



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Wednesday 13 September 2017**

**Session 5**



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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 13 September 2017

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

#### Energy Efficiency and Climate Change (Support for Products)

**1. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it provides to companies selling products that improve energy efficiency and tackle climate change. (S5O-01225)

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** I think that the microphones might need to be turned up, but I invite the cabinet secretary to proceed, in a loud voice.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government provides support to companies through our enterprise agencies. For instance, Scottish Enterprise works with businesses to understand the business opportunities of low-carbon products and services and provides support with product or service development where appropriate.

The Scottish Government also supports the sustainable energy supply chain programme via the Energy Saving Trust and Resource Efficient Scotland. The programme supports businesses across Scotland to help build capacity and aids in maximising their share of spend from various Scottish and United Kingdom Government programmes.

**Stuart McMillan:** Two businesses in my constituency, one of which the Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy visited a couple of weeks ago, provide various products and services that improve energy efficiency in buildings across the country. What assistance is provided to businesses to help them to fully test their products and get them to market, which could have a beneficial effect on the environment, the economy and job creation?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As I indicated, a wide range of services are available to companies through the enterprise agencies and universities to support their innovation journey from initial concept development to market launch. The support ranges from expert advisory services to

support with raising investment and grant funding to develop new products and invest in research and development. For instance, SMART Scotland provides grants to small and medium-sized enterprises that are based in Scotland to help them to undertake technical feasibility studies and R and D projects that have a commercial end point. Information on the full range of services and contact information are provided on the Scottish Enterprise website.

**Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP):** What efforts has the UK Government made to seek the Scottish Government's opinion on the each home counts review and the improved standards framework for installation of energy efficiency products, particularly in light of the fact that hundreds of consumers in Scotland continue to suffer financial hardship as a result of issues with the UK Government's previous green deal initiative?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The Scottish Government has long held the view that the UK Government needs to strengthen its consumer protection frameworks to ensure that customers are well protected. We therefore welcomed the each home counts review when it was first announced, when officials met Dr Bonfield to share best practice and offer examples of areas where things needed to be improved.

We recognise that the recommendations from the review are really just the start of the process and that further details will need to be developed. We are considering carefully the review's recommendations as part of developing Scotland's energy efficiency programme. We will continue to liaise with the UK Government to understand better how it is building on the report's recommendations and ensuring that proposals for improving consumer protection are fully implemented.

**Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** Companies should be properly supported not only to make products that help to tackle climate change but to transport them in a greener and more low-carbon way. Will the new plans for low-emission zones that were outlined in the programme for government also include urban consolidation hubs for goods vehicles, given that transport emissions have not fallen under this Scottish National Party Government?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That is one of the things that we are consulting on. As the member might be aware, on 9 September—I think that that was the date—we launched the consultation on low-emission zones, which includes reference to precisely the issue that he raised. Low-emission zones will of course be developed in conversation with local authorities. They might look like an attractive option for many local authorities, but at

this stage we are not mandating specific frameworks for low-emission zones—they will be developed over time. I invite the member to look at the consultation. He might also wish to advise others to have an input on that specific issue.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary will be aware of widespread concern in the north-east about the First Minister's decision to wind up the energy jobs task force after she attends its final meeting today.

In that context, what new initiatives will the Scottish Government take to support and encourage oil and gas service companies to provide their experience and knowledge of engineering, construction, commissioning and maintenance to large projects, such as the Moray offshore wind project, that are designed to tackle climate change and which really need the expertise of the existing North Sea industries?

**The Presiding Officer:** That is quite a broad question, but perhaps the minister can succinctly answer the part of it that applies to her.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I will struggle to bring that within the remit of my portfolio, but I am aware that some of the aspects that the member raised are germane to my previous portfolio responsibilities in fair work, skills and training. If he wishes to have a much more detailed conversation on that with one of my colleagues, either Paul Wheelhouse or Keith Brown will be only too happy to oblige.

### **Climate Change and Sustainable Development (Support for Targets)**

**2. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its targets on climