at the time.

We will of course work on these issues with the UK Government, as we have done on many issues. Wherever the interests of Scotland need to be represented, we will do that by the best means possible. I am happy to come back to Dean Lockhart on the first part of his question when I read it in the *Official Report*.

Abattoirs (Closed-circuit Television)

5. **Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to introducing legislation on the installation of closed-circuit television in abattoirs. (S5O-01123)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government has already recommended the installation of closed-circuit television as best practice in the monitoring of animals at the time of killing. I am advised that an estimated 95 per cent—the overwhelming majority—of animals are slaughtered in plants where CCTV has already been installed voluntarily.

The Scottish Government does not consider that CCTV by itself prevents welfare failures or secures welfare compliance. We will continue to monitor animal welfare at the time of slaughter through the presence of Food Standards Scotland veterinary and inspection staff in all approved slaughterhouses. In addition, we will consider whether there is a role for the Scottish Government to help industry to produce a set of good practice protocols for the review, evaluation and use of CCTV.

Alison Johnstone: In data that was released under freedom of information law, Food Standards Scotland lists 706 breaches of animal welfare regulations in Scotland’s 35 abattoirs between May 2015 and January this year. Many of those instances involve multiple animals, and more than a third were rated as critical non-compliance, which means that they caused

“avoidable pain, distress or suffering”.

Many consumers would be horrified to learn that they might be supporting businesses in which animals have not been treated with care and respect. Surely the cabinet secretary should commit to insisting on 100 per cent CCTV coverage in areas where animals are stunned and killed. Of course, that does not take away from the importance of veterinary inspections.

Fergus Ewing: Scotland has the highest welfare standards at slaughter, with strict legal requirements, and it is important to avoid giving the impression that that is not the case. The Farm Animal Welfare Committee, which is the expert on the matter, has said that CCTV cannot act as a substitute for direct oversight by management or veterinarians.

It is important to be clear that, of those 706 breaches, the majority—479—were actually attributable not to the slaughterhouse, as the member implied, but to on-farm or transport activity. Food Standards Scotland quite rightly takes all these matters extremely seriously indeed. The member did not mention this, but enforcement action has been taken in many of those cases, as is absolutely correct.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Although it is indeed the case that, according to Food Standards Scotland, 95 per cent of slaughterhouses have CCTV, the benefit depends on where the CCTV operates. I suggest that it should be required in all areas involved in animal slaughter: from the point of delivery to lairage; in the lairage itself; in the race to the stunning box; in the stunning box and at the point of stunning; in the roll-out from the stunning box; during hoisting and sticking; and in the bleeding area. Should the Scottish Government ever consider legislation, would it factor in the need for CCTV in all those areas?

Fergus Ewing: The member displays an admirable knowledge of the specific details of the process of the slaughterhouse. She is quite right to highlight that each of those factors deserves to be considered carefully. That is why, as I said in my original answer, we have already indicated that we are considering helping the industry to produce a set of good practice protocols. It remains the case that the Farm Animal Welfare Committee believes that CCTV, by itself, cannot be the solution and that it is not a substitute for proper management and oversight. We will, of course, continue to keep these matters carefully under review.

Sub-let Crofting Application (Shetland)

6. **Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government when its rural

payments division will issue advice to the Crofting Commission to determine the sub-let crofting application at Vigga, West Yell, Shetland, which was submitted to the commission on 24 June 2016. (S5O-01124)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government provided the additional information requested by the Crofting Commission on 8 June 2017. If no further information is required for the sub-let crofting application, the Crofting Commission will complete its actions and provide advice on the outcome.

Tavish Scott: I thank the cabinet secretary for looking into the case. I would be grateful if he could tell my constituents when the commission will reach a determination on the application, given that it has been outstanding from June last year.

When he introduces his reforms to the Crofting Commission next week, will the cabinet secretary ensure that the principle to be followed is that the commission should be a body that helps crofters, rather than the other way around?

Fergus Ewing: Tavish Scott is absolutely right to raise that individual case, and I assure him that my officials received a full answer from the commission. It is important to say that the commission regrets that the applicant experienced an unfortunate three-month delay between August and November last year. It has given an explanation for that; I am happy, if the member wishes, to explain that and to provide the explanation to his constituent.

The average time taken for sub-lets over the past 12 months is 12.2 weeks, which indicates that there is not generally a problem with the process. I am sure that the Crofting Commission chief executive and board members will have listened carefully to what Mr Scott has said and will ensure that things are processed as quickly as possible in future.

Rural Payments

7. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

To ask the Scottish Government whether all farmers will receive their 2015 and 2016 subsidy payments by the end of June 2017. (S5O-01125)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): We completed 99.9 per cent of pillar 1 payments by the European Union deadline of 15 October and have only 25 2015 basic payment scheme payments still to complete. In relation to pillar 2 2015 claims, we have paid more than 99 per cent of all rural priorities claims for 2015, along with 98

per cent of payments under the land managers options scheme, and have processed 85 per cent of 2015 less favoured area support scheme claims. We hope to complete processing the vast majority of outstanding LFASS claims next month.

We have repeatedly made clear our determination to make the vast majority of payments by the end of the payment period and we are doing all that we can to meet that goal. Everyone is working incredibly hard to process the remaining payments. We have addressed a small number of known defects that held up some claims, and those are now being progressed.

We will continue to provide regular updates on progress across the schemes to both the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee and the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee.

Edward Mountain: I thank the cabinet secretary for that long answer, which was, effectively, no.

We have had the blunt and condemnatory report produced by Fujitsu on the £180 million common agricultural policy information technology system and a damning report produced by Audit Scotland. We have also been warned that there might be £60 million-plus of fines to be paid.

Last year, the cabinet secretary gave Parliament a short, three-word answer to the problem—"We are sorry." Today, can he answer a short three-word question on this omnishambles—who's to blame?

Fergus Ewing: I could answer the member's question by using three words about the three propositions that he made—"You are wrong."

First, the member is wrong, because the Fujitsu report did not, as he said, conclude that the system was broken. On the contrary, as he well knows, the technical report concluded that the system is fundamentally sound and that we are sorting the defects. [*Interruption.*] Those are the facts—I know that Opposition members are not very keen on the facts, but here they are.

Secondly, the Auditor General recognised that significant process has been made.

Thirdly, the member is wrong that there will be a £60 million fine. We are absolutely certain that that will not be a figure that we recognise. I point out another fact—last year, the Auditor General said that the fines or the penalties would total between £40 million and £125 million. That, too, will not be the case.

Therefore, on all three matters, the Conservatives have got their facts wrong. I suggest that they have a thorough reading, as I have had, of the report.

Finally, I pay tribute to the hundreds of staff around this country, most of the offices of whom I have visited and many of whom I have spoken to. Unlike the Tories, who are carping from the sidelines, they are working flat out to do their duty and ensure what we all want to see—farmers and crofters getting the support payments to which they are entitled.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): Presiding Officer, I start by offering my thoughts and, I am sure, the thoughts of the whole Parliament to everyone affected by the horrific events at Grenfell tower in London yesterday. I offer my thanks to those who responded and those who continue to respond today.

To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S5F-01381)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We have all been horrified by the tragic events in London this week. I am sure that the thoughts of the whole Parliament are with everyone affected and, in particular, with those who have lost loved ones. I also want to record my gratitude and appreciation to the emergency services, who have been responding and who continue to respond.

The investigation into the fire is clearly at a very early stage, and although there appear to be very serious questions to be answered, we must be careful not to speculate at this stage. That said, members will wish to know that the Minister for Local Government and Housing has this morning discussed the fire with local authority colleagues, and a ministerial group will be convened to review Scottish regulations and ensure that we are standing ready to take any actions that are necessary as lessons are learned from this catastrophic fire. In the meantime, our thoughts remain with all those affected.

Later today, I will have engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Ruth Davidson: Last week, the Scottish National Party lost half a million votes and 21 members of Parliament—this, after the First Minister had put her plan for a second independence referendum as early as next year at the heart of her campaign. With the benefit of hindsight, does she now think that that was a mistake?

The First Minister: Of course, last week, the SNP won the election in Scotland. We won more seats than all the other parties in this chamber put together. Of course, we achieved that result having been clear in our view that the people of Scotland should have a choice at the end of the Brexit process.

However, I have also made it clear that I will now reflect on that position, not just in light of how people in Scotland voted but also in light of what

the election, United Kingdom-wide, now means for the Brexit process, and I will set out my views on that once I have had the time to properly consider the interests of not just my own party but Scotland as a whole.

Given the results of the election UK-wide, I think that it is a dereliction of duty for Ruth Davidson or any other politician to be focusing only on what might happen at the end of a Brexit process and not on what is about to happen in just four days' time. On Monday, this hapless UK Government is about to start a formal negotiation with the EU with no mandate for its hard Brexit position and no consensus even within its own ranks, let alone in the country more widely, about what it is trying to achieve.

In short, in just four days' time, we are going to be led off the cliff edge by a Tory Government that is devoid of legitimacy and credibility and utterly clueless about what it is trying to achieve. That is the real and present danger to Scottish jobs, investment and living standards. Any politician with the national interest, rather than just party interest, at heart will be focused on trying to protect Scotland from a disaster that the Tories are in the process of leading us into, and that is what I am focused on doing.

Ruth Davidson: Nicola Sturgeon talks about having Scotland's national interest at heart, but Thursday's election was not the only test of public opinion in the last week. Today, fully 60 per cent of people in Scotland say that they do not want a second independence referendum, which is more than double the number of people who back one—indeed, even a third of yes voters say that they do not want another referendum. I have a pretty simple question. In light of the election result last week, does the First Minister not think she should listen to them?

The First Minister: Of course, 62 per cent of people in Scotland did not want the Tory Brexit, but the Tories do not appear to be interested in listening to that.

I have already said that I will reflect on all those factors when deciding on the best way forward, not just for my party, or any party in the Parliament, but for the country as a whole. That is the right and proper thing to do.

No one in Scotland should be taking any lectures from the Conservative Party. Let us just recap what the Tories have managed to do to the UK in the space of just one year. First, they called a divisive and unnecessary European Union referendum, entirely for reasons of Conservative Party management. Having lost that gamble, they are now pursuing a hard Brexit, purely to appease the right wing of the Conservative Party. As if that was not enough, they then called an unnecessary

general election, purely in the self-interest of the Conservative Party. Having mucked up that campaign, they are now putting the country in hock to the Democratic Unionist Party.

That is what the Tories have done in less than a year. They have jeopardised the economic security of the UK and are running the risk of making the UK an international laughing stock. As if that were not bad enough, they have put the Irish peace process at risk into the bargain. What a shower of charlatans the Tories are. No one should take any lessons from them.

Ruth Davidson: It is the same every single time. You ask her for her referendum plan and she hides behind her Brexit bogeyman. It happens every single time.

Let us hear what the message from the First Minister on the referendum plan has been. It is hunker down, attack anyone who asks for a little bit of clarity and hope that none of us notices that she is pressing on regardless. We all remember what happened after the Brexit vote last summer. Within hours of the result, the First Minister pounced to put a second independence referendum on the table, yet this week, when independence is under threat, she suddenly insists that it would be wrong to take a knee-jerk decision. That is a total double standard—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Order.

Ruth Davidson: Some of the First Minister's colleagues, such as Alex Neil, understand it. He says that we should recognise that indyref 2 is not going to happen in this session of the Scottish Parliament. If he gets the public mood, why can she not?

The First Minister: What people deserve and will get from me over the next few days is some calm reflection.

Ruth Davidson has just demonstrated and is increasingly demonstrating to the Scottish people that she is nothing more than a one-trick pony. If she has to confront any issue other than an independence referendum, she is left floundering.

Ruth Davidson has asked for clarity. Is it not the case that people in Scotland have a right to expect some clarity from the Conservatives about what is due to happen, not in some months' time, but in just four days' time? Perhaps the next time that Ruth Davidson gets to her feet she will give us some clarity around these issues. Is Ruth Davidson's position that we should be in or out of the single market? Is her position that we should be in or out of the customs union? Alternatively, is her position exactly what her position has been over the past year, which is that she will do exactly

what Theresa May tells her to do, regardless of what is in the best interests of the country?

I will give Ruth Davidson a chance to prove that she has some ability to think independently on those matters. In or out of the single market? In or out of the customs union? Why do we not get some clarity on a negotiation that is about to start in four days' time?

Ruth Davidson: I make no apologies for raising the First Minister's referendum threat today, given—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Ruth Davidson: Given that she will not even talk to her own Cabinet members about it, I thought that it would be nice for them to hear what the plan is.

The First Minister talks about making decisions in the best interests of Scotland. Does she not realise that that is precisely what we did in 2014? The majority of people in Scotland believe that staying in the UK is in the best interests of Scotland.

Let us cut to the chase. This has got nothing to do with listening to the people. It is all about how the First Minister can find a way to refloat or rebrand her sinking dream of independence. The people of Scotland just want to put it behind us. She says that she is listening to the folk of Scotland, and so she should. Her referendum is not wanted, so will she ditch it now?

The First Minister: Everybody watching will notice that Ruth Davidson completely dodged all the issues about what this country is confronting in four days' time. From me, people will get the calm reflection in the national interest that I have promised.

I say this again: in four days' time, this country faces the prospect of being taken off a cliff edge by a Tory Government in Westminster that does not have a clue what it is doing. That is completely unacceptable. The people of Scotland want to know from Ruth Davidson what her position is on these vital issues. Scottish jobs depend on it, Scottish investment depends on it and Scottish living standards depend on it.

I will continue to stand up for Scotland and Scottish interests on Brexit and every other matter, while the Tories simply do whatever they are told to do by their bosses in London.

Engagements

2. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I add the heartfelt condolences of Labour members to everyone who has been affected by the events at Grenfell tower. Once again, we find ourselves in awe of the heroics of the emergency services. We

all looked on in horror, anger and dismay and we all share a collective desire to ensure that everything that can be done is being done to prevent future tragedies like this. In that spirit, I strongly urge the First Minister to listen to the concerns of the Fire Brigades Union.

To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the week. (S5F-01379)

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

Kezia Dugdale: In last week's election, voters sent the First Minister a clear message to focus on what really matters to people. The First Minister still pretends that education has always been her top priority, but we all know that her Government has presided over our having 4,000 fewer teachers while class sizes have gone up. Scotland is falling down international tables and parents are being asked to fill in in the classroom. While she has taken her eye off the ball, we have had college lecturers on strike, and now even teachers are threatening industrial action. The First Minister cannot blame negative media coverage for that. Why is it always someone else's fault and never hers?

The First Minister: With the greatest respect, I have to say that Kezia Dugdale is talking nonsense. As will be demonstrated this afternoon when the Deputy First Minister outlines to Parliament the next stage in our education reform programme, this Government takes full responsibility for ensuring that we equip our education system to raise standards and close the attainment gap. That is why we have in place the new national improvement framework and the new attainment fund, including the pupil equity fund, which has put £120 million directly into the hands of headteachers.

This afternoon, the Deputy First Minister will outline the outcome of the governance review, which will include steps to ensure that we have a school system that puts schools, teachers, headteachers and pupils at its centre.

Kezia Dugdale raised the important issue of the recent colleges dispute, which gives me the opportunity to set out my clear expectations on that. On 19 May, agreement was reached that allowed the strike to be called off, which was extremely welcome. Since then, discussions have continued on some outstanding issues. However, I am very clear that what was agreed on 19 May now needs to be fully implemented. I spoke yesterday to the chair of the employers association, which will meet again on Monday, when it will be asked to ratify the agreement that has already been reached, including payment of the first instalment of the cash settlement. I hope

and expect that that ratification will take place on Monday and that any prospect of further strike action will be removed completely.

Kezia Dugdale: The problem for the First Minister is that this week the Educational Institute of Scotland revealed what teachers really think about Scotland's education system. Their workload has increased and fewer than half would recommend teaching as a career. There is a recruitment crisis, with hundreds of vacancies, some of which will take up to three years to fill, and new figures reveal that teachers are receiving up to £6,000 less than they would have received had their pay risen in line with inflation. It is little wonder that teachers are saying enough is enough.

What will the First Minister say to teachers who are struggling in our schools? Can I suggest that "Sorry" might be a good place to start?

The First Minister: What we will continue to do is what we are doing—investing with local authorities to make sure that we maintain teacher numbers, and putting more resources into the hands of headteachers to equip them to respond better to the challenges that they face in schools.

The Deputy First Minister will continue to take action to reduce unnecessary workloads for teachers. That is why the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Education Scotland are reducing and clarifying the guidance that they provide to teachers. Education Scotland has published clear advice for teachers on what they should and should not be expected to do in the classroom. Definitive benchmark guidance on literacy and numeracy has also been published: in fact, benchmarks for all the curriculum areas have now been published, which will replace the much larger volume of existing materials.

We will continue to get on with responding to the challenges that we face by taking the action that we are taking. That is what responsible Governments are expected to do, and that is what this Government will continue to do.

Kezia Dugdale: The response from the Scottish National Party back benchers says it all. Never has the First Minister sounded so out of touch with the reality on the ground. The truth is that the First Minister has taken teachers for granted for years. Now they are threatening strike action just to get John Swinney to sit up and pay attention.

The SNP's answers to the crisis are to send untrained teachers into our classrooms and to introduce league tables and high-stakes testing in primary schools. The First Minister has even flirted with opt-out schools. Each and every one of those is a failed Tory policy. Does that not prove, First Minister, that if you vote SNP, you get Tories?

The First Minister: From the leader who advised some people in Scotland to vote Tory, that is a bit rich. No wonder Kezia Dugdale is blushing right now—but let us get back to serious matters.

First, it is simply not sufficient for Kezia Dugdale to come here and make it up as she goes along. There is no question whatsoever of there being untrained teachers in schools in Scotland. John Swinney will set out the Government's position on all aspects of the governance review later this afternoon.

We will continue to get on with the job of reforming and investing in Scottish education, including providing extra money to help teachers with the job that they do, carrying out the reforms that are necessary to ensure improvements in our schools, and ensuring that politicians are held much more to account because of the greater transparency that we are introducing in the system.

What is striking again today—as so often in the past in the chamber—is that when we come forward with policies, ideas and initiatives to address the challenges, all Labour does is oppose them. Labour never brings forward any constructive ideas of its own. That is probably why, Presiding Officer, for the first time in living memory in a Westminster general election, Labour came third in Scotland. That is the reality of Labour in Scotland today, as the SNP continues to get on with the job.

The Presiding Officer: We have a couple of constituency supplementaries. The first is from Bob Doris.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I extend my sympathies to everyone who has been impacted by the horrific and deeply shocking events of the Grenfell tower fire tragedy.

My constituency has several high-rise tower blocks; many MSPs will have similar stock across their constituencies. I also know that my local housing association will place a significant priority on safety, including fire safety. However, that will not stop the people who live in such properties having understandable concerns.

Although I welcome the steps that the First Minister has already taken, which have been outlined today, does she agree that we must ensure that the most appropriate and rigorous fire safety regulations possible are in place, and that we reassure worried householders? Does she also agree that any lessons that must be learned from the Grenfell tragedy in the weeks and months ahead are learned and acted upon here in Scotland?

The First Minister: I agree very much with Bob Doris. I know that many members across the chamber, perhaps especially members such as Mr Doris—and me, in fact—who represent urban constituencies in which there are high-rise flats, will feel particularly concerned by the tragic events in London this week. As I said earlier, the most serious questions have to be answered about that tragic fire, but given how early a stage the investigation is at, it is important that we do not rush to judgment or early speculation about the causes.

Nevertheless, I am acutely aware of the responsibility that the Scottish Government bears here. We must stand ready to provide whatever reassurance we can to people across Scotland who are living in similar accommodation and who might have very understandable concerns as a result of what we have seen this week.

We must also stand ready to learn any lessons that require to be learned as the causes of the fire become clearer. That is why the Minister for Local Government and Housing had early discussions with local authority partners this morning. We will also discuss these matters, particularly with regard to fire safety and regulation, with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The ministerial group that I have referred to will be convened to ensure that on an on-going basis, and in as close to real time as possible, we learn any lessons that have to be learned and take whatever steps are required in Scotland. I know that all members have a human interest in the issue, but we will be happy to keep any member who has a particular constituency interest very closely updated on steps that the Scottish Government considers appropriate.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Yesterday, a *Press and Journal* report revealed that last month an Aberdeen man died following a 999 call-handler error. Information regarding the call had not been passed to the dispatch team; by the time the error had been realised and an ambulance dispatched, 33 minutes had passed and, tragically, the man had passed away. What action will the First Minister take to ensure that such a catastrophic incident does not occur again?

The First Minister: I am aware of what has been reported about that tragic case. First and foremost, I want to say that my heartfelt sympathies are with the family and friends of the individual who sadly passed away.

The case is under investigation by the Scottish Ambulance Service, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has already spoken to the chief executive of the service to seek assurances that the investigation will be full and proper. Given that the investigation is under way, it is not appropriate

for me to go into any more detail about it or to speculate on its outcome. The health secretary will be happy to correspond further with Liam Kerr when we have more detail from that investigation.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): As the First Minister will be aware, the energy regulator, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, and SSE have this week announced the closure of Lerwick power station, with the loss of 25 permanent jobs and apprenticeships. They are going to replace the power station with a cable that will import wind power from Caithness but that will not allow energy from large-scale renewables to be exported from Shetland. Will the First Minister ask Ofgem to consider how such an ill-conceived proposal has seen the light of day?

The First Minister: I am happy to ask the relevant minister to discuss the matter with Ofgem. We are aware of the proposed new energy solution for Shetland, which seeks to connect Shetland with the Scottish mainland for the first time while also having some on-island diesel supply. Although aspects of the proposal contribute to our approach to cleaner energy, there are understandable concerns about security of supply and, indeed, the issues around export that Tavish Scott has referred to.

The proposal has been made by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks and is being overseen by Ofgem, which is an independent regulator. Nevertheless, I recognise the concerns that Tavish Scott has expressed on behalf of his constituents and I will ask the relevant minister to speak to Ofgem to make sure that those concerns are conveyed and then to have further discussions with Tavish Scott as a result of that.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I, too, express my concern and the concern of my party for those who have been affected by the shocking events at Grenfell tower and our concern for those who are suffering, who are grieving or who are worrying about friends and relatives and fearing the worst.

To ask the First Minister when the Cabinet will next meet. (S5F-01382)

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

Patrick Harvie: Two weeks ago, the Government's consultation on fracking and unconventional oil and gas was closed. It is reported that there have been tens of thousands of responses. The First Minister may already be in a position to confirm whether that is one of the biggest ever responses to a Government consultation.

Since the consultation closed, even more concerns have been raised about the health impacts of fracking, with more than 150 studies linking the chemicals that are used in the fracking industry to cancer risk and permanent lung damage, for example, through the exposure of workers to benzene and silica dust, among other substances. The concerns extend to wider public health fears, too.

The temporary moratorium has been in place for a year and a half, and we know that it cannot last for the long term—the Government knows that it is going to have to make a decision. It previously gave a commitment that a final decision on a full ban would be made by the end of this calendar year. Now that the consultation has closed, will the First Minister confirm that timetable and give a clear commitment that the decision will be made and a vote brought to the Parliament before the end of this year?

The First Minister: That is the timetable to which we continue to work, and I restate our commitment to bringing a vote to Parliament. We said that we would do that when we launched the consultation, and nothing has changed.

Patrick Harvie specifically asks about the scale of the consultation responses. The final numbers are being confirmed through the validation and verification process, but about 60,000 responses have been received. A considerable number of those responses have been received via postcard and petition campaigns.

I am sure that Patrick Harvie will agree that it is important that we properly analyse the consultation responses and use that analysis as a factor that we will take into account in reaching a final decision.

Patrick Harvie is right in saying that a moratorium, by its very nature, is temporary—there is no doubt about that. We have always said that the moratorium is in place pending a final decision on the substantive issue.

It is also important to recognise that we have taken a cautious and precautionary approach exactly because of the concerns that Patrick Harvie has outlined. Many people have a range of different concerns about fracking, including about the impact on the environment, health and transport, and none of those concerns could or should ever be brushed aside. That is why we are taking this approach. We will continue with our approach and will take into account all the views and concerns.

I reassure people that, while the process is under way, the moratorium remains in place. Therefore, no fracking or drilling for coal-bed methane can take place in Scotland until the outcome of the process is known.

Patrick Harvie: I am pleased that the extraordinary number of responses demonstrates the breadth of concern about the issue. I am also pleased that the number of responses will not be used as an excuse to delay the process. Of course, there needs to be analysis of the responses, but we need clarity and every one of the 60,000 people deserves clarity that the decision will be made this year. There will be a widespread expectation that the decision will be for a full and permanent ban on these extraction techniques.

The Scottish National Party's 2016 manifesto said:

"We will not allow fracking or underground coal gasification in Scotland unless it can be proved beyond any doubt that it will not harm our environment, communities or public health."

Following the publication of that document, we still see SNP activists campaigning wearing "Frack off" badges, and we hear SNP politicians say that it is time to bring an end to

"the Tory days of gung-ho fracking policies"

in Scotland and that

"Jobs, water quality, food and drink would all be unnecessarily put at risk".

Those comments are clearly incompatible with a decision to give the green light to those techniques.

Does the First Minister also agree that, if Brexit goes ahead as the United Kingdom Government plans, a huge number of environmental controls and protections that would affect the fracking industry and many other industries that threaten public health in Scotland will be decided here? Can we have a clear and absolute guarantee that not one of those regulations will be downgraded, watered down or weakened in Scotland?

The First Minister: I will take the latter part of Patrick Harvie's question first. Even our harshest critic would suggest that the concern about the watering down of environmental regulations post-Brexit is not one that people should have about this Government, although it is certainly a concern that people should have about the current UK Government. We take environmental protection and regulation very seriously. Indeed, one of my many concerns about the Brexit process is the fact that there will be a fragmentation of environmental protection through the process of the UK leaving the European Union.

Returning to the issue of fracking, I would have thought that Patrick Harvie would welcome the fact that he is able to quote so many members of the SNP agreeing with his position. I have previously described myself—and I would continue to describe myself—as somebody who is personally

very sceptical about fracking for many of the reasons that Patrick Harvie has outlined. What we said in our manifesto on the subject absolutely stands, and that is the standard by which we will assess the issue.

We have embarked on a process of consultation that follows the process of the expert research work that we did into a range of issues. It is vital that we conclude that process with all due process and in good faith. We will do that in the timescale that we set out, and we will come to a final decision within that timescale.

As I said in my first answer, people in Scotland can be assured that, pending the outcome of the process, there will be no fracking in Scotland. That is why the moratorium is so important.

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Roaming charges within the EU have been abolished from today, meaning that we do not get billed excessive amounts for making calls and sending text messages abroad. Has the Scottish Government had any assurances from the UK Government that it will work to preserve that benefit in Brexit negotiations?

The First Minister: To the best of my knowledge, we have had absolutely no assurances from the UK Government on what is a very important issue for people who use mobile phones in other European countries. There is no doubt that the abolition of roaming charges is one of many benefits arising from the digital single market. It is vital that Scottish consumers continue to benefit from that post-Brexit.

In spite of the continued lack of meaningful engagement on the part of the UK Government on any of these matters, the Scottish Government will continue to engage in good faith to ensure that our interests are represented as the negotiations get under way—I remind members—in just four days' time.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights

4. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government is doing to support LGBT rights. (S5F-01394)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am very proud of the Government's record on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights, including the introduction of civil partnerships and, now, equal marriage for same-sex couples. We have robust and inclusive hate crime legislation in place, we have established the LGBTI inclusive education working group and we intend to reform gender recognition law. Those actions show why Scotland continues to be ranked as one of the

most progressive countries in Europe regarding LGBTI equality.

It is not just the actions that we take for people living in Scotland that are important; so is our willingness to stand up for LGBTI rights across the world. The Government is determined to continue to do that.

James Dornan: The First Minister will be aware that the LGBTI pride celebrations are happening across Scotland this month, and in Belfast next month. At the same time, the Tories, in a desperate attempt to cling on to power at Westminster, will be dealing with the Democratic Unionist Party, which has used its veto to block the legalising of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland a total of five times. Does the First Minister share my concerns about the message that that arrangement sends out to members of the LGBTI community, along with many others, and does she agree with me that that highlights the importance of complete transparency for any proposed Tory deal with the DUP before it is signed and sealed?

The First Minister: First, I recognise up front that the issue of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland is one to be decided by politicians in Northern Ireland. It is not an issue for decision in this Parliament. However, I think that it is regrettable that Northern Ireland is now the only part of the UK where loving same-sex couples cannot get married, as they can in England, Wales and Scotland. I hope that we see that change for the better in the not too distant future.

Secondly, I record my deep-seated concern and, I believe, the deep-seated concern of many people not just in Scotland but across the UK at the prospect of some kind of grubby deal between the Tories and the DUP to allow Theresa May to cling to office. I have just listened to Ruth Davidson talking about the national interest, but that kind of deal is not in the national interest in any way, shape or form, particularly if it is not completely and utterly transparent. I say that not just because of some of the views of the DUP, which perhaps not all but many of us feel deeply uncomfortable about, but because of a concern about the disregard that has been shown for the Northern Irish peace process. One of the most shameful aspects of the whole Brexit process since the beginning has been the disregard that has been shown by many for the peace process. Under the Good Friday agreement, the UK Government is meant to be an impartial broker in Northern Ireland and there is a real question—

The Presiding Officer: First Minister, the question is about LGBT rights.

The First Minister: There is a question, which has been raised by John Major and others, about whether that can be the case. Those are serious

matters. I have seen some suggestions this morning that the deal—if there is a deal between the Tories and the DUP—will not be published in full, which would be completely unacceptable.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): In September 2015, the Scottish Government received a letter from Arlene Foster, the present leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, in her capacity as a Government minister. The letter was about Scotland's equal marriage legislation, and my colleague Clare Bailey, Green MLA for South Belfast, described it as part of Mrs Foster's anti-equality offensive. Rather than hide behind freedom of information legislation, will the Scottish Government publish that letter?

The First Minister: I am happy to give consideration to that. My understanding is that that letter was about the translation of civil partnerships into marriages in Scotland.

The commitment of this Government to equality—shared across the Parliament—is beyond question, which is something that we should celebrate. We are responsible for our own actions in that regard, but on issues such as equality—whether LGBTI equality or any other equality issue—it is important not just to do the right thing at home but to stand up for the right thing in other countries the world over. I am very aware of that responsibility.

Common Agricultural Policy Futures Programme

5. Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my register of interests.

To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the Audit Scotland update on the common agricultural policy futures programme. (S5F-01392)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): One of these days, I will ask Peter Chapman which particular page of his register of interests he is referring to.

Over the past year, we have made significant changes to the development and implementation of the CAP futures programme. Clearly, there is a lot more for us to do, but I welcome the fact that the update report from Audit Scotland recognises some of the progress that we have made and reinforces the actions that we have taken since last May. We will carefully consider the findings in the context of the significant improvement activity that is under way.

Peter Chapman: I am absolutely shocked by how complacent the First Minister is, because farming communities are not as relaxed as she is about the issues. The information technology system has created the worst farming cash crisis

in a generation. Now we learn that there is still no back-up system should the IT system fail and that there is a possibility of £60 million-worth of fines from the European Union for non-compliance, and yet more money is needed to get the system working. Farmers around Scotland are still waiting for 2015 and 2016 payments and, worst of all, we face at least another year of chaos until the system is fully compliant.

In the light of that catalogue of errors, does the First Minister take responsibility for the catastrophe? How can our farmers ever trust her again?

The First Minister: As I have said in the chamber before, I take full responsibility for everything that the Scottish Government does. There is not a shred of complacency on the Government's part about the issue. Fergus Ewing has already apologised to farmers, as have I, for the failures that have been experienced in the system, which is why a significant part of his time and energy each day is taken up with ensuring that the system delivers as farmers have a right to expect it to.

The member made a number of comments that require to be challenged and, just before First Minister's question time started, Fergus Ewing challenged similar comments.

On disallowance risks, the figure of £60 million is entirely speculative, just as the figure of £125 million, which was quoted in last year's Audit Scotland report, was entirely speculative and turned out not to be the case. On the budget issue, the financial ceiling for delivering a compliant CAP system is being held to. On payments to farmers, it is because we are acutely aware of the importance of cash flow to farmers that we put in place the loan scheme to ensure that they got their payments. As Fergus Ewing said this morning, 99 per cent of payments in the 2015 round have been made, and we are continuing to work through the 2016 payments.

We will continue to give the matter our absolute and full focus and attention to ensure that farmers get the service that they deserve.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): On 31 May last year, in his first appearance in the chamber after his appointment as the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, Fergus Ewing said:

"The farming industry needs to have confidence in the payment timetable and that we will do what we say. There must be no repeat of the problems that were faced in 2015-16."—[*Official Report*, 31 May 2016; c 5.]

Does the First Minister have confidence that Fergus Ewing has fulfilled that promise?

The First Minister: Yes—that is entirely what Fergus Ewing is focused on doing. That is why we have in place the loan scheme and why we are taking steps to ensure that farmers get the money that they expect while we take steps—many of which are narrated in the Audit Scotland report today—to ensure that the IT system does the job that it is there to do and while we continue to pay attention to the overall budget and the value for money issues that are at the heart of the matter. Led by Fergus Ewing, we will continue to focus absolutely on ensuring that we deliver in the way that farmers across the country have the right to expect.

Second Independence Referendum

6. Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether work by Scottish Government officials on a second independence referendum will now cease. (S5F-01401)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): In case I did not mention it earlier, I note that last week the Scottish National Party won the general election in Scotland with more MPs than those of all the other parties combined. As I have said, I will reflect carefully on the election result before I set out my views on the next steps. It is clear that the people of the United Kingdom have rejected a hard Tory Brexit, and it is imperative that we now build a cross-party, four-Government approach that will protect all our interests at this time.

Lewis Macdonald: She lost a heap of seats, her flagship policy cost her votes, yet she seemed to think that she had won the election. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Lewis Macdonald: That was Theresa May last week, but this week Nicola Sturgeon seems to be equally in denial.

Given that the First Minister has said that she wants to be involved in negotiating Brexit on behalf of the UK, will she now recognise that she cannot possibly be sitting at the top table and heading for the exit at one and the same time?

The First Minister: I have made clear my position on the reflection that I will now give to the issue of an independence referendum.

As for Scotland being represented in the Brexit negotiations, whatever our disagreements on other matters might be, I would have thought that every MSP of every party across the chamber would agree that Scotland should be represented in those negotiations. What has been said speaks volumes; I would expect it from the Tories, as they want Scotland's position to be just to keep quiet and do whatever they tell us to do, but I am

astounded that not only Labour but Lewis Macdonald in particular—he has actually been very sensible on these matters over the past year—is not getting behind the Scottish Government and demanding that Scotland, Wales and both sides in Northern Ireland are fully engaged in the negotiations. Anything else would be completely unacceptable, and I cannot believe that Labour would ever go along with it.

Carers Week

7. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government is marking carers week. (S5F-01391)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, I thank carers for all that they do. The Scottish Government continues to support carers week, which encourages all of us to better understand the challenging circumstances that unpaid carers across Scotland can face. Aileen Campbell and Jamie Hepburn visited LifeCare in Edinburgh yesterday to recognise the work of carer positive employers, which support unpaid carers in their workplace. In partnership with Young Scot, we are also running our week-long benefit take-up campaign this week to increase awareness and uptake of carers allowance among young adults with caring responsibilities.

Graeme Dey: I very much welcome the actions that the First Minister has just highlighted, but will she outline what further measures and support will be provided to unpaid carers in coming years?

The First Minister: The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 will, from next April, extend and enhance the rights of carers to support, which will help them to continue to care, if they so wish, and to maintain a fulfilling life alongside caring. We will increase carers allowance to the same level as jobseekers allowance from the summer of 2018, and we are committed to increasing carers allowance further for those who look after more than one disabled child. We will continue to promote the carer positive scheme to employers, which links with our fair work agenda. So far, 72 organisations have been recognised as carer positive employers, which covers just short of 300,000 employees. The scheme helps carers to balance caring and employment responsibilities, and it helps employers to retain valuable staff. Across a range of issues, we are absolutely determined to do everything that we can to support carers in the invaluable work that they do.

Stink Pits

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-05662, in the name of Christine Grahame, on stink pits stink. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the continued use of stink pits, which are also known as middens, as part of the predator control regime on shooting estates in the Scottish Borders and elsewhere; understands that these are pits or piles of animal carcasses that are left to decompose so that the smell will attract foxes and other predators into snares placed around them; believes that the dead animals found in these pits recently have included foxes, deer, whole salmon, pink-footed geese, pheasants, rabbits, mountain hares and domestic cats; considers that killing and dumping animals, including protected species and domestic pets, to rot and act as bait to trap other animals, is inhumane and fundamentally disrespectful to the creatures; believes that current use goes beyond good practice in many instances; notes the view that it is necessary to assess the justification for permitting their use when the disposal of farm livestock is strictly controlled, when the extent to which their use is associated with the killing of protected species and domestic animals is taken account of and when the association between the pits and intensive predator control regimes as practised on driven grouse moors is examined, and notes calls for the Scottish Government to consider the merits of banning the use of stink pits in Scotland altogether, on ethical, animal welfare and public health grounds.

12:49

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I thank the many Scottish National Party, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat members who signed my motion. However, I am disappointed that not one Conservative member felt that they could support a motion that, after describing the horrors and indiscriminate cruelty of stink pits, merely asks the Scottish Government

"to consider the merits of banning the use of stink pits in Scotland altogether, on ethical, animal welfare and public health grounds."

After I lodged the motion, someone asked me what a stink pit is. I will be frank: until a few months ago and a discussion about snaring, I had never heard of one. As they say, "Ye ken noo," and I wanted to have this debate to educate members and, I hope, condemn to the past what to my mind is a barbaric practice.

I will be brief. The use of stink pits, which are also known as middens, is a fundamental part of intensive predator control on Scottish shooting estates. Gamekeepers are taught to dig a grave and fill it with bait such as wildlife carcasses, fish heads and other animal remains, and to build low

walls of brush and branches that direct foxes towards gaps, where snares are placed.

Snares are cruel and indiscriminate traps, which OneKind and the League Against Cruel Sports Scotland, along with 76 per cent of the Scottish public—including me—believe should be banned. I had the privilege of speaking in Colin Smyth's debate on the banning of snares.

Stink pits are designed to lure in and catch all foxes and other mammals in an area. Animals that have been dumped in stink pits in Scotland since the introduction of the snaring provisions under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 include foxes, deer, whole salmon, pink-footed geese, pheasants, rabbits, hares and cats.

The killing and throwing away of domestic cats is known to cause particular offence, as is the use of stink pits to dispose of mountain hares that have been culled in large numbers. All that seems far from being "good hunting practice."

If members want to learn how to construct a stink pit, I direct them to "Middens factsheet: Your guide to working a midden/stink pit for humane fox control"—the word "humane" is ironic. The fact sheet is available on the website of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust. I could also direct members to the many websites that display graphic images of disgusting, exposed animal graves and the non-predatory animals that fall victim to the encircling snares.

That is bad enough, but the fundamental point is that to pile exposed carcasses upon carcasses is, of itself, offensive. I recall the public being sickened by the sight of animal carcasses in vast funeral pyres during the foot-and-mouth outbreak. How would they respond to images of deer, foxes, pheasants, hares and cats piled on top of one another? Where is the regard for animal life?

Let me give some examples. In Marchmont estate in Berwickshire, in October 2015, a snare that was set by a stink pit contained a dozen pink-footed geese. Pink-footed geese are protected only between February and September—it seems that they were shot as soon as it became legal. In Glenturret estate in Perthshire, in June 2016, a cat was in a legal stink pit. In Leadhills estate, in South Lanarkshire, a young fox was found in a stink pit with a snare around its muzzle. Three other snares were found round the pit, one of which was not tagged. There are images of badgers that have been caught in snares, and so on.

Under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, farmers are not permitted to bury livestock on their land, other than in designated remote areas in the Highlands and Islands. However, gamekeepers and land

managers are allowed to dispose of entire bodies or parts of wild game, as long as that is

“in accordance with good hunting practice”.

That is not a level playing field.

I make no bones about it: I wish a ban on the use of stink pits, on the ground of animal welfare, because stink pits are callous and indiscriminate, on the ground of public health, and because stink pits are just plain inhumane. I have no doubt that when the public are fully aware of the existence of stink pits, they will be disgusted and wish them banned—as they do in relation to snaring itself, which is the *raison d'être* for stink pits. I hope that that helps to persuade the Government.

My motion contains the mild request that the Government “consider the merits of” an outright ban, but I refer the cabinet secretary to my recent parliamentary question S5W-09661:

“To ask the Scottish Government, with reference to section 11E of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As amended), what information it holds on (a) the location of snares and (b) which animals were caught, and whether such information is in the public domain.”

As a former lawyer, I cannot help going into some of the provisions that are pertinent to the use of stink pits. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 11E(1) of the 1981 act say that records must be kept of

“the location of every snare set in position by the person which remains in position”

and

“the location of every other snare set in position by the person within the past two years”.

Paragraphs (e) and (f) of section 11E(1) say that records must also be kept

“in relation to each animal caught in a snare mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b)”

of

“(i) the type of animal”

and

“(ii) the date it was found”

and

“such other information as the Scottish Ministers may by order specify.”

Section 11E(2) is about finding locations

“by reference to a map”

or

“by such other means (for example, by means of a description) capable of readily identifying the location.”

I do not know how many stink pits there are in Scotland. I do not know how many snares are around them. I do not know whether those snares

are all legal. I do know that they exist. In tackling the subject, that is the least we should require.

I agree with pest control, but this is not the way to go about it. We need reliable statistics. I look forward to members' contributions.

12:55

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I thank Christine Grahame for the opportunity to discuss the use of middens as part of a policy of controlling foxes on estates that are used for sport and agriculture. Despite spending my whole life living and working in the countryside, I have never come across a midden as described in the motion, nor was I aware of what one was without doing some research. I presume that that is because I am a farmer and not involved in shooting. I have no problem with shooting in the countryside; I realise that it is an important part of the culture and finances of many Scottish estates, but I do not participate in it.

Middens are areas that are used for attracting foxes. They are baited using carcasses that are not fit for human consumption. We could say that they are similar to the deposits of grain that are used to attract rodents to places where they can be trapped and controlled. The difference is that middens use snares, not kill traps, and snares allow non-target species to be released.

The motion is, I feel, phrased in slightly emotive language, and thus it somewhat masks the truth. Middens are located in remote areas that are well away from habitation and from where non-target species are located. There is no point in locating middens in places where the very species that they target will be disturbed or where domestic animals can be accidentally encouraged to visit. The very fact that most visitors to the countryside—and, indeed, myself—have never seen a midden proves that what I have just described is correct.

On baiting, a proper midden is located in an area where target species can be naturally channelled and, as such, I am told that descriptions of piles of carcasses are frankly incorrect. Indeed, such piles are not necessary: it does not take a tonne of wheat to attract a rat—a small pile will do—and it would be the same for a midden.

Christine Grahame: Has the member looked at the online images that confirm the point about carcasses being piled on top of one another in middens? Does he stand by his statement in which he likened animal carcasses to grains of wheat?

Peter Chapman: Obviously there is a difference, but I used that as a simile for a way of attracting animals that we want to control to the site.

I have looked online, but I have not seen many instances. I accept that there might be occasions when carcasses are piled on top of one another, but it does not always happen and it is not necessary.

Vermin controllers often use the carcasses of animals that have been culled and are not suitable for human consumption, such as deer carcasses that have been damaged during culling or are in poor condition due to the animal's ill-health.

There should be no examples of farm livestock being used, because—as we rightly heard—it is illegal to do so. The fallen stock legislation requires all agricultural fallen stock to be disposed of via an approved knackery. To fail to do so would flout cross-compliance regulations, which could generate real penalties. That is where I have problems with middens. In the past, farmers were allowed to bury fallen stock on their farms. However, that has been illegal for some time now, so why are open pits with rotting wild animals still allowed?

Middens are used to attract predators, which can then be controlled through legal means. I fully understand that some members may not like the use of snares, and I respect that. However, they are an effective and, if used by a trained practitioner, legal form of control.

Snares are designed not to kill animals but to hold them, so non-target species can be released and target species can be humanely controlled. It is of course vital—it is in the rules on the use of snares—to examine snares at least once every 24 hours, so that the suffering of caught animals is kept to a minimum.

Some might argue that it would be better not to use middens and to rely on shooting. However, we know that a canny old fox will never be seen during the day and will never stand in the light. Middens are therefore an important tool in the toolbox. They are not used only on intensively managed grouse moors. I am told they are used across many sporting estates and agricultural holdings, although I have never come across them in Aberdeenshire—I do not know whether there are any there.

I do not believe that there is any need for the Government to consider the merit of banning middens. If folk feel that there is an issue, it would be right to promote the proper use of middens in the snaring training course that is a legal requirement in Scotland.

13:02

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I thank Christine Grahame for bringing the topic to the chamber and for her long-standing commitment to animal welfare.

I found out about the existence of stink pits only very recently and accidentally when I was doing some research in advance of the recent debate on snares. I am grateful that the debate has brought the issue more fully to my attention, and to the attention of other members and the general public. If our constituents are appalled by the indiscriminate and cruel nature of snares, wait until they get a load of stink pits, which are even more indiscriminate and even more cruel—and, to be frank, disgusting.

As we have heard, stink pits are quite simply holes in the ground in which piles of putrefying carcasses are dumped and surrounded by snares. The putrid and pungent smell of the stink pit attracts other animals, which are killed by the snares and then added to rot on the pile with the rest—an unpleasant and chronic cycle of inhumane death and decomposition.

Not only are stink pits simply repulsive and barbaric, they are absolutely indiscriminate. Although I do not believe that there can be any justification for the use of snares, the case is often made that precautions can be taken, such as setting snares on animal runs, which reduces—if it does not eliminate—the chances of trapping non-target species.

Stink pits, by contrast, attract a wide range of mammal species, which hugely increases the already huge risk of non-target species being trapped in snares. Animal welfare charities report that they have found all sorts of animals in stink pits—foxes, deer, pink-footed geese, mountain hares, otters, pheasants, and even domestic cats. For that reason, whether people are for or against snares, there can be no justification for stink pits.

For a person who is against snaring, stink pits are a gruesome extension of a generally cruel and indiscriminate practice. For the pro-snaring lobby, the existence of stink pits hugely undermines the arguments that are put forward about taking precautions to respect animal welfare and protected species. In addition to the direct harm that is caused to the animals that they trap, stink pits also indirectly harm other animals—in particular, sheep. During the summer, stink pits generate maggots and blowflies, which are a significant and expensive health issue among sheep.

As well as the clear animal welfare case against stink pits, there is also a strong public health argument, in that stink pits that are close to areas

that are accessible by the public, or close to water courses, pose a serious health risk to humans.

It is shocking that there is currently no legislation or regulation covering stink pit use in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK, but even if there was, I am not sure that any legislation or regulation could sanitise or condone the use of stink pits. It is my opinion that they should be banned. Trusted animal welfare organisations, from the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to the League Against Cruel Sports and OneKind, are unanimous in their calls for a ban. I appreciate that there is big money in countryside sports, and that advocates for those sports have loud and powerful voices, but when it comes to animal welfare I will stand with those who protect animals, not those who profit from their suffering.

If recent weeks have shown us anything, it is that we cannot rest on our laurels when it comes to animal welfare. If Theresa May had had her way last week, we would now be seeing moves towards the reintroduction of fox-hunting in England and Wales. Thankfully she did not, but that near miss should serve to remind us that we cannot take animal welfare achievements for granted, and that we must continue to push for progress in areas where little progress has been made, and protect against regressive steps.

Some animal welfare debates can be nuanced, with cases made for each side. However, there is simply no case for stink pits and there is every argument against them, and all the major animal welfare charities support a ban. They stink, and it is time for them to go.

13:06

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which shows that I am a member of the League Against Cruel Sports. I thank Christine Grahame for lodging the motion and bringing this important issue to the chamber. As Christine Grahame's deputy on the cross-party group on animal welfare, I know how passionate and knowledgeable she is when it comes to championing animal welfare. That passion and knowledge were very evident again today in her opening speech.

It is worth repeating exactly what we mean by a stink pit or midden, because I suspect that many of our constituents will not know about their existence, and would be appalled if they did. As we have heard, stink pits are literally piles of dead animals, carcasses and fish heads that have been dumped on the ground or in plastic containers, which are then surrounded by snares. Their purpose is very clear: they are raw bait that is

designed to lure foxes and other mammals to the snares that are laid nearby.

Research by the League Against Cruel Sports in Scotland has shown that, in some cases, dozens of snares have been found around a single stink pit. Unlike snares, no regulations or legislation cover use of stink pits in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK. However, just like snares, stink pits are indiscriminate and often lure non-target species, including badgers, to the traps.

Most people might think that the presence of stink pits would be at odds with the regulations on disposal of livestock carcasses, as controlled by the European Union animal by-products regulations. As members will know, under those regulations, farmers in most of Scotland are not permitted to bury livestock on their land. However, there is a derogation whereby gamekeepers and land managers are allowed to dispose of entire bodies or parts of wild game as long as it is done

“in accordance with good practice”.

It is clear from the evidence that has been produced by OneKind and League Scotland that the use of stink pits across Scotland falls far short of that good practice. Good practice would dictate that stink pits comprise

“wild fish ... rabbits ... deer galloch and dead foxes”.

However, the charity OneKind has found numerous examples of protected species on stink pits that have been

“killed and thrown onto the pile to rot”,

in addition to domestic animals, including cats. The dumped carcasses are more often than not uncovered, and snares around the stink pits are often set in walls of branches, which heightens the risk of an animal that is attracted to the pit becoming strangled or entangled. They are also sometimes found close to accessible public areas, which heightens the health risk to pets, people and livestock, given the prevalence of blowflies, which so often become a feature of stink pits in summer months.

I will give some more details of one of the examples that Christine Grahame gave to highlight the reality of a stink pit in my South Scotland region. Late last year, OneKind responded to a complaint from a member of the public about a fox being caught in a snare on the Leadhills estate. Unfortunately, the responding unit was unable to find the fox and, on returning to the site the next day, a member of staff found it with horrific injuries, piled on top of a stink pit. The staff member said:

“It looks like the snare killed the fox by causing that massive wound. There were gobbets of flesh on the grass and blood and fur. The fox's eye was bulging out so much

... which must have been due to being strangled by the snare.”

Stink pits are indiscriminate, cruel, stomach churning, unhygienic and antiquated. They have no place in a modern Scotland. However, stink pits are merely the symptom of a wider disease: snaring.

Perversely, the tightening up of the rules on snaring by the Scottish Government could act as an encouragement to use stink pits. The logistics of having to check snares daily could limit the number of snares, so stink pits could be used increasingly to draw animals to a few more easily checked sites, especially on large estates. Certainly, the guidance on middens from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust points out that difficulties of snaring mean that

“the midden technique is now widely used by grouse keepers.”

Although I would welcome a ban on stink pits, what we really need is a ban on snaring itself. There is no point treating the symptoms when we could get rid of the disease itself. I set out that view in my recent member’s business debate—a view that is shared by three quarters of the Scottish public.

I regret that the Government’s failure to ban electronic shock devices and to consult on a ban on snaring, as well as this week’s decision to favour the reintroduction of tail docking and concerns that the Government will not go far enough on banning hunting, all seriously undermine the credibility of the Government when it comes to animal welfare.

I hope that today’s debate will signal a commitment that that is not the case, and that the Government will work across Parliament with those who want a truly progressive approach to animal welfare. I hope that we will hear today that the Government will consider a ban on stink pits and that it will at least consider a more thorough look at the animal welfare implications of snaring, which the recent Scottish Natural Heritage review utterly failed to do.

13:11

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I am grateful to Christine Grahame for securing this debate on stink pits and for her work as the convener of the cross-party group on animal welfare. We have recently seen dispiriting performances from the Scottish Government on issues of animal welfare, but I remain optimistic that today we will see a more enlightened approach and that stink pits will soon be outlawed in Scotland.

I am particularly grateful to the League Against Cruel Sports, the SSPCA and OneKind for providing MSPs with detailed briefings for the debate, especially at a time when the Scottish Government is keeping them busier than ever. As Colin Smyth highlighted, the Government is proposing the reintroduction of tail docking for working dogs against advice from vets—every single professional veterinary body is opposed to it; it is standing by while foxes in Scotland continue to be offered less protection from hunts than those south of the border; and it is refusing to ban the use of snares despite the inability of those barbaric devices to discriminate between species, with family pets as vulnerable to a slow, agonising death as target species.

As has been highlighted, stink pits are filled with bait such as rotting wildlife carcasses, fish heads and other animal remains so that the smell of decomposing animals will lure foxes towards the snares that are set to catch them as they approach. Both wild and domestic animals are regularly found among the piles of bodies that are left to rot, as well as protected animals including mountain hares, badgers and pink-footed geese. Animals found in pits have also included sheep, deer and cats, with a high probability that family pets have been killed.

Although farmers in Scotland are not allowed to bury livestock on their land, other than in designated remote areas in the Highlands and Islands, gamekeepers are free to kill and dump piles of entire animal bodies or parts of wild game as bait to kill even more animals as long as it is

“in accordance with good hunting practice”.

I agree with OneKind that that seems a far cry from good practice of any sort.

Among the evidence that has been provided by OneKind is an example that further demonstrates how feeble current legislation is at protecting animals from those who operate shooting estates. A dozen pink-footed geese were found in a stink pit in Berwickshire in October 2015. As the birds are protected between February and September, OneKind has concluded that they were shot and dumped in the stink pit as soon as the season opened. That is gravely concerning.

Along with OneKind, the League Against Cruel Sports, the SSPCA and supportive members in the chamber, I am determined that we will continue to fight for improvements in legislation to protect Scotland’s animals. I see no reason for delay in banning stink pits, and I agree wholeheartedly with Colin Smyth and other members that we need to revisit the Government’s refusal to ban snares altogether.

Those who defend stink pits do so on the basis that a profit is to be made from allowing people to

kill animals. That is simply indefensible. I do not think that I am alone in preferring to see priority given to those who visit Scotland's countryside for many other reasons, including to enjoy our fabulous scenery and our natural wildlife. Visitors do not want to be confronted with piles of decaying carcasses surrounded by snares, but people are coming across them. I would prefer priority to be given to people who do not go into the countryside to indulge a blood lust that, in my view, has no place in modern society. As Ruth Maguire pointed out, many people were incredulous and horrified when Theresa May called for a repeal of the fox-hunting ban. A civilised nation does not indulge in such pastimes.

I fully support OneKind's call for the use of stink pits to be reviewed as a matter of urgency, and on behalf of the Scottish Greens I urge the cabinet secretary to take the necessary steps to introduce—on ethical, animal welfare and public health grounds—an outright ban in Scotland on the truly barbaric use of stink pits.

13:15

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I congratulate Christine Grahame on obtaining this members' business debate. She has long taken similar stances on issues related to animal welfare, and her persistence and consistency require to be acknowledged and admired.

As I said during the previous debate on snaring, four weeks ago, the use of stink pits, or middens as they are also known, is an emotive issue, so I understand the use of emotive language in this connection. I appreciate that the idea of rotting carcasses in a stink pit will be repugnant to many, if not most, people. However, it is the job of legislators to give careful consideration to how and why the pits are being used rather than to immediately come to the conclusion that they should be banned.

People are asking why the pits are needed, but I suppose that people do—even given their comments—accept and understand that stink pits are used as a way of maximising the effectiveness of snaring as a means of fox control. They are used to draw foxes into fewer, more easily checked sites; thus, they have the benefit of concentrating snaring effort and reducing the number of snares that are set in the wider countryside. They are legal as long as they do not use livestock whose use is prohibited under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013.

As Christine Grahame mentioned, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has a best-

practice fact sheet specifically on the use of stink pits in Scotland. It is provided as a handout during the compulsory snaring training courses that people must pass before they are allowed to set snares, and it clearly sets out what carcasses can be used for baiting the stink pit. I understand that some land managers are trialling the use of alternative methods for stink pits, and we will be interested to hear how those trials develop and whether their use can be incorporated into best practice.

There is no evidence or intelligence that suggests that the use of stink pits encourages increased unlawful activity such as the killing of protected species or domestic animals. If people believe that they have such evidence or intelligence, it should be reported. All snaring operators must now put their personal identification number on each set snare, which makes them more accountable to the law.

It is true that stink pits will attract the interest of non-target species such as badger, wildcat and pine marten. However, there is no reason why a stink pit should catch a higher percentage of non-target species than a snare that is set in the open countryside. It is still the responsibility of the snare operator to ensure that snares are not set in close proximity to badger setts or otter holts, where it is highly likely that they would catch those non-target species. It is also the responsibility of the snare operator to release unharmed any non-target species that is caught.

I hear the comments that are being made about animal welfare and public health issues surrounding the use of stink pits but, again, we have no hard evidence to substantiate the claims. If people believe that they can provide such evidence, I strongly encourage them to do so.

A review of snaring was undertaken recently by SNH on behalf of the Scottish Government. As I indicated in May, in my response to the members' business debate on snaring, I will ask the Scottish technical assessment group to look at the use of stink pits as part of its overall consideration of the snaring recommendations in that report, and the issues that members have raised today will be brought to the group's attention.

Christine Grahame: I went through my parliamentary question in some detail in my speech. Is the cabinet secretary aware of how many stink pits there are in Scotland and their location? That would be a start.

Roseanna Cunningham: I am going to mention that. At present, I have no information about the number of stink pits, but that is possibly because the numbers will change because the pits will not necessarily be in the same places over a period of

time. I need to check that—I will return to that point in a minute.

We are asking the Scottish technical assessment group to look at the use of stink pits. If the group's review of their use highlights any significant issues, we will, of course, consider their use and the possibility of introducing further regulation.

I also recently announced a package of measures in response to the report on the fate of the satellite-tagged golden eagles, which included a commitment to set up an independently led group to consider grouse moor management. I have yet to confirm the details of that, but I would expect the use of stink pits as part of predator control to be within the scope of that group. If the group comes up with proposals to regulate the use of stink pits, I will give them serious consideration.

That means that we now have two separate groups looking at the use of stink pits from slightly different perspectives. I will inquire whether there is any possibility of establishing the extent of the use of stink pits in order to answer the questions that have been raised by my colleague Christine Grahame. I hope that members will accept that that is the proper way for the Government to proceed.

Snaring is a divisive issue, and I am determined that snaring and its associated activities, such as the use of stink pits, shall be carried out to the very highest standard. There are currently only 1,571 snaring operators who have passed the snaring training course and have been issued with a snaring identification number by Police Scotland, which I regard as an indicator of success. Our position has always been that, if snaring is to be carried out, it requires a professional approach. It should not be undertaken unless it is really necessary and the operator is confident that they can meet the high standard that is required.

13:22

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

Garden Lobby Roof

1. John Scott (Ayr) (Con): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what plans it has to address the pooling of water on the roof of the garden lobby. (S5O-01130)

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): As the member might recall, a question relating to the garden lobby roof drainage was raised on 10 November 2016, when members were given the following advice:

"An inspection of the roof was carried out in 2007 by our property service consultants, Lee Boyd. The garden lobby roof consists of stainless steel"

cladding and glazed panelled

"roof lights which are designed as leaves and positioned close together. Combined with the three-dimensional form, that creates a complex roof arrangement. The inspection confirmed that the design can lead to water pooling in certain areas after heavy or persistent rainfall. The bespoke roof has shallow falls and raised seams, which are part of the original architectural design. Our consultants advised that the issue does not affect the roof's waterproof structure. ... we clean the roof regularly to maintain its appearance and to check that the drainage points are clear and free flowing."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 2016; c 42.]

However, areas of pooling are still expected to occur.

John Scott: Members of the corporate body will be aware that, in recent weeks, standing water has covered a large area of the roof and, in addition, a red algal bloom has developed on the roof. Has the corporate body considered installing one or several small electric float pumps, discreetly located, to drain off the pond of water and, thereby, to reduce the area that is covered by standing water? In the long term, notwithstanding Mr Stewart's reply, that will help to maintain the integrity of the roof, as well as reducing the annual cost of £7,000, or thereby, of cleaning the roof. An investment in such a roof drainage solution would probably pay for itself in one year.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): There you go, David Stewart. That was a thorough question.

David Stewart: Perhaps it would be helpful if I added a little bit more information for the member.

Facilities management has been aware of the issue since occupation of the building in 2004, and it commissioned an inspection by the property service consultants, Lee Boyd, as I said. Following

the inspection, facilities management undertakes regular reviews of the standing water on the roof, and there is currently an effective maintenance regime to clear the standing water and to remove any discolouration that is caused by the algal growth.

FM regularly reviews the issue with the on-site contractor to ensure that there is no change in the roof's integrity, and the maintenance interventions are frequent enough to keep the issue under control. However, I am happy to arrange for officials to meet Mr Scott again to discuss the issue further and to assess the constructive suggestions that he made this afternoon.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

2. Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it plans to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points. (S5O-01133)

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): Yes. There are plans in place to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points from the current two spaces to four. We have already applied for grant funding for additional electric vehicle charging and the Energy Saving Trust has provisionally awarded us 75 per cent of the costs, up to a cap of £1,500. The full cost of installing a vehicle charging point, which serves two parking spaces, is between £2,000 and £3,000.

The additional charging point is on the corporate body's project list and we will progress it in due course. Currently, both existing charging points are in use on most business days, so the corporate body is proactively planning for the future by ensuring that capacity is available.

We currently have access to an electric car as part of the Enterprise car club and members might wish to know that it can be booked for exclusively business journeys. It offers members, members' staff and corporate body staff the option of undertaking journeys in a more environmentally friendly way. They should register on the Enterprise car club website to book the vehicle.

Maurice Golden: I welcome that positive response. However, given the targets to vastly increase electric vehicle usage, will the corporate body revisit the number of charging points that are allocated as and when required?

David Stewart: Again, it might be useful if I provide a slightly more detailed answer for the member.

Obviously, the Scottish Parliament works hard to reduce its carbon footprint, and we already have a target to reduce it by 42 per cent by 2020, in line with the Scottish Government's targets. We are on

track to achieve that, with emissions already down 37 per cent on the 2005-06 baseline figure.

We encourage members to register with the Enterprise car club. If members or staff are converting to electric vehicles, we will encourage them to inform officials in advance so that we can incorporate that information in our future plans for further electric charging points.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Claudia Beamish has a supplementary question.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I note the positive answer from my colleague David Stewart but, given that the transport sector is now the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global climate change, it is, of course, important that we continue to lead by example in the Scottish Parliament. In addition to the charging points, what is the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body doing to encourage modal shift in the Parliament to ensure greater use of public transport and active travel? What information does the corporate body hold on the transport choices of the Parliament to inform its future actions?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That question is a bit outwith the original one, but Mr Stewart may wish to answer it.

David Stewart: The Scottish Parliament has an extensive sustainable travel plan, which is available on our website. That plan details measures that are taken to encourage staff and visitors to adopt active and sustainable travel.

I agree with the points that Claudia Beamish has raised. It is clear that we want to achieve our climate change targets.

Garden Level Restaurant (Portion Size)

3. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what consideration it has given to reducing the portion size of food served in the garden level restaurant. (S5O-01134) [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I hear groans all round on that one, Mr Mason.

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The portion sizes that are served in the garden level restaurant are based on standard catering practices for workplace restaurants. We have no plans to reduce portion sizes—

Members: Hear, hear.

David Stewart: I must come back here more often. Customers can ask for smaller portions and our catering staff will be happy to oblige.

In developing the menus, our executive chef considers that lunch may be the main meal of the

day for many customers. However, lighter options are available.

John Mason: On a serious note, we are told by the cancer and diabetes sectors that obesity is one of the major problems that they face. I accept that some people need to eat more than others do, but the assumption in the restaurant seems to be that the norm is a very large portion, and people have to ask for a smaller one.

Members: No.

John Mason: Last week, very large pizzas plus chips were offered to us, although half a pizza was sufficient for me.

David Stewart: I think that the people have spoken.

The garden level restaurant holds the healthy living award plus, which means that all meals are nutritionally balanced and a wide choice is available to customers. We are regularly audited for the award to ensure that our meals continue to meet the criteria. Where possible, we will indicate to customers the calorific value of a meal to allow them to make a more informed choice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I dread what is coming. Murdo Fraser has a supplementary question.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): What comfort does the corporate body have for all the growing lads and lassies around the chamber who would occasionally like larger portions?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I fear that we are descending into some nonsense, but David Stewart may feel that he wants to answer that question.

David Stewart: We are thinking of reallocating members' rooms so that members who need more exercise would have to go to the top floor.

Security Staff (Lethal Weapons Seized)

4. Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body how many potentially lethal weapons have been seized by security staff in 2017. (S5O-01129)

Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The parliamentary security office does not—I have not put my card in the console. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Some people are enjoying your misdemeanour.

Jackson Carlaw: The parliamentary security office does not use the definition “lethal weapon”—Mr Stewart might be a bit of a lethal weapon

himself—but the term “knives and bladed articles” is used.

All knives, penknives, scissors and other sharp objects carried by visitors are retained by security staff for the duration of a person's visit. The total number of such objects that security officers have retained in 2017, up to and including 8 June, is 841. Knives that can be carried legally in a public place in Scotland are returned to the visitor when they leave. The number of knives that have been surrendered to Police Scotland in 2017 is 70.

Alexander Stewart: It is paramount that visitors, staff and members feel safe in the Parliament building. What additional measures have been introduced in recent months to allay any fears and tighten security?

Jackson Carlaw: In partnership with the parliamentary authorities, Police Scotland recently undertook a comprehensive review of the Scottish Parliament building and external policing arrangements. The corporate body has now received the review report and noted its recommendations, which will be taken forward by the Parliament's head of security, in collaboration with Police Scotland and other relevant agencies. It would not be appropriate to discuss any particular recommendations, as they pertain to the security of the building and those who work and visit here.

Cyberattacks

5. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what assessment it has made of the danger of cyberattacks on its information technology systems. (S5O-01132)

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body recognises the danger that cyberattacks pose, and our advisory audit board recently considered an independent review of our cybersecurity maturity. The review looked across the three critical security domains of technology, people and crisis management, and it offered assurance that sufficient and effective arrangements are in place to manage cyberthreats and risks. For obvious reasons, I will not go into detail, but we also take advice from the police, the security services and the national cyber security centre.

Monica Lennon: Is further advice available to staff and members on any actions that they can take to protect themselves from online hacking? In particular, is any advice available on the use of USB drives on parliamentary devices?

David Stewart: The member makes a number of excellent points. Cybersecurity is of course a critical risk area that organisations need to

understand. It is a risk that continues to evolve and it should not be seen solely as an information technology issue. All users of the IT systems have a responsibility in the area. I recommend to all members the information security guide that is available from the business information technology office, which gives advice on actions that members should take. The BIT office has a number of tools to identify any irregular and unusual activity.

As a requirement of CGI's contract with the Scottish Parliament, it prepares monthly reports of network performance, server capacity and certain aspects of security-related management information, including the identification of malware, the status of anti-virus software across the desktop estate and any threats that have been blocked by existing firewalls.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions to the corporate body. I look forward to seeing the portions that John Mason will now receive in the canteen.

Education Governance

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on education governance—next steps. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:42

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): The Government was elected last year on a platform of radical and bold action to make Scottish education world class for all our young people. That commitment has driven the changes that we have already made and it drives the reforms that we now propose. In particular, we pledged to

“give more power and resources direct to schools, to put teachers, parents and communities in the driving seat of school improvement.”

Today, with the publication of our paper on school reform “Education Governance: Next Steps—Empowering Our Teachers, Parents and Communities to Deliver Excellence and Equity for Our Children”, we make good on that pledge. The aim is to deliver excellence and equity by raising the bar for all and closing the attainment gap. A simple powerful premise sits at the heart of our proposals: the best decisions about a child's education are taken by the people who know that child best—their parents, their teachers, their school and their community.

We are determined to build an education system from the classroom out. We will reform the system so that the key decisions in a child's education are taken by our schools. Schools will be free to improve learning and teaching and to make decisions as they think best within a broad national framework. All other parts of the education system will share a collective responsibility and work within a strong framework to support schools to succeed.

We have excellent teachers, who are hard working and committed to raising attainment for all. Many children and young people fulfil their potential. Exam results are very good and are improving, and the overwhelming majority of young people leave school to go into a job or training, or to continue their studies. We have a strong curriculum, which has the needs of children and young people at its centre.

However, those strengths do not mask the challenges that we face. There is still too much bureaucracy, generating unnecessary workload for our teachers. We remain committed to freeing teachers to teach, and we continue to work with

their professional associations on further steps that we can take to achieve that.

We fully recognise the message of the programme for international student assessment and Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy results. They reveal the significant hurdles to be overcome if we are to make progress on raising the bar and closing the attainment gap.

We can, and we must, achieve more. That is why we embarked on a programme of reform. The national improvement framework and the attainment fund have laid the foundations for what I am setting out today. In particular, the pupil equity fund has put £120 million directly into the hands of our headteachers.

When we launched the governance review last September, we set out to engage directly with teachers, practitioners, parents and professional bodies across Scotland. I formally place on the parliamentary record how grateful I am to the many individuals who spoke to us and for the written responses that we received. I am publishing our analysis of those responses today.

No one will be surprised to hear that many of the respondents from within the education system argued against change. However, very few respondents expressed satisfaction with the status quo, and many expressed real concern about elements of the current system.

We also examined a wide range of evidence to inform our approach, including from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the international council of education advisers, and children and young people in Scotland themselves. Advice from the international council has been clear: to improve our education system we must tackle culture, capacity and structure. I am taking a blended approach, to address all three.

The centrepiece of these reforms is a package of sweeping new powers for schools, so that education is led by teachers, parents and communities. We will put the power to change lives into the hands of those with the expertise and the insight to target resources at the greatest need. Schools have the expertise and the insight to target resources to greatest effect, so they will be responsible for attainment, delivering improvement and transforming children's lives. That will be supported by a new structure, with three key pillars: enhanced career and development opportunities for teachers; improvement services, delivered by new regional collaboratives; and support services from councils.

There is clear evidence that the strength and quality of leadership in our schools is crucial to delivering improvement. We know that headteachers want to focus on the delivery of

learning and teaching and do not want to be chief administrators of their schools. We will therefore give headteachers more power over decisions on learning and teaching, freeing them to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people.

At the heart of this will be a statutory headteachers charter. Headteachers will be the leaders of learning in their schools, responsible for raising attainment and closing the attainment gap. They will be free to select and manage the teachers and staff in their school, determine their own school management and staffing structure, decide on curriculum content and directly control a significantly increased proportion of school funding.

International evidence shows that involving parents, families and communities fully in schools improves attainment, so that is what we will do. We will enhance parent councils and modernise and strengthen the legislation on parental involvement, to enable all parents to play a role in their local school and particularly in their children's learning. To ensure that schools interact more effectively with families who find it difficult to engage, every school will have access to a home-to-school worker, to make and maintain such links.

Children and young people must be at the heart of our education system. We will strengthen their voice, through more effective and consistent pupil participation.

Parents should be involved in the wider running of schools. We have seen an increased desire for autonomy in the proposals that have been put to us, including from St Joseph's primary school in Milngavie. As part of the governance review, we have carefully considered each proposal on its merits. I recognise what the parents are trying to achieve for their schools and their children, but I am acutely conscious that schools also need support frameworks to function well.

The reforms that I am setting out today will significantly increase the autonomy of our schools and the role of parents in school life and ensure our schools are rooted in their communities. Crucially, however, our reforms deliver that within a clear national and local framework of policy and support. Such a collaborative approach is a key strength of the Scottish system, and it is critical to improving attainment and closing the attainment gap.

I therefore cannot agree to pursue the specific proposals from parents at St Joseph's and elsewhere as they would remove schools from that crucial support structure. I consider, however, that we are delivering on the autonomy and increased parental involvement that lie behind many people's support for the plans that have been proposed in

good faith by the parents of St Joseph's and other schools.

Schools will lead, but they must have the support that they require to succeed, so we will back them with a new support structure around the three pillars that I mentioned earlier. The first pillar—enhanced professional development and career opportunities for teachers—will see teachers strongly supported throughout their careers. Professional learning and collaboration are key to that. We will streamline and enhance professional learning so that there is a coherent learning offer for teachers. Improved support through collaborative practice in new regional models and school clusters will also build the capacity of teachers significantly.

We also know that some teachers have been frustrated at the lack of opportunities to progress in their careers, so we will work with the profession to design new career pathways to develop and reward leadership skills, pedagogic expertise and subject specialities. We will also undertake reforms to initial teacher education to ensure that new teachers are well prepared, with consistently well-developed skills, to teach in key areas such as literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Finally, we will continue to develop new routes into teaching that attract a broader range of high-quality graduates, including in priority areas and subjects.

A formal procurement process will shortly begin for new routes into teaching. However, I can be clear today that any new route into teaching will require to meet the General Teaching Council for Scotland tests, including partnership with a university to maintain credibility and academic rigour. This Government will not remove the crucial guarantee of the quality of teaching in Scotland.

We recognise that the success of a school and teacher-led system rests on the availability of the right support, which is not currently available consistently across the country. We must build capacity for educational improvement in the system by putting in place the second pillar—a revolutionised offer of support and improvement.

We will establish regional improvement collaboratives to pool and strengthen resources to support learning and teaching in Scotland's schools. Led by a new regional director who will report to the chief inspector of education, the collaboratives will provide educational improvement support through dedicated teams of professionals and will draw on Education Scotland staff, local authority staff and others. They will facilitate collaborative working, share best practice and support collaborative networks and partnership approaches tailored to their local area. I welcome the steps that have already been taken

by some local authorities to embrace that approach, and we will work with local government to expand and deepen that work.

The collaboratives will provide a coherent focus across all parts of the system through an annual regional plan for educational improvement that is aligned with the national improvement framework. We know that our teachers want to improve continuously, for the simple reason that they want to do better for our children; this will help them do that.

The third pillar of support will be delivered exclusively by local government. Local authorities will retain a vital role in our education system, with responsibility for a wide range of education support services, including the number and catchment areas of schools in their area; the provision of denominational and Gaelic-medium schools; the administration of placing and admissions procedures, including for children who have additional support needs; the provision of back-office support services such as human resources; and securing excellent headteachers for the schools in their area. Taken together, that all makes for a crucial role for councils in ensuring that schools have the support framework and services they need. Retaining important local accountability means that we retain vital democratic accountability for the leadership of Scotland's schools.

Councils will also have new statutory duties. They will have a duty to collaborate to support improvement on a regional basis and to provide staff, including headteachers and teachers, to work within the regional improvement collaborative in partnership with other local authorities and national agencies.

An empowered system that is underpinned by collaborative working and a strong improvement support function will operate within a clear national framework. The Scottish Government and national bodies have a key role to play in that regard.

As part of the reforms, Education Scotland will undergo significant change, with strengthened inspection and improvement functions. The improvement functions will remain with inspection, acting as a crucial tool to support the system-wide goal of continuous improvement.

We will give Education Scotland a renewed focus on professional learning and leadership, providing clarity and coherence to the national landscape. That will incorporate the functions of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership and will be delivered via the new regional improvement collaboratives. That will mean that hands-on advice, support and guidance can flow directly to more schools to support improvement.

We know that current support can feel either inconsistent or distant, and we must reverse that.

As Parliament will be aware, Bill Maxwell, the chief executive of Education Scotland, is retiring on 30 June. I can confirm that Karen Reid, the chief executive of the Care Inspectorate, will lead both organisations on an interim basis, supported by Graeme Logan as interim chief inspector and chief education adviser. The process for the appointment of a permanent chief inspector of education, who will also lead Education Scotland and be my principal education adviser, will start in the summer.

One of the strengths of our education system is that we have national teacher professional standards, underpinned by a national registration scheme. We recognise that there are many other professionals, such as education support staff, who play a key role in educating our children and supporting our teachers but who are not currently part of a national registration scheme. We will therefore consult on establishing an education workforce council for Scotland to take on the responsibilities of the GTCS and the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland and registering other education professionals.

To support those system-wide changes, we must have an approach to funding that ensures that control over resources for schools sits with schools. The consultation on fair funding that I am publishing today seeks views on how we can achieve that. As our proposals make clear, I have ruled out the development of a fixed national funding formula.

It is clear that the reforms that I have set out today cannot be delivered by Government alone. They will require partnership working, shared effort and real focus on delivering change in every part of the system. I commit the Government to active engagement with our local authority partners, the professional associations and other stakeholders to take this agenda forward. I also acknowledge that the Government does not command a majority in this Parliament, so we will work with other parties to build agreement around the reforms. Some changes can be delivered without legislation and we will work with partners to deliver those quickly. For changes that need legislation, we will introduce an education governance bill in 2018.

At the heart of all our reforms is a simple plan. We will free our teachers to teach; we will put new powers in the hands of our headteachers; we will ensure that parents, families and communities play a bigger role in school life and in their children's learning; and we will all—Government, councils and agencies—support our schools to do what they do best: transform the life chances of

our children. That must be the vision of us all for the future of Scotland's schools.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Parliament knows that, for several decades, the Scottish Conservatives have wanted to see a school system that involves real devolution to headteachers. We are pleased to see that the Scottish National Party is now supporting that direction of travel in the general principles of these reforms.

The cabinet secretary is right to say that the status quo is not an option—how could anyone argue otherwise given the incontrovertible evidence that Scotland's schools face many fundamental challenges, especially over standards of literacy and numeracy? He will, however, not be surprised to hear that we do not believe that the reforms go far enough—in particular, when it comes to extending choice and allowing schools to opt out of local authority control if that is what parents and teachers want.

I will ask the cabinet secretary three specific questions. First, why will headteachers not receive full autonomy in spending the pupil equity fund but will instead have to abide by both local government and national Government guidelines on how the money should be spent?

Secondly, given all the evidence that has been submitted to the Education and Skills Committee in recent months, does the cabinet secretary really believe that it is credible to have the inspectorate remain part of Education Scotland when that body is also undertaking the development of curriculum for excellence and when there are many question marks over the delivery of the curriculum in our classrooms?

Thirdly, is the introduction of regional education boards not completely counter to the Scottish Government's stated aim of devolving powers down to local communities?

John Swinney: I welcome Liz Smith's comments about empowering schools and headteachers. I believe that that is the right step to take to ensure that decisions about the education of our young people can be taken by those whom we trust to lead the education process and who have the greatest opportunity to effect the approach.

I will deal with the three specific points that Liz Smith raises in order. First, pupil equity funding has already made a huge impact on Scottish education by giving headteachers the flexibility to address the needs of young people in their care. They will do that along with schools and communities, because headteachers who act wisely will engage them in determining how best to proceed with pupil equity funding.

In the reforms that I am making, I am trying to strike a balance between providing schools with the autonomy to make the decisions that matter to young people and providing the support to enable headteachers to make wise decisions. Any guidelines that are available on PEF must be supportive and advisory; they cannot be the type of restrictive instrument that prevents headteachers from exercising sensible educational judgment about how the money should be distributed. From my conversations with headteachers, I know that they value guidance on how to utilise those resources but value equally having the freedom to spend the resources in a fashion that they can justify educationally.

Secondly, I recognise that the issue relating to Education Scotland has been debated extensively in Parliament. Indeed, I considered the question substantially in the debate that we had on the subject some months ago. If we were to separate the inspection and improvement functions, with leadership of those functions being held separately in our education system, we would be requiring schools to work out whether they should follow the signals of the inspectorate or those of the improvement organisations. Inspection is all about being part of the improvement function in education—that is our vision for inspection, which is a contributory factor in the design of improvement mechanisms in education.

Thirdly, regional collaboratives are what I say they are: mandatory collaborations between local authorities and Education Scotland that will enable us to pool our combined resources in order for them to have more effect in improving education in individual schools. Why is that important? It is important because not all schools can currently rely on a strong, specialist and effective improvement function being available in their part of the country, and that is not good enough. Every school in our country must be able to rely on such a resource. Through joint working between local authorities, Education Scotland and experienced educationalists, we intend to create regional education collaboratives that will fulfil that purpose.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will expect me to begin by welcoming something that he has done, so I am delighted to welcome the fact that he has dropped the idea of centralising school funding in a national funding formula. Well done. I also welcome the end of his flirtation with the idea of opt-out schools.

However, the first of the two funding options on which he is now consulting, which would enshrine a national approach to the devolution of funding, appears to suggest that he still wants to decide individual school budgets nationally. How is that different from a national funding formula?

I have always had an open mind on regional collaboration as long as it is aimed at providing pedagogical and subject-based support in the way that the old advisory services used to, which could really support classroom teachers in their work. Nevertheless, can the cabinet secretary explain how regional improvement collaboratives, centrally appointed regional directors and annual plans are not just another layer of bureaucracy? How will they support the teacher in the classroom?

Consultation responses from teachers, parents, educationalists and councils have all said the same thing: the first reform that we need is more teachers who are properly paid, properly supported and properly resourced. Why has his statement nothing to say about that?

John Swinney: I welcome Iain Gray's two points of welcome. Even he will acknowledge that it is the fundamental duty of a minister to consider propositions that are put to him by members of the public. Considering proposals that have been put to me by organisations around the country is not a "flirtation" with particular concepts but the exercise of a duty that the Parliament would be surprised if I did not exercise.

The first of his three questions was on funding mechanisms. The first option in the consultation document—which, I stress, is an opportunity for members and interested parties to make their contributions to the process—would give more control to individual schools within a framework that was designed from particular components of education expenditure. It would flow through local government into particular schools with conditions attached in the process. It would not be a national approach, because we would not decide all the elements of the process.

In response to Mr Gray's second question, I hope that we can make progress on common ground, because the vision that Mr Gray outlined of a pedagogical and advisory support arrangement to enhance the quality of learning and teaching is exactly what I want to create. I want the arrangement to have the pace and drive to improve education in Scotland. That is why I want the regional directors to be accountable to the chief inspector of education, who will have responsibility to ensure that we constantly pursue improvement in Scottish education. The vision for its purpose that Mr Gray spoke about is exactly what I want to see in place, because we need more specialist expertise to be available to enhance learning and teaching at a local level in individual schools.

Mr Gray's final question was about the teaching profession. The Government has put in place the resources that are now leading to an increased number of teachers in the profession. Through the mechanisms that I have set out here, we are

strengthening the educational development functions of the system to ensure that we enhance learning and teaching. Those are some of the elements that the teaching profession has called for, and I have responded positively to enhance the pedagogical and advisory influence that is available.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are 13 more members who want to ask questions—the clue is in the word “questions”. I call Jenny Gilruth, to be followed by Jeremy Balfour.

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

Is the cabinet secretary aware of the recent report by the National Parent Forum of Scotland? The report suggests that

“Moves to engage parents in their children’s education have been largely successful, but need to go further”?

Will he outline what impact he expects strengthened parent councils to have on our children’s learning?

John Swinney: The National Parent Forum of Scotland undertook a very good and rigorous review of the legislation that is in place and has made a number of recommendations, which the Government will take forward as part of addressing the commitments that we have given in the governance review.

I will make two points in response to Ms Gilruth’s questions. The first is that parent councils are an opportunity for headteachers to engage in creating a real community of interest to advance education. As I indicated in my response to Liz Smith, there is already a lot of very good evidence that parent councils have been heavily involved in the design of pupil equity funding and how it can be used to make the biggest impact on the system.

My second point, which is as important as the first, is about engagement of parents in their children’s learning. Again, active involvement, and steps to ensure that parents are more actively involved in their children’s learning, have been proved by the international studies—which we cite in the consultation document response—to have significantly enhanced young people’s achievement and attainment, and to have contributed to the development of stronger performance within education systems. I would like us to take action in both those respects.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for his statement. I ask him to clarify three points. Will headteachers have the power to employ and sack teachers in their schools, and if not, where will that power lie? How

many regional collaboratives will there be? Will councillors be part of the regional groupings?

John Swinney: Under the charter, headteachers will be responsible for selection of staff in their schools, but they will not be the employers of their staff. Local authorities will continue to be the employers. My judgment is that if 32 human resources systems is too many, I do not want to move to having 2,500. Local authorities will be the employers of teachers and will deal with HR matters, but headteachers will be free to select the teachers who will teach in their schools. Where there are performance issues or other such matters, the local authority will have to be involved, but that will be at the instigation of the headteacher.

Secondly, I am not prescribing how many regional collaboratives there should be, but they will have to involve a number of local authorities. I will consult local government on the matter. I have it in mind that there should probably be six or seven regional collaboratives, but I am not wedded to those numbers.

Thirdly, I do not envisage councillors being on the collaboratives; rather, I envisage the collaboratives being composed of education professionals who will work together to enhance the support that I talked about to Mr Gray, and ensure that pedagogical expertise is available to schools. Again, however, I am prepared to discuss the issues with our local authority partners.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): The Education and Skills Committee recently took from teachers evidence in which workload was a recurring theme. I welcome the reassurance that the cabinet secretary has provided that teachers will continue to be the leaders of learning, but will he expand a wee bit on the support that will be available to teachers and how it will improve their current situation?

John Swinney: First, I say to Mr Dornan that I remain focused on reducing workload because that is a necessary step to free up the space to enable teachers to enhance learning and teaching.

That brings me on to my second point in response to Mr Dornan. The enhancement of learning and teaching is at the heart of the governance review, and that is why we are taking steps to draw together the work of Education Scotland and local authorities in the regional collaboratives to ensure that classroom teachers have available to them a range of expertise and specialism that will enhance the quality of learning and teaching. We believe that that blend will significantly assist teachers in fulfilling their potential.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Regarding the cabinet secretary’s remarks about

alternative routes to teaching, can he say what the minimum amount of time spent in lectures and on supervised placements will be under the plans? How will that compare with the professional graduate diploma in education and other current teaching qualifications? As a procurement-process model will be followed, can he advise us what criteria will be used to assess the bids and make awards? What are the—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, Mr Johnson. One question, not a whole sequence of them.

John Swinney: With no disrespect to Mr Johnson, I say that I suspect that we could have a long parliamentary committee session exploring the detail of those questions. They are all valid points to raise.

Let me say two things. First, some of the questions that Mr Johnson asks are material to the composition of initial teacher education courses. He knows from my appearance at the Education and Skills Committee that I have a question in mind about variability in those components. That is an issue that we need to explore with the colleges of education.

Secondly, whatever steps we take on any of the detailed questions that Mr Johnson raises, we must have assurance on the quality of the propositions. That is why there must be an academic partner and GTCS assessment of the particular routes, so that we can be satisfied that the quality of the route into teaching is of a sufficiently high standard. We need to have confidence that in identifying a new route into teaching, which may be shorter, quality is not compromised in any way.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I will follow up Jenny Gilruth's question. We have areas in Glasgow—particularly poorer areas—in which there are schools that have no parent council because parents have been very reluctant to get involved. Can the cabinet secretary suggest how we can deal with that?

John Swinney: The way to deal with that is to encourage parents to be involved in the school as part of the learning process.

I think it was on Monday that I was in St Thomas' RC primary school in the east end of Glasgow—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, you are speaking away from your microphone. I know that you are doing so out of politeness to a member who is sitting at the back, but no one can hear you.

John Swinney: I apologise because that was disrespectful to you, Presiding Officer.

I was in St Thomas' RC primary school in the east end of Glasgow at Smithycroft, on Monday. I visited a marvellous project in which young people were articulating their understanding and experience of the Holocaust—in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s and in Darfur in recent times. I saw at first hand magnificent learning and expression by the young people, but I also saw significant parental engagement in the project and process. That is one very good way to encourage parents to be involved in the school. It may be that the learning process encourages more parents to become involved in the development of the school: I certainly saw a very good example of that on Monday.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for giving us advance sight of his statement. He began by saying that headteachers do not want to become chief administrators, but then announced new responsibilities in recruitment, management of staff and budgeting, which they will have to take on. Is not that an example of the wider problem, given that the exercise is not one that was asked for and will not resolve the key issue in Scottish education, which is that over the past 10 years we have lost 4,000 teachers, more than a third of school librarians, more than 500 additional support needs teachers and hundreds of support staff?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I hope that you heard my sigh.

Ross Greer: I did, Presiding Officer. That was my question.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes. You have asked your question. Please sit down.

John Swinney: I reiterate to Mr Greer that I have absolutely no intention of turning headteachers into chief administrators of their schools—I want them to be leaders of learning. They want to be leaders of learning—I do not meet headteachers who do not want to be leaders of learning—instead of the chief administrator of their school. Many headteachers say to me that they cannot be leaders of learning because they do not have sufficient control over what they are able to do in the school and in their selection of staff.

In my answer to Mr Balfour I made it clear that I am not going to set up HR systems in individual schools. That is not what is envisaged. Local authorities will continue to provide HR support services to individual schools. However, I want headteachers to have the discretion to choose the staff who will work in their school so that they can design the most effective way to deliver an effective curriculum for the young people in their care. That is the sensible route that will enable headteachers to make a profound impact on the lives of young people.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I agree with the cabinet secretary's direction of travel but not his logic on Education Scotland. Will he confirm that under the proposals, education regions—and, indeed, schools—will have to follow the national improvement plan, that the improvement plan is the education secretary's, and that the chief inspector of education, who is now to be the principal adviser to the education secretary, will be his education policeman? Rather than decisions being taken at the school level—which I entirely agree with—many people see the proposals as a top-down structure, in which Scotland's educational future is determined by ministers here in Edinburgh.

John Swinney: I do not accept that characterisation. I am happy to discuss those questions in some detail, because I do not think that Mr Scott and I are in disagreement in any way. I want schools to be properly empowered to take the decisions that will shape the learning of young people in their care, but I want them to be well supported in undertaking those functions. I am undertaking reforms at national and regional levels to ensure that all of us—whether we are in local government, Education Scotland or the Government—are taking part in that process of support.

One of the interesting things with which we wrestle in education is the level to which issues should be prescribed. I do not want to prescribe issues, because that would be alien to curriculum for excellence. I want schools to be able to take those decisions and to take them well supported by the regional and national infrastructure that is in place.

I have come to my conclusions on Education Scotland and on inspection and improvement activities on the basis of good analysis and sound reason. I am very happy to discuss that at length with Tavish Scott and anyone else who tries to get to a point of agreement, because I want to proceed with these reforms with as much agreement as possible.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that moves by councils such as the Labour-Tory-run North Lanarkshire Council to divert pupil equity funding from its intended purpose into core education funding will do nothing to close the attainment gap or free up teachers' time? Does he share my anger—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, no. You have had your question, Mr MacGregor.

Fulton MacGregor: —at the decision of the administration in North Lanarkshire to cut hundreds of classroom assistants from schools,

removing support from the children and young people who need it most?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have had your question about diverting funds, Mr MacGregor. Please sit down.

John Swinney: Pupil equity funding has been allocated to make what I hope will be a profound impact on the education of young people, and it should be used for that purpose. The Government is in active discussion with all local authorities, many of which have responded to the approach effectively, to make sure that the pupil equity funding is used in the effective way that it should be, to enhance learning and teaching for young people and to close the attainment gap.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Brian Whittle, I say to Fulton MacGregor that when I tell you to stop, you stop. You do not keep speaking. That goes for all members.

I call Brian Whittle.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I note that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is committed to moving forward regional collaboration in co-production with the Scottish Government, building on the collaboration that already occurs between local authorities. With that in mind, I ask the cabinet secretary what relationship new regional collaborations will have with local authorities and what role they will play in deciding school policy.

John Swinney: I welcome COSLA's statements on regional collaborations. There is a very good example in the north of Scotland, with which members will be familiar: the northern alliance, in which seven local authorities have come together in a voluntary collaboration. They are pooling resources to ensure that the seven authorities have access to resources that can enhance the quality of learning and teaching. It is not about deciding policy; it is about how to provide support for individual school development. A key part of the reform agenda that I am putting before Parliament is to create the support that will enhance the quality of learning and teaching in our schools, so that pupils in classrooms can receive enhanced support in the delivery of education. If we can make progress on that swiftly—and there is no reason why we cannot—we will begin to see the fruits of it in Scottish education very quickly.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I welcome what the cabinet secretary has said about children and young people being at the heart of our education system. How has the Scottish Government ensured that their voice has been heard throughout this process and will continue to be heard?

John Swinney: I attended a number of sessions with young people, and I think that Mr McDonald and Ms Somerville attended some as well. They were facilitated by Young Scot and Children in Scotland. The format of those events was conducive to allowing us to understand and appreciate the perspective of young people, which has been reflected in the Government's announcements today.

I intend to continue that type of dialogue. I also gave a commitment to Mr Greer in earlier discussions that we will involve young people in some of our national deliberations on key questions to make sure that the perspective of young people is heard very directly on those points.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I welcome recognition in the cabinet secretary's statement that international evidence shows that involving parents, families and communities fully in schools improves attainment. The announcement that every school will have access to a home-school worker sounds very positive.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not hear a question.

Monica Lennon: It is just coming, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not waiting any longer. Let us have the question.

Monica Lennon: Can the cabinet secretary say how many of those workers we will have and what the cost will be and, while he is in the mood to talk about evidence, will he talk about the proposal for school-based counselling as well?

John Swinney: Those are all questions that I am happy to explore as we move to the detailed implementation, which we will take forward in partnership with our local authority colleagues and other stakeholders.

There is very good evidence on establishing home-to-school link workers, which some schools have already done through the attainment challenge. I saw some very good evidence of how successful it has been on a visit to the Inzievar primary school, which is in my colleague Shirley-Anne Somerville's constituency. It has had very good success there and has enhanced the access to learning for young people.

We will explore those questions in detail with our local authority partners.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary says that he cannot agree to the proposals from St Joseph's in Milngavie and others because it would remove such schools from crucial support structures. Does he not accept that headteachers must have the freedoms that those

proposals call for? Which support structures does he think an autonomous school might lack?

John Swinney: The point that I am making is that I have looked carefully at the demands that have been made and the proposals that have been put forward and, although I understand exactly and do not in any way question the motivation of anyone who has made them, I am providing through this statement a level of flexibility and autonomy in schools that substantively meets the aspirations of the groups to which Mr Greene refers.

What concerns me is that our system operates on the basis of there being an amount of discretion and flexibility in schools, but also on schools being able to rely on quality support to enhance education. We must be able to give a guarantee of effective education to children in all parts of our country.

In that balance, where there are competing points of view, my judgment is that the amount of flexibility and autonomy that is being proposed under these reforms substantively addresses the issues that have been raised by the parents of pupils at St Joseph's primary school. On that basis, I have come to my conclusions on ensuring that the schools in our system are able to rely on quality support from the reforms that I set out today to Parliament.

Richard Lyle: In his speech, the cabinet secretary said:

"At the heart of this will be a statutory headteachers charter."

Can he confirm that a headteachers charter will be developed in partnership with the profession?

John Swinney: It will.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): If there are to be no councillors on the new regional bodies, who will they be accountable to? Will it be to the cabinet secretary?

John Swinney: No. There will be collaborations between local authorities. It is about sharing expertise; it is not about top-down control. The problem that we have today is that in some parts of the country our schools are not able to rely on a sufficiently strong pedagogical and educational support service. I cannot allow that to continue, so I am doing something about it, and this is my solution. This is not about me controlling it but about me making sure that every school in every single part of the country can rely on strong expertise to support the delivery of education. That is the point of the reform.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions to the minister.

Edinburgh Festivals

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-06073, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on recognising and celebrating Edinburgh's international festivals in their 70th anniversary year. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

15:31

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I am delighted to open this debate on recognising and celebrating Edinburgh's international festivals in their 70th year.

In 1947, the conductor Rudolf Bing co-founded the festival with Henry Harvey Wood, head of the British Council, Sidney Newman, professor of music at the University of Edinburgh, and civic leaders, most notably Sir John Falconer, who spoke of his ambition that the festival should

“provide a platform for the flowering of the human spirit”.

In the aftermath of the devastation brought about by world war two, arts and culture were seen as a pivotal means of reimagining a new and better world. Bing's vision was of establishing a festival programme of ambitious and varied character—above all, in a city that would

“embrace the opportunity ... to make the festival a major preoccupation not only in the City Chambers but in the heart and home of”

citizens. How prophetic his words were.

The impact of the first festival resonated across the city and around the world, enabling Edinburgh to become the world's leading festival city and acting as a catalyst for the formation of Edinburgh's family of festivals. Indeed, 1947 was also the founding year of the film and fringe festivals.

Alongside the international festival, a programme of documentaries was presented by the Edinburgh Film Guild. The Edinburgh international film festival is now the world's oldest continually running film festival; it bursts into life next week, exploring identity in the context of our shifting political and cultural changes. It will showcase 151 features from 46 countries and will expand into arts venues around the city.

Back in 1947, eight theatre companies arrived in Edinburgh. When they found themselves unable to participate in the festival, they sought out smaller alternative venues for their productions. Thus the fringe was born. Now the world's largest arts festival, this year it features nearly 3,400 shows in

300 venues, with 62 countries represented. An open-access festival where no one is denied entry, it is the largest platform on earth for artistic freedom.

Ten years ago, Festivals Edinburgh was created as a strategic organisation focusing on overarching areas of mutual interest. Its sole focus is to maintain the festivals' global competitive edge, and I applaud how well that has been done. It supports the festivals from behind the scenes—all the partners, the agents, the artists, the producers and the politicians who descend on the city—and I am particularly impressed by its momentum programme, which brings international delegations to view work, share knowledge and deepen relationships.

In 2007, former MSP Kenny MacAskill and I, as Lothian MSPs, recognised the need to provide more support to and opportunity for Scotland's artists at the Edinburgh festivals. As a result of a 2007 manifesto commitment, the festivals expo fund was born, promoting the creation of new work in Scotland and international appreciation of work from Scotland.

Since 2008, the Scottish Government's expo fund has provided £19 million to members of Festivals Edinburgh. It is pivotal in supporting the best of our cultural heritage, showcasing contemporary innovation and generating ambitious collaborations. It has enabled the creation of a legacy of important new work that promotes and maximises opportunities for the best of Scotland's artists on an international platform. It has built innovation across the festivals, raises their international profile and exposes our creativity.

The made in Scotland programme, funded by the expo fund, has enabled 159 companies, ensembles and artists to showcase their work, with a further 57 productions touring across five continents, visiting more than 20 countries. “The James Plays”, which many members might have seen, was presented at the international festival in 2015. It has toured to Adelaide and Auckland, in Canada and across the United Kingdom, receiving critical acclaim and winning an *Evening Standard* award in 2016. The fund has also enabled the film festival to nurture new talent in the sector through the talent lab. Every one of our international festivals has received funding to develop and enhance their unique programmes and support artists working in Scotland.

This year, the Scottish Government provided an additional £300,000 of extra funding to celebrate the 70th anniversary year through three remarkable and unique pieces of work. The 70th anniversary year was launched with a spectacular midnight moment as part of Edinburgh's hogmanay, supported by £90,000 from the expo

fund. It drew the eyes of the world to this momentous occasion.

The Scottish Government supports world fringe day, which recognises the importance of all the fringes across the world, on 11 July. The year 2017 is the 70th anniversary not just of the Edinburgh festival fringe, but of the whole fringe concept: 1947 was the catalyst that ignited a global network of fringes, with more than 200 across the world today. Fringe festivals transcend national boundaries and create great networks, collaborations, friendships, debates and discussions.

The second international festival celebration event that the Scottish Government supports illustrates the concept of the flourishing of the human spirit that I referred to, through bloom, a complex and strikingly beautiful night garden brought to life through illuminations and 3-D mapping.

The third project, which will be announced at a later date, is being developed by the Edinburgh's film, science and children's festivals.

With reference to the Conservative amendment, the Scottish Government has been a strong supporter of and fully engaged in the development of the proposed IMPACT performance venue since my initial conversations back in 2013, when I met the Royal Bank of Scotland and the donors, who saw great value in the proposal. I took the subsequent decision to fund the initial feasibility study, which was conducted by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Since that time, we have been in discussion with partners involved in the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal to secure their support for the venue. I am pleased that the negotiations have progressed to this stage and that the United Kingdom Government has confirmed its support.

The project will secure a critical new performance venue in the centre of Edinburgh, provide a home for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and be used exclusively for festival performances in August. The economic and cultural inclusion benefits of such a venue will be felt widely across Edinburgh and the surrounding regions and will reach out across Scotland, to build new audiences and embrace a variety of musical genres. In the face of increasing national and international competition, the venue will optimise Edinburgh's position as an international festival city and Scotland's reputation as a leading centre for music and the performing arts. The project will be truly transformational for a wide range of communities through its reach, innovation, quality and impact.

I welcome the spirit of the Conservative amendment, and I look forward to concluding the

city deal details with the UK Government when it is ready to restart discussions.

Of course, the festivals have many funders and partners. They include Creative Scotland, Event Scotland, VisitScotland, the City of Edinburgh Council, the British Council, trusts, foundations, public and private philanthropists and audiences from Edinburgh and beyond. Collectively, they enable our festivals to be the best in the world.

The festivals' economic contribution was underlined in the 2015 Edinburgh festivals impact study. The festivals are recognised as a world-leading brand, with audiences of a staggering 4.5 million, which is on a par with the FIFA world cup and second only to the Olympics. The festivals act as an economic powerhouse, generating an economic impact of £280 million in Edinburgh and £313 million in Scotland in total.

Yesterday saw the launch of the spirit of '47 strand of the international festival, which is curated with the British Council. It presents—perhaps Lewis Macdonald will reflect on this when he comes to move his amendment—a rich global programme that will examine how culture connects us across borders and divisions. The new European songbook project brings together respected European musicians and non-European Union artists who have made their home in Europe during the recent wave of migration.

The festivals support the seamless flow of artists from Europe and nations elsewhere to ensure that Edinburgh maintains its international position. We will have to work hard to ensure that the festivals are not debilitated or disadvantaged by Brexit. The festivals support our thriving and fast-growing cultural sector, which relies on creative people building skills, expertise and knowledge through exchange and dialogue with others. Access to the ideas, talent, experience and creative exchanges that freedom of movement provides is essential to enable all our industries to flourish and thrive—including, importantly, our festivals. That must be part of the UK Government's reconsidered Brexit.

The festivals are distinctly Scottish yet profoundly international, drawing artists, audiences and media from every continent, with people from more than 70 countries attending each year. Edinburgh's festivals define and promote Scotland's identity as a confident, creative and welcoming nation. They support our international outlook by providing cultural platforms and forums for national and international debate.

Last year, the Scottish Government engaged with representatives of 27 nations during August. Individual countries choose Edinburgh to host their own showcases, and this year we will welcome

Canada, Ireland and India. We will also welcome South Australia and many others.

The festivals challenge us and enable us all to step out of our own lives to experience something new and unique. They bring people together to germinate new ideas. They help us to understand other cultures and experiences. They celebrate human expression in all its guises of sorrow, laughter, joy and beauty.

I urge the Parliament to come together to recognise the outstanding contribution of the Edinburgh international festivals to Scotland and the world, and I pay tribute to the passion, commitment and talent of all the artists and audiences who have contributed to a remarkable 70 years.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the success and impact of Edinburgh's world-leading international festivals, which are in their 70th year; notes that the festivals, their partners, supporters, funders, artists and audiences make an invaluable contribution to Edinburgh and Scotland's communities and wider society, economy and culture, and acknowledges and celebrates the impact that the festivals have made establishing Scotland's place internationally as innovators, thinkers and cultural leaders, and for providing a welcome to the world, while maintaining and growing their world-leading status.

15:42

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): As an MSP who represents the Lothian region, it gives me great pleasure to open the debate for the Scottish Conservatives.

Today we recognise the extraordinary success of Edinburgh's international festivals in their 70th year. The festivals have gone from strength to strength, with growing numbers of visitors attracted to Edinburgh each summer and with an ever-increasing number of festivals.

The city of Edinburgh and, indeed, Scotland have shown that Rudolf Bing, the man credited with bringing the festival to the city in 1947, knew what he was doing. However, even he might have been surprised to see how many events now take place every year. In just a few weeks, Edinburgh will take the lead in celebrating the international success of the festivals with world fringe day on 11 July. More than 200 open access events will take place—in Edinburgh and as far afield as Australia—reflecting not only how successful Edinburgh has been as international festival leader but how popular the appeal of the fringe model now is across the globe.

Another year of events will then begin, with the international festival itself, the fringe festival, the film festival and the jazz and book festivals, to name but a few. We should not forget what is

often seen as the real jewel in the crown at Edinburgh castle: the Edinburgh military tattoo. It is an extremely popular event that many of the people of Edinburgh have attended and which I myself have attended on occasion. As I and others are aware, obtaining tickets can be quite an art in itself—and that for an event that has been running since 1950. Any member who has yet to experience the thrill of the tattoo is well advised to attend, but they should buy their tickets early.

As a resident of Edinburgh who works, as we all do, at the foot of Scotland's Royal Mile, I will not be the only one struggling to walk to the top of the High Street during July and August. However, as an advocate who worked in the courts behind St Giles cathedral, I had many years of even more direct experience of that struggle.

I well remember a colleague of mine, who shall remain nameless, being pursued down the High Street by a street artist waving a pair of underpants, shouting after him, "Sir, you've forgotten your briefs." As members know, "briefs" is the name for counsels' instructions from solicitors—we were all highly amused by that.

That incident was perhaps bettered only by hordes of teenage girls pursuing a number of junior advocates, dressed in morning dress, in various directions from the corner of St Giles cathedral. We found out that the occasion was a rumour that Robbie Williams had purchased a flat in the newly refurbished former corner court building behind the cathedral. The girls mistook various advocates for Robbie Williams's butler, pursuing us in the hope of meeting Robbie himself, until they realised, in utter disappointment, that there were too many of us for that to be true. That was indeed comedy, provided in real time.

The people of Edinburgh take great pride in welcoming all who come to experience our comedy—real life or otherwise. Whatever the apparent inconveniences, 89 per cent of local people who attend the festivals acknowledge that the yearly event increases people's pride in their city.

It is quite staggering that, in 2015, there were more than 4.5 million attendees, bringing £280 million to our economy in Edinburgh and £313 million to Scotland as a whole. Those figures are both substantial increases on the figures that were recorded five years earlier in 2010.

I acknowledge the role that is played by the 25,000 or so performers and entertainers in making the Edinburgh international festivals what they are. Although we very often think of the household names that grace the stage of the Edinburgh International Conference Centre with sold-out gigs evening after evening, we should congratulate others who might not benefit

financially in the same way from the festivals, but who nevertheless come to Edinburgh to do what they do best. They perform in the melting pot of the good, the bad and—we must admit it—the sometimes ugly shows in the festival. Some spend literally thousands of pounds of their own money, much of which might never be recouped, on travelling to Edinburgh, hiring out venues and putting on their show. Without them, we would not be here today speaking about the success of the Edinburgh international festivals.

Edinburgh is an important gateway to our country and the Edinburgh festivals 2015 impact study, which was published last year, showed us that visitors to the festivals now spend more nights elsewhere in Scotland—outwith Edinburgh—than they did five years ago.

Despite the political and economic challenges that our country faces, figures for festival attendances remain buoyant, with fringe ticket sales up by more than 7 per cent in 2016. Meanwhile, the number of overseas tourists to Scotland continues to rise at ever-increasing rates. In 2016, there was a 6 per cent increase in overseas tourist numbers, which was accompanied by a 9 per cent increase in tourist spending. Much of that increase was down to North American tourists, showing that destinations—and Edinburgh and Scotland more widely—matter more than distance or other factors in a tourist's decision on where to travel.

It is to be welcomed that the Scottish and UK Governments continue to support Edinburgh and its festivals. As we celebrate the 70th anniversary, I am pleased that the Scottish Government has provided additional funds.

I hope that support for the development of the new Edinburgh concert hall through the proposed Edinburgh city deal—which the cabinet secretary referred to—along with UK Government support, will reinforce Edinburgh's role as a world-leading festival city, and that the concert hall will be a leading centre for music and the performing arts.

Throughout the year, the proposed hall will continue to draw eminent musicians, actors and other performers from around the globe into the city, ensuring that Edinburgh, a city with a great artistic tradition and heritage, maintains its continuous exchange of creative talent, not just in August, but throughout all 12 months of the year. I am pleased that the Scottish Conservatives will support the Labour amendment in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which echoes those sentiments, as well as the Scottish Government's motion, and I look forward to today's debate.

I move amendment S5M-06073.1, to insert at end:

“, and welcomes UK Government proposals to support the development of the new Edinburgh Concert Hall under Edinburgh's City Deal.”

15:49

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland)

(Lab): Seventy years on, there is, indeed, much to celebrate. The Edinburgh festivals have achieved truly global status. Hundreds of venues provide a stage for thousands of artists, who perform to a combined audience of hundreds of thousands and generate millions of pounds in benefits to the Scottish economy. Great numbers of visitors from around the United Kingdom, Europe and around the world all contribute to Edinburgh as a world city and put Scotland firmly on the map for the whole range of performing arts—and also film, as the cabinet secretary mentioned.

Any anniversary celebration should, of course, start with where things stood when it all began. The Edinburgh festivals were created as an act of policy following one of the most traumatic episodes in human history. Like the first world war, the second world war was hugely destructive of people and places. There was also an all-out assault on the shared values of human civilisation and systematic genocide and vast impoverishment. It was a time of darkness, austerity and division.

The post-war Labour Government recognised the need to light beacons of hope in such a time. The creation of Edinburgh as an international festival city was one of the fruits of that policy, which was shared by all in public life in Scotland at the time. The truth that the festivals symbolised then is that the best answer to barbarism is to strengthen and celebrate civilisation, to meet destruction with creativity, and to promote hope, compassion and unity against those who would spread hatred, division and fear. That is what makes the festivals truly world events. It is not just about where people come from; it is about what the festivals represent.

We know only too well that hatred, division and fear stalk the world again. The same terrorists who sponsored murder in London and Manchester have committed outrages around the world, not least in destroying the physical evidence of human civilisations in the middle east. Just as the Edinburgh festivals lit a beacon of hope after the second world war, the great get together this weekend will be a direct answer to the forces of hatred that killed Jo Cox a year ago. It will mark the anniversary of her death and make it an occasion to celebrate our shared civilisation and values.

The spirit of '47 is as important now as it was 70 years ago. I look forward to the 10-day festival within a festival under that title later this year,

which the cabinet secretary mentioned. It will feature music, theatre, dance and debate on that internationalist and multicultural theme. Joining all those art forms with debate and discussion goes to the heart of what Edinburgh's festivals are about. I am certain that the experience will be entertaining, inspiring and enlightening.

The festivals have, of course, gone from success to success and they have perhaps exceeded even their founders' wildest dreams. The number of festivals has multiplied, the size of the audiences has grown, and the impact has extended well beyond the city to benefit every area in Scotland. As the cabinet secretary said, the scale of the festivals each and every year puts them in the same league as the Olympic games and the FIFA world cup.

Success always brings its own challenges, of course. In this case, success means that the festivals now matter for more than simply their cultural excellence; they are also vital to the tourism sector and the Scottish economy as a whole. That is why public funding is not just right in principle; it is in the public interest in a material sense, too. I welcome the Scottish Government's expo fund and the initiatives that it supports, and I look forward to hearing more about the pop-up family festival, for example. I know that it will visit parts of Scotland later this year.

It is important to acknowledge that continuing public funding remains part of the recipe for the success of the Edinburgh international festivals and that it must never be taken for granted. This week, I looked again at "Edinburgh Festivals: Thundering Hooves 2.0. A Ten Year Strategy to Sustain the Success of Edinburgh's Festivals", which was published in May 2015. That strategy was supported by all the main local and national stakeholders in the festivals, including the Scottish Government, and its main findings still hold good today. It highlighted the risk to the festivals of cuts in local authority funding in particular and concluded that

"Large scale, radical solutions are now needed to replace eroding public funding and these must include potential alternative funding models, even if they present their own constraints."

The festivals do not seek in any way to live off public subsidies. The international festival, for example, grew its earned income from fundraising and ticket sales by 46 per cent between 2009 and 2016, at the same time as grant income went down by 4 per cent.

The festivals are more than ready to help themselves. However, public funding enables the festivals to plan ahead and to invest for future productions with a degree of certainty and without depending entirely on current cash flows for investment to grow their future audiences. I know

that the cabinet secretary understands that point and I hope that she will continue to engage with all the festivals and the City of Edinburgh Council to explore potential funding solutions for the future. If that is done creatively and constructively, the next 70 years can be as productive and as exciting as the last.

I move amendment S5M-06073.2, to insert at end:

"; believes that the ideals behind the origin of the festivals in the wake of the Second World War, namely that culture can break down borders and bring people from all nationalities together, are still pertinent today, and recognises the need to find solutions to the future funding challenge that the festivals face."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to the open debate. I have quite a bit of time in hand so if members wish to wax lyrical, I will be quite relaxed about that. I can also give extra time for interventions and to allow a bit of discussion, if members feel that that would be useful.

15:55

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): The 2015 Edinburgh festivals impact study points out that the festivals' combined audience of 4.5 million puts them on a par with the FIFA world cup. In the interests of context, I thought of a comparison that is a little closer to home. The 2014 Commonwealth games in Glasgow, which were widely acknowledged to be a resounding success, were attended by 1.3 million people. Therefore, the Edinburgh festivals are the equivalent of having the Commonwealth games in Scotland three times a year every year.

Although we are right to emphasise the economic benefits that the festivals bring—they are worth £313 million to the Scottish economy as a whole—we should remember that, as members have pointed out, they were born out of idealism and not a desire for pecuniary gain. As others have said, the founder of the international festival, Sir Rudolf Bing, wanted to use it to build bridges across a world that had been torn apart by war. He was an Austrian-born opera impresario who, being Jewish, had to flee his home in Germany to seek refuge in Britain. We should bear that in mind, given some of the divisive language that is used today about refugees. If Rudolf Bing had not found safety here, we might not have been having this debate and our country would be so much poorer, culturally and financially.

The first Edinburgh international festival featured Glyndebourne opera, the Hallé orchestra and Sadler's Wells ballet, which reflected Bing's interests. However, even in that first year, there was more than that. As the cabinet secretary said, the Edinburgh Film Guild decided to run a week-long film festival, which developed into the

international film festival. The Royal Scottish Academy extended its summer exhibition that year, so visual art had a place at the festivals right from the start and, of course, that has expanded in the years since then. That very year, someone had the idea of getting some pipe bands to play on the castle esplanade, and that event developed into the magnificent tattoo, which officially began in 1950, as Gordon Lindhurst told us.

Most important, however, we should remind ourselves that the festival fringe began in exactly the same year as the international festival, and it very much had its roots at home in the then vibrant Scottish amateur theatrical movement. In effect, the theatre companies gatecrashed the party that year. They included the left of centre Glasgow Unity Theatre, which viewed the official festival as bourgeois. It wanted to connect the festival to the wider public, and its two shows that year were Gorky's "The Lower Depths" and Robert McClellan's "The Laird o' Torwatletie". Other contributors to what was then called the adjunct to the festival were the Edinburgh district community drama association, which staged "The Anatomist" by James Bridie at the Pleasance, and the Edinburgh People's Theatre, which put on "Thunder Rock" also at the Pleasance.

So it was a people's festival right from the beginning. The term "fringe" appeared the following year, in 1948. It was first used by Robert Kemp, a journalist and playwright who was the father of the late Arnold Kemp, who went on to edit the *Glasgow Herald*. The tensions between the fringe and the official festival are far less apparent these days, now that we have the very successful umbrella organisation Festivals Edinburgh.

However, it is fair to say that there was a long-running debate over many decades about accessibility versus excellence and indigenous work versus international work. There was an energy around the debate that benefited both sides, and the success of the expo programme, which the cabinet secretary mentioned, is a good example of how such creative tension can give birth to something really good that is welcomed by all.

Dr Angela Bartie, of the University of Edinburgh, explores that dynamic in her 2013 book, "The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-War Britain". She notes that the numerous cultural wars around Edinburgh's festivals, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, reflected key debates about the place of arts in society during that period, including debates about censorship, the role of culture as a means of enlightenment, its use for political purposes and the conflicts between small-c conservative and liberal values, elitism and diversity and the traditional and the avant-garde—all of which clashed in Edinburgh every August.

That meant that Scotland was at the cutting edge of the big, global, intellectual arguments of the age.

Today, as we celebrate the 70th birthday of Edinburgh's festivals, it is as well to note that they are still at the centre of international debate on the key challenges that face us. One of the most thought-provoking submissions to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee's inquiry on Brexit came from Festivals Edinburgh. As well as pointing out the obvious financial implications, not least for programmes such as creative Europe, the organisation commented on the message that Brexit is sending out and said:

"It is vital that the countries of the EU and beyond continue to see Scotland as an open and outward looking nation."

In that context, I was particularly pleased to see that this year's 70th anniversary programme includes spirit of '47, a co-curated programme that marks the founding partnership, which features artists from Scotland, England, the United States, Ukraine, Lebanon, Cuba and other countries from all over the world. It is a timely celebration of the depth and quality of international cultural collaboration. That was the spirit of 1947 that Rudolph Bing sought to nurture. It should also be the spirit of 2017 and beyond.

16:02

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): It is a great pleasure to take part in the debate not only as a member of the Scottish Parliament for the Lothian region but as someone—probably the first member to speak in the debate—who grew up in Edinburgh and went to the fringe and the festival as a child. With your forbearance, Presiding Officer, I will go down memory lane and share a few highlights.

I was brought up in a family who did not find culture very accessible, and my father used to close his office for two weeks in August so that he could get away from all the people in Edinburgh. However, we managed to move beyond that slightly.

One of the great strengths of the festivals in Edinburgh in August is their diversity. My colleague Gordon Lindhurst mentioned the tattoo. I remember going to the tattoo as a young boy—just a few years ago—and the excitement of seeing the different people who were taking part. Perhaps the greatest excitement came right at the start of the tattoo, when the person who was introducing it would say where people were from and we would go round the world hearing about countries not just in the Commonwealth but in

North America, Asia, Europe and the rest of the globe. That was always remarkable.

One of the strengths of the international festival is that it brings together people from different cultures and backgrounds, and together we celebrate what is going on in the city. If we ever lose that international feel, the festival will be the lesser for it.

We can go from the grand tattoo, with bands and shows from around the world, to performances in church halls and small community centres. My researcher informed me that, last year, she spent two hours at a show that she described as “brilliant” and “life affirming”. It was medieval Latin chanting. The diversity is immense—the audience can go from medieval chants to Gilbert and Sullivan in one day.

Something that we have slightly lost sight of and might need to look at again is how we take all that out to communities across Edinburgh and the Lothians. When Councillor Eric Milligan was the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, he deliberately took some of the best-known acts into some of the most deprived areas of the Lothians.

Fiona Hyslop: The member might be interested to know that I wrote to thank Eric Milligan for his role with the festivals. He has just stood down from the board of the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival, for which he was a great advocate.

On the issue of taking the festivals out into the community, is the member familiar with the work that the Edinburgh International Festival is doing, particularly with Castlebrae community high school? That is not just a one-off; it is a sustained relationship. The festivals also engage with all 32 local authorities throughout the year, but perhaps not everybody knows about that outreach work.

Jeremy Balfour: I was going to talk about that, which is the one example that we have. Such work needs to be done a bit more. Schools in Edinburgh are often back by the final two weeks of the festival, which means that there would be opportunities, and it would be good for primary and secondary schools to deliberately make time for children to see events. We need to look at how we can do that.

One of the great developments of the past few years has been the book festival in Charlotte Square. It is an opportunity to bring together people from different political, historical and cultural backgrounds to meet and talk. As someone who grew up in the city, I got inspiration from being able to hear people from different backgrounds talk about what they had done in their lives and how they had impacted their societies.

We must look towards what will happen in the next few years. I was elected a councillor in Edinburgh just when the report “Thundering Hooves: Maintaining the Global Competitive Edge of Edinburgh’s Festivals” was published and sent to City of Edinburgh Council and other bodies. We have something unique here, but people in other parts of the United Kingdom, Europe and the rest of the world want to steal it. We cannot be complacent and think that, because it has been here for all these years, it will continue. I hope that national Government, the city council and others will continue to fund what is going on. Lewis Macdonald was absolutely right to say that others play their part and that people pay to come and spend their money here, but we need to make sure that the festivals have the appropriate support.

We, in Edinburgh and the nation, can be proud of what happens here in August. Nevertheless, I confess that I still look forward to the first week in September and a bit of peace and quiet on the Royal Mile.

16:08

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): As the cabinet secretary said, the Edinburgh festivals are the economic powerhouse of the tourism industry in Scotland. They start with the Edinburgh international science festival in March and go on through to Edinburgh’s hogmanay, and their economic impact is measured at £280 million in Edinburgh and £313 million across Scotland. The “Edinburgh Festivals 2015 Impact Study” also found that 5,500 jobs in Edinburgh and 6,000 jobs across Scotland are supported by the 12 festivals that take place each year in the city. However, it is not just that those jobs bring economic benefit to the city. Locals who took part in the survey agreed that the various festivals bring the community together and increase people’s pride in the city.

My constituency of Edinburgh Pentlands is closely associated with the military, as three army barracks are located in the area, so I will focus on the contribution of the Edinburgh military tattoo to the economy of the city. The first tattoo took place in 1950, and the first overseas regimental band to participate was the band of the Royal Netherlands Grenadiers in 1952. They were joined by performers from Canada and France. Since then, 48 countries from across six continents have performed at the Edinburgh military tattoo.

More than 14 million people have attended the tattoo since it started, and the audience figure currently stands at around 220,000 people every August. The event is so popular that it has sold out for the past 18 consecutive years. Many people get their first taste of the tattoo while watching

television, which has resulted in a worldwide audience of 100 million people every year.

My constituency has another direct connection with the tattoo in that the rehearsals for the event are held every year on the parade ground of Redford barracks, where close to 1,200 performers and 250 pipers along with the military bands come together for the first time to practise and showcase their talents. The cavalry barracks also act as home to a large proportion of the military personnel who take part in the tattoo for the duration of its August run.

An assessment of the economic impact of the tattoo alone put its value to the Scottish economy at £77 million, and, because it was set up and is run for charitable purposes, it gifts about £8 million to service and civilian organisations.

However, an issue that could impact on future tattoos in Edinburgh is the Ministry of Defence's proposal to sell off the Redford infantry and cavalry barracks by 2022. If the proposal goes ahead, where will performers be accommodated? Where is there a large enough secure area for them to carry out rehearsals? With five other military sites also due to close, including Craigiehall and Glencorse, which will make a number of army units homeless, finding a base for the tattoo could prove difficult.

The 12 festivals that take place in the city each year are well established, but it is as a whole that they are viewed when people refer to Edinburgh as the world's leading festival city. By undermining the tattoo, the MOD could have an impact on the city's hard-won reputation and on the 4.5 million visitors who attend each year, especially as many visitors state that the festivals are their sole or most important reason for visiting Scotland.

The "Edinburgh Festivals 2015 Impact Study" found that 94 per cent of respondents were of the view that it is the festivals that make the city special, so we need to protect what makes Edinburgh a leading international destination. The MOD should think again about the future of Redford barracks.

16:12

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I am grateful for the chance to speak in this important debate, which recognises the remarkable value and worldwide significance of Edinburgh's international festivals. I am incredibly proud to have grown up in Edinburgh and to live in this city now—like others—and to represent the vibrant and brilliant constituency of Edinburgh Northern and Leith in the Scottish Parliament.

Edinburgh is a truly outstanding city all year round. In a recent Deutsche Bank survey, it came out as the second-best city in the world for quality of life. However, during August—when the Edinburgh art festival, the royal military tattoo, the Edinburgh international festival, the Edinburgh festival fringe, the Edinburgh international book festival and so much more are alive—this place is particularly incredible. The population of the city almost doubles in size, the streets are filled with talent from around the globe, and fun, curiosity, generosity of spirit and internationalism are all around.

Last year, people could not have been in this great city without seeing the Edinburgh international festival's inspiring "Welcome world" campaign. Signs that proclaimed the two words "Welcome world" in large, bold, purposeful letters were attached to buildings, lamp posts and bus shelters; those words were on programmes, leaflets and T-shirts. That campaign was in place before the result of the European Union referendum was known, but it felt particularly poignant and on the mark in Scotland's capital city last year. It made a powerful statement that could not be ignored.

Running throughout August last year, the international festival alone welcomed 2,442 artists from 36 nations to Scotland's capital city. Despite the good feeling, there were worrying conversations in venues, bars, restaurants and business meetings between artists from Scotland, the wider UK and beyond about how to keep the strength and diversity of the festival alive in the face of the Brexit challenge and its implications. Influential voices have raised concerns about possible barriers for audiences and performers who come to Edinburgh for our festivals, and it remains unclear what travel arrangements the UK Government will pursue post-Brexit. The UK Government can allay those fears, and I genuinely hope in good faith that it will do so sooner rather than later, because we are now one year on from the EU referendum.

As I said, the international festival's Scotland welcomes the world campaign last year was created not as a result of the EU referendum but to bring the festival's founding principles to the forefront and to emphasise and celebrate the spirit of the festivals. In 1947, the founders believed that the festival could reinvigorate and enrich the cultural life of Europe and Scotland and

"provide a platform for a flowering of the human spirit"

by bringing together people and artists from around the world. The vision was that it would generate significant cultural, social and economic benefits for Edinburgh and for the whole of Scotland. How visionary that ambition was, and

how much Edinburgh, the whole of Scotland and beyond have been enriched as a result.

As other members have said, in addition to the cultural benefits of participating in and attending events in fields such as the arts, comedy, literature, film, music and science, there are immense economic benefits. From filling beds in our hotel rooms to boosting our bars and restaurants and providing a vital source of income for wonderful venues across Edinburgh, the benefit that we gain from our festivals is huge. In 2015, the economic impact for Edinburgh was estimated at £280 million, and £313 million was generated for Scotland as a whole. That boosted support for jobs and businesses across a variety of sectors in our economy, from tourism to hospitality and more. We must all seek to protect and grow our festivals.

We must not forget that it is people who make the festivals possible—not just the artists on stage, the curators and executives who work hard to produce their work, the fantastic venues, the shows that we all see and the interesting talks that we enjoy, but those on the ground who support the day-to-day running of the festivals: the bartenders, cleaners, taxi drivers, hotel staff, police officers and others. We must also remember that a great number of the individuals who are showcasing their work are, more often than not, Scotland's emerging artists, performers, producers, directors and playwrights. Our festivals can be their gateway to the world and the launch pad for their talents and careers.

I thank and congratulate everyone, from the artists to the hospitality staff, who has been involved in Edinburgh's festivals over the past 70 years. Over those years, the festivals have done what they were intended to do and more. They have brought together an incredibly diverse range of people and cultures and enriched Scotland in many ways. They have indeed brought about a "flowering of the human spirit".

Let us work together to make sure that we enjoy another 70 years of festivals in this great city and that we do not take them for granted. Let us expand the reach of the festivals—for example, further into Leith. I hope that one day Leith theatre will again host events for the festivals, as it recently hosted the hidden door festival so brilliantly. Let us also expand the economic benefits by, for example, working together to share more of the wealth and the cultural enrichment throughout our city. Let us do that with openness and internationalism. Let us keep our international festivals international in the face of all the challenges ahead, and let us continue to welcome the world to this great city.

16:19

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): I am delighted to speak in the debate. Before entering this place, I spent many years supporting, performing in and co-ordinating theatrical, musical, dance and operatic events, so I know only too well about the time, talent and commitment that are required to stage an event or festival, and I pay tribute to anyone who has embarked on that endeavour. The opportunity to perform, inspire an audience and unlock the potential of an artist is remarkable and encouraging to see.

Every August in Edinburgh, the international festival possesses the capacity to transform one of the world's most beautiful cities into a combined stage and platform for some of the best emerging and established acts from around the globe. It is an opportunity to showcase their talent in the exquisite, unique and historic surroundings of the capital of Scotland; we are the envy of the world for our location.

The international festival's success is built on an uncompromising commitment to originality. The festival invites creators and performers to showcase their talent in music, theatre, film, dance and opera, which offers a unique experience for audiences to feel enthusiastic about when watching the performers and participating in many of the events that take place. This year is special, as 2017 marks the international festival's 70th anniversary, which we should celebrate and shout about from the rafters.

What we have all come to expect and recognise as the Edinburgh festival encompasses a host of festivals, such as the international fringe and the film festival. The international festival was founded in 1947 by Rudolf Bing and, as we have heard, the opportunity to bring together different festivals has developed over the years, including the royal Edinburgh military tattoo, the jazz and blues festival, the international book festival and the international science festival.

This year, we celebrate all those fantastic events, as the Edinburgh festivals will be the largest cultural opportunity that we have had and will host more than 25,000 performers. That will contribute hundreds of millions of pounds and thousands of jobs to our economy, which we all welcome. The economic impact has been measured at £280 million in Edinburgh and £313 million across Scotland. The festivals provide a fantastic opportunity to develop; individuals come here to express themselves and everybody gains understanding and gets something from that.

The Scottish Conservatives have recognised that festivals are important; our manifesto even said that we support the Edinburgh festival in its

70th anniversary year and that we want to develop the new Edinburgh concert hall,

“reaffirming Edinburgh as the UK’s leading festival city and a cultural beacon around the globe.”

There have been many studies and reports on the festival; 92 per cent of respondents to one study said that the festival had given them the chance to see something that they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to support and that they thought that the festival was a must-see event, because it brings together in collaboration individuals and organisations that want to inform and get their message over in many ways. It is a fantastic opportunity to see collaboration of young and old and all the different elements.

In 2016, 3,269 shows took place in 294 venues across Edinburgh. That is an immense organisational structure to put together.

The fringe model has been emulated in places from Australia to France, Canada to Prague, South Africa to Brighton, China to Brazil and everywhere in-between. The fringe movement has grown from strength to strength, which has enabled people all over the world to make cultural connections and to transcend national boundaries.

It is only right and proper that a global celebration of the festival fringe is to be staged for 24 hours on 11 July to bring together the opportunities of a worldwide euphoria like that which is generated by such events as St Patrick’s day and Burns night. We want to ensure that those people—and we—have the opportunity to be on that stage, with more than 200 open-access events in places as far afield as Canada, South Africa and Australia expected to unite to mark and make much of their Scottish roots. If that celebration is successful, it could realistically become an annual event, which would rightly cement Edinburgh as the birthplace of the festival fringe.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to participate in the debate. I will not sing or perform to members on this occasion, but we might get time for that in the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: If your colleagues had not used up the extra time, I might have been asking you to do that, Mr Stewart.

16:25

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): As an Edinburgh MSP, I am very happy to be taking part in this debate.

Seven decades ago, Europe was reeling. Lives were lost, cities were destroyed and the very meaning of humanity was almost forgotten. In the process, the art and culture that many European nations had pioneered and were known for around

the world were put on hold. Melodies were silenced as concert and opera halls were bombed; prose was usurped by propaganda; and theatres went dark for years—that is, until war receded, and in its aftermath Europe looked to Edinburgh.

In selecting a city for the international festival, one of the founders, Henry Harvey Wood, said:

“Above all it should be a city likely to embrace the opportunity and willing to make the festival a major preoccupation, not only in the City Chambers, but in the heart and home of every citizen, however modest.”

Seventy years on, and with the festival including more than 2,000 artists from 40 nations, I think that Edinburgh has fulfilled Henry Harvey Wood’s ambition and vision. Each year in August, Scotland’s capital city is filled with opera, music, theatre, dance and literature, and while the hundreds of thousands who flock here get to experience Scotland in the process, so too does Scotland get to experience the world.

Edinburgh’s rich culture was a draw for the festival’s founders, but I would like to think that they also appreciated the friendly and welcoming nature of Scots in general. That, I believe, is what is so beneficial about the international festival and its mission of the

“flowering of the human spirit”.

People from all over come together in Edinburgh and are united through art and culture.

In its 70 years, the international festival has brought people together not only through the main events in August but by inspiring even more festivals. With the fringe, the international film festival, the science festival and Edinburgh’s hogmanay, to name just a few, Edinburgh is now host to 12 major annual festivals throughout the year, which are experienced by more than 4.5 million people a year, earning Edinburgh the title of the world’s festival city. We celebrate them all in the motion for this debate, and I welcome the fact that the Government has provided £19 million in funding to the festivals since 2008, with an extra £300,000 having been pledged for the 70th anniversary year.

Such achievement in the provision of world-class events would never have been possible without the leading work of the international festival, and we owe it, its founders, its current and previous staff and volunteers, its funders and its audiences a debt of gratitude. After all, the events contribute in so many ways to Edinburgh and to Scotland, including economically, with £280 million in economic activity for Edinburgh alone.

As we have heard, the festivals bring many visitors to Scotland. According to the 2015 festival impact study, 71 per cent of visitors said that the

festivals were their sole or most important reason for visiting Scotland.

I have been attending festival events since I was a child. The first one that I can remember was when my parents took me to watch the fireworks that mark the end of the festival. I have to confess that I still love watching the fireworks, and I went along last year. I have also had the opportunity to start taking my children to events at the festival. I or we have attended a range of things from opera and concerts to experimental comedy and even just the inventive street shows. My friends from down south love to come up in August so that they can combine visiting me with attending some of the festival. I recommend the festivals very highly. There is something for everyone and anyone who has not been along to the festival should consider attending something.

In the aftermath of war, organisations such as the Edinburgh International Festival were born, in part for the world to heal, but more significantly, they were born and still exist today so that, even in the most challenging of circumstances, we—humanity—will never turn our backs on one another.

Festival director Fergus Linehan probably said it best when reflecting on the festival's 70th anniversary:

"It feels more important than ever, perhaps, that we celebrate the founding values of the International Festival"

and

"continue to welcome the world to our city."

I hope that we will all continue to be inspired by the festival's creativity, both in its philosophy and in its art. In 70 years it has done so much for Edinburgh, Scotland and the world. I am confident that the best is still yet to come.

16:30

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I am pleased to contribute to today's debate on Edinburgh's international festivals. Of course, for an almost-Weegie from the west of Scotland, it can sometimes be challenging to talk about a successful Edinburgh.

On a serious note, it is absolutely right that we have this debate to celebrate the impact that Edinburgh's international festivals have on our communities by delivering a thriving economy and vibrant cultural scene. My remarks will begin with culture, as there can be no underestimating the fact that Edinburgh's festivals are world leading and a cornerstone of Scottish culture and tourism. They have been defining and promoting Scotland's identity as a confident, creative, welcoming nation for the past 70 years.

Just last week in Parliament, I asked the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs what the Scottish and UK Governments were doing to attract major events to Scotland. I asked that question because Scotland is a melting pot of culture and a real draw for international visitors, with so much to showcase and so much to share.

The numbers that are associated with the Edinburgh festivals are staggering. In terms of the talent that the festivals attract, in 2016 there were more than 2,500 artists from all over the world. From comedy to acting, art and music, a plethora of talent is on display. In 2015, there was a combined audience of more than 4.5 million, which puts the festivals on a par with the FIFA world cup and second only to the Olympic games for attendances. We should be proud that our capital city continues not only to deliver an amazing event but to deliver for Scotland.

Moving on from culture, I would like to highlight an important factor in the festival and the other contribution that it makes to Scotland, which is its contribution to the economy. The facts speak for themselves: Edinburgh's festivals generate a total economic impact of £280 million in Edinburgh and £313 million in Scotland.

The good news for all of us is that the money that is generated from the festivals has continued to grow. According to the "Edinburgh Festivals 2015 Impact Study", the suite of festivals that are held in the capital generated £280 million for Edinburgh and £313 million for Scotland, which represents an increase of 19 per cent and 24 per cent respectively since 2010.

For comparison's sake, we should look at golfing tourism, which the most recent independent economic impact assessment estimates to be worth £220 million annually. That is a significant economic benefit to Scotland.

Beyond finance however, the festivals also deliver opportunities, including opportunities for employment. As we saw in 2015, a total of 5,560 full-time equivalent jobs were created in Edinburgh and 6,021 jobs in Scotland, compared with 5,047 and 4,757 respectively in 2010.

It is clear that the Edinburgh festivals contribute not only to Scotland's incredible cultural scene but to our economic growth as a nation. I am proud that, in 2017-18, the Scottish Government has allocated £2.3 million through the Edinburgh festivals expo fund, which will take the amount awarded since 2008 to more than £19 million. That shows the commitment of this Scottish National Party Scottish Government and the cabinet secretary to delivering large-scale events that attract international visitors and domestic visitors alike and say loudly and clearly our message:

Scotland is open, Scotland is welcoming and Scotland is a nation with so much to offer. In two words, we could simply say: visit Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move to closing speeches, I put it on the record that Ash Denham has apologised for not informing the chamber that she is the cabinet secretary's parliamentary liaison officer. Thank you, Ms Denham.

16:36

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): This has been a fantastic debate, and there has been a lot about which we can all agree. I offer great thanks for, among other highlights, the mental image of Gordon Lindhurst being chased down the Royal Mile by someone brandishing a pair of underpants. We can all recognise that there was a remarkable degree of consensus in the chamber: practically every speaker used the line about the world cup. That consensus cannot be construed as an own goal at all. My only disappointment is that Alexander Stewart did not take up the suggestion of entering into a song-and-dance routine. I have always thought that the space in front of you would be perfect for such a show, Presiding Officer.

As a member of the Scottish Parliament who represents an Edinburgh constituency—indeed, as someone who grew up in the city—it is with a huge sense of pride that I speak in the debate. As every member has mentioned, the Edinburgh festivals truly are special. For the month of August—

Ben Macpherson: Will the member take an intervention?

Daniel Johnson: I am sorry. I was getting carried away. I would be delighted to do so.

Ben Macpherson: Does Daniel Johnson share my disappointment that six MSPs who represent Edinburgh did not take part in the debate?

Daniel Johnson: I diplomatically suggest that those members have missed out on a fantastic opportunity to talk about great things in our great city. I agree with Ben Macpherson, to that extent.

For the month of August, this city of a mere half a million people truly welcomes the world. It becomes a much bigger city: one that is full of different ideas and activities. That is something truly special and something that I became very aware of as I was growing up in Edinburgh. At the age of eight, I decided that I would make my own contribution to the Edinburgh festivals by putting on an exhibition of completed jigsaws and interesting rocks from my garden, which I advertised through chalk drawings on neighbouring streets' pavements. Like many shows in the Edinburgh festivals, it was not

necessarily a commercial or an artistic success, but I believe that it was a small contribution.

The contributions that the Edinburgh festivals make are not merely commercial. They are much bigger than that: they are cultural and artistic. That is demonstrated by the degree to which the festival means so many different things to different people: it is comedy, music, art and literature. Well and truly, in the Edinburgh festivals the worlds of the arts come together in one place.

As many members have said, imitation really is the sincerest form of flattery. The fact that so many festivals all around the world seek to capture and copy some of the sense of the Edinburgh festivals truly is a credit to what we have created here.

We should thank Fiona Hyslop and my colleague Lewis Macdonald for setting out very well the history of the Edinburgh festivals. In 1947, when the international festival was created, the world was a shattered place. It is a true tribute to Rudolf Bing and his colleagues that they brought everything together—especially Rudolf Bing, who had fled the chaos and unimaginable horror of the second world war. For him to have come here and do such a big thing as creating the international festival is truly amazing.

What we have is an amazing and eclectic combination of wonderful art forms coming together. The combination of the different festivals is also important. Alongside the international festival we have the Edinburgh festival fringe, which is truly open and welcome to all who want to come, create and contribute. It is that combination of curation of the very best that the world has to offer, along with that openness and creativity, that is important.

I would also like to welcome Ben Macpherson's speech. His point is very important—the lessons are true and important today. We are living in a time when the world seems to be on the brink of drawing in on itself. The spirit that the festival sought to bring to the world is one that we need to consider and look to. The Edinburgh festivals can continue to make that kind of contribution as we go forward, because what we have here is of global significance. People around the world know Edinburgh because of how important the Edinburgh festivals are and the cultural contribution that they make.

That contribution is also very important to Scotland. A good number of members talked about the economic contribution of about £300 million, and that is important, but the festivals are also important because they give us, in Edinburgh and Scotland, the opportunity to give something back to the world. That is always very apparent when you talk to people from other countries who

know about Edinburgh and about the specialness of what happens here during the international festivals. It is fantastic that we are able to make that contribution to the world through the Edinburgh international festivals.

I would also like to comment on the points that were made by Jeremy Balfour and Joan McAlpine about the importance of maintaining that openness, and especially openness to communities here in Edinburgh. At times the arts can be precious and closed off. One of the important things about the Edinburgh festival fringe in particular is that it was meant to be about openness. We must make sure that we continue to preserve that openness, both to people who want to contribute to art and performance and to those who want to attend. We must make sure that the Edinburgh festivals are open to all—artists and people who want to be in audiences.

Although this is a debate in which we can agree on a great deal, I need gently to bring up the fact that the arts need support. Although I very much welcome the restoration of the expo fund, we must note that the City of Edinburgh Council contributes £9 million to the Edinburgh festivals. Given government pressures, we need to be concerned about that. I urge the Government to make sure that it continues to support the arts, because they need that support.

In conclusion, I think that the Edinburgh festivals contribute a great deal to Scotland and the world. They give us a great deal to be proud of, and we should all continue to support them and the great work that they do.

16:42

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): It is a great pleasure to contribute to this debate. I am, with Patrick Harvie, a best-selling box-office success from a previous Edinburgh fringe festival, with a sell-out audience of 600 people. I think that members will agree that we were the Pete Cook and Dudley Moore of the event, although I should say that it was probably more owing to the success of comedian Mark Thomas, who was holding one of his “People’s Manifesto” events. Nonetheless, we expected a television series to follow but were sadly to be disappointed in that. I also point to the hugely competitive nature of the bidding for venues at the festival.

I want to pay tribute to Rudolf Bing. He is a hero of the Jewish community, of which the greatest number of members in Scotland live in my constituency of Eastwood. He was born in Vienna in 1902. He lived to the grand old age of 95, died in New York 20 years ago and was knighted in 1971. He was born and brought up in Vienna and moved to Berlin in 1927. He was not actually a

refugee, as Joan McAlpine suggested, but consciously chose to move here. He certainly became very aware of the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany, but he left at the start of all that to work at the Glyndebourne opera house from the summer of 1934. He was in fact the manager of Glyndebourne from 1936 through to 1939, when it closed during the hostilities. He was there to reopen Glyndebourne in the period immediately after the war.

It was Rudolf Bing who, with others, had the vision of the festival. I have to say that Edinburgh was not the first choice—he wanted to establish a festival in Oxford, but when they were not able to make progress in Oxford, he had to scout around for another venue and, for the most parochial of reasons, he settled on Edinburgh. Why? It was because he liked the castle, which reminded him of Salzburg castle, in his native Austria. Of course, Salzburg had its own music festival; it is most familiar to most of us, I would think, from the von Trapp family singers and the classic conclusion to “The Sound of Music”.

Crucially, there was also the practical contribution that Edinburgh could make. It had not received the carpet bombing that many other cities had during the war, and there was the potential and ready availability of 100,000 beds for tourists and artists who might want to visit.

For those reasons, Rudolf Bing settled on Edinburgh, but it was a difficult sell. In the first year, he managed to attract the Vienna philharmonic orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter, which had a huge impact in giving credibility, but Bing himself said that many people across Europe were sceptical about bringing their talent to Edinburgh; indeed, some did not even know what it was. That was a much more parochial era. As Bing pointed out, the structure of the arts in this country at that time could be encapsulated in the comparison between the number of opera houses on the continent and the number in the United Kingdom and the message that it sent to artists that they really should not go to Britain to advance their careers. There were 80 opera houses on the European continent and only two in the whole of the United Kingdom, one of which was not terribly celebrated and was regarded at that stage as being somewhat parochial and not having standards that really rose to the occasion.

Bringing all those arts companies to Edinburgh was therefore a major achievement, and Edinburgh itself became an inspiration for development of the arts across the whole United Kingdom. For all our talk of the remarkable contribution that it has made to Scotland’s cultural life, we should remember the Edinburgh festival’s

enormous contribution to the arts across the UK in the post-war years.

We have heard some excellent speeches this afternoon. Joan McAlpine might be concerned to learn that I actually agree that Brexit presents challenges. I hope that the challenges will prove to be at the margins, but given that funding support comes from Europe, there will be funding challenges to deal with.

Jeremy Balfour gave us some childhood nostalgia. In the great tradition of Norman Wisdom and Eric Sykes, Gordon MacDonald used a prop to entertain us throughout this speech. We heard from Ben Macpherson, and Alexander Stewart told us of his previous career in musical theatre. Who knew? Who suspected? All I can say is that he will be compulsorily auditioned and if I think that there is any mileage in it, I will cut short a future speech to give him a final opportunity.

We heard from the convener of the Showmen's Guild—I think that that was the cultural aspect that Richard Lyle brought to the debate. Daniel Johnson talked about his own showmanship. Indeed, I have often paid tribute to that—I have always thought that he, Mr Cole-Hamilton and Jamie Greene are the great new theatrical performers in the chamber—and it all began with his seeking to embark on a thespian career with completed jigsaws.

Like many people, I have been coming to the festival for years—and I hope that Ben Macpherson does not mind my saying that, as someone who comes from the west coast. Indeed, I hope that that does not preclude me from participating. Last year, one of the concerts that I attended was about the lost music from the Weimar Republic. It was hosted by the comedian Barry Humphries, and I found it incredibly profound. He had discovered the compositions in a battered briefcase in a second-hand bookshop; many of the artists had not escaped from and had died in Nazi Germany, and their music had not been performed since Weimar's cabaret years and its banning by Hitler. Mr Humphries had brought the music back to life by reorchestrating and performing it, and when I thought about Rudolf Bing and his Jewish cultural heritage, I felt that the concert last year had a nice circularity in what it was celebrating.

Having tried to be upbeat, I want to conclude with a cautionary note, and I am interested in hearing what the cabinet secretary has to say about this. This has been a troubled year, and we have seen some pretty shocking events in the rest of the United Kingdom. People will want to know that they are safe when they come to this year's festival. By its very nature, it draws a huge international community to the city; however, it is incredibly open and the venues in which it takes

place are extraordinarily diverse. I do not think that any of us can be anything other than alert to people's concerns, so it is important that we send a message from Edinburgh that we will do everything that we can to ensure that the festival is every bit as successful, every bit as safe, every bit as enjoyable and every bit as participative as any that have gone before it.

We want the 70th Edinburgh festival and all the other festivals, including our own festival of politics—which I know comes later in the year but, as a member of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and having seen this year's programme, I can tell the chamber that it is stuffed full of some very big acts—to bring people to Edinburgh and to be a huge and continuing success.

16:50

Fiona Hyslop: We heard from Gordon Lindhurst about the melee of the advocates and the artists at the top of the Royal Mile. My confession is that, when I came to the festival as a 14-year-old, my friend and I ended up in a Scientologist recruitment session thinking that we were at a fringe show. Another of my earliest memories was getting on a bus in Ayrshire to come to the military tattoo, an experience that has stayed with me.

There is passion for the Edinburgh festivals, not just because they happen in Edinburgh, although Ash Denham, as an Edinburgh MSP, set out why this city is so well disposed to the festival and how it has developed over the years to embrace it. I impress on members, however, that the international reputation of the Edinburgh festivals as a calling card for this country is something that other countries are hugely envious of. The festivals tell the world something about our country, our creativity, our innovation and our enlightenment.

Joan McAlpine talked about the intellectual challenges to the festivals that have existed across the years. That is incredibly important. The festivals have taken shape in different times. Some times have been conservative; at other times, different ideas have come to the fore. With the Edinburgh book festival, we see a cafe culture where the moments and the issues of the day are debated. Perhaps that is where, today, we find the intellectual powerhouse that has been the tradition throughout the years.

Lewis Macdonald talked about the importance of internationalism. He said that the best answer to barbarism was to celebrate civilisation. We absolutely will.

To reflect on the latter points, particularly from Jackson Carlaw, we want to make sure that

people are safe, that we are open for business and that that reassurance is extended. Indeed, Michael Matheson, the justice secretary, discussed the issue last year because, obviously, the threats are not just recent, and we have been conscious over a number of years of how, either within venues or through other means, we ensure that security is in place.

On the commitment that we have, there is consensus across the chamber on the value of the Edinburgh international festivals, their importance, the joy that they bring and the impacts in the economic sphere, too.

I commend all those who work tirelessly across the festivals. This year, the First Minister will host a reception to recognise and personally thank those who work tirelessly behind the scenes and who are instrumental to the festivals' success. That includes the volunteers, the box office staff, technicians, joiners and so many more that go unseen.

There will be celebrations this year for the momentous 70th anniversary year. The festivals need to push boundaries in so many different ways, and we have seen them reinvent themselves either by where they take place or by their content. Again, I congratulate the Scottish Parliament in getting in on the act with the festival of politics.

Ben Macpherson talked about the importance of the generosity of spirit. I was a bit worried about Richard Lyle's Weegie confession and whether he would talk about an Edinburgh success, but he was able to talk about how important the events are.

Ben Macpherson talked about the Leith theatre. We also need to recognise that Summerhall has become a new venue. Indeed, we should recognise that the places where the festivals take place are important.

Gordon MacDonald brought an important constituency issue to the debate when he spoke about the future of the barracks and the implications for the tattoo.

I let all those who have contributed to the debate—the Stewarts, the Macphersons, the MacDonalds and perhaps the McAlpines—know that, in this year of history, heritage and archaeology, there will be a splash of tartan at the royal military tattoo, where two different clans will parade each night. I am not sure whether they have been recruited, but perhaps there might be an opportunity to get involved.

We have talked about the founding festivals from which other significant festivals grew. In the 1950s, we had the first military tattoo on the Edinburgh castle esplanade. The jazz community

led the way and developed the first jazz festival in 1978, in the Adelphi ballroom in Abbeyhill. That music festival now encompasses blues and jazz.

The book festival emerged in 1983. It remains in its original spot in Charlotte Square and continues to welcome writers from around the world to share ideas and to debate the power of the written word. I understand that it has disturbed the First Minister in Bute house from time to time.

The first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova, arrived in Edinburgh in 1989 to inaugurate the world's first science festival. This year, 146,000 attendees were attracted, with a wider reach of 350,000.

In the same year, communities were instrumental in setting up the international storytelling festival. Originally welcoming 700 attendees, it has now grown to 23,000.

The Edinburgh international children's festival started in 1990. This year, it had 10,000 delegates, including schools, and there were 300 international delegates from 23 countries. I learned during my visit to Japan that there is a real recognition there of the value and status of our children's festival.

The world-famous hogmanay emerged next, in 1994. Those of us who lived in Edinburgh before then might perhaps remember how easy it was to get to the Tron before the 1994 hogmanay explosion. Now, of course, we get 75,000 people into the city.

Ten years on, the Edinburgh art festival was founded in 2004. It now has an estimated 172,000 visitors. Importantly, it is helping people to explain the city to themselves, exploring lanes and buildings and being wowed by high-quality visual art.

Perhaps Daniel Johnson might wish to dust off his early work and see whether he can get in on the act and demonstrate the creativity that is also renowned in the Parliament.

The list of festival alumni—the artists themselves—is extensive and illustrious. Early audiences were treated to the works of pioneering animator Norman McLaren at the film festival, which also established the profile and reputation of Ingmar Bergman in the late 1950s. Jonathan Miller, Alan Bennett, Dudley Moore and Peter Cook created comic mayhem in the 1960s. That was the decade when the Traverse theatre was established by John Calder, Jim Haynes and Ricky Demarco. Indeed, Ricky Demarco brought "Macbeth" to Inchcolm island. Importantly, artists were brought from behind the iron curtain to exhibit their art. To extend the point made by Lewis Macdonald, arts and culture can extend

beyond boundaries in a way that other things cannot.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask for a bit of quiet around the chamber, please. There should be no private conversations.

Fiona Hyslop: Ravi Shankar appeared in the 1970s and in 2011. A number of writers and performers who started on the fringe are now well known, with examples including Rowan Atkinson, Jo Brand and Ben Elton. More recently, we have had Juliette Binoche and our home-grown Nicola Benedetti and Alan Cumming.

That only scratches the surface of the quality and variety that the festivals bring. The festivals will continue to thrill and entertain us, making us feel outrage or empathy, perhaps bringing a tear to our eye. They educate and stimulate us, and they can perhaps be quite provocative. They are the lifeblood and part of the foundation of our culture and heritage.

The festivals are so important, and not just to our economy. At a time when the world is facing so many challenges, we should be very proud of the thoughts, ideas and expressions of our shared humanity that are celebrated in our Edinburgh international festivals.

I am delighted that we have had such consensus today. I recognise the genuine passion and commitment that people have to the importance of the Edinburgh festivals. I encourage all members: if you have not already booked your tickets, make sure to join us in the celebration that will take place right across the summer period. The Edinburgh film festival starts next week.

In this year, the 70th year, I hope that all of us will join together to pay tribute to those who had the vision at the start—Rudolf Bing and others—and to those who carry the torch of that humanity and expression that is the festivals as they celebrate their 70th year.

Business Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-06127, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for next Tuesday.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Tuesday 20 June 2017—

after

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau motions

insert

followed by Member's Oath/Affirmation—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

17:00

Meeting closed at 17:00.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are three questions to be put. The first question is, that amendment S5M-06073.1, in the name of Gordon Lindhurst, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06073, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on recognising and celebrating Edinburgh's international festivals in their 70th anniversary year, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-06073.2, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which seeks to amend motion S5M-06073, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on recognising and celebrating Edinburgh's international festivals in their 70th anniversary year, as amended, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-06073, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on recognising and celebrating Edinburgh's international festivals in their 70th anniversary year, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the success and impact of Edinburgh's world-leading international festivals, which are in their 70th year; notes that the festivals, their partners, supporters, funders, artists and audiences make an invaluable contribution to Edinburgh and Scotland's communities and wider society, economy and culture; acknowledges and celebrates the impact that the festivals have made establishing Scotland's place internationally as innovators, thinkers and cultural leaders, and for providing a welcome to the world, while maintaining and growing their world-leading status; welcomes UK Government proposals to support the development of the new Edinburgh Concert Hall under Edinburgh's City Deal; believes that the ideals behind the origin of the festivals in the wake of the Second World War, namely that culture can break down borders and bring people from all nationalities together, are still pertinent today, and recognises the need to find solutions to the future funding challenge that the festivals face.

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

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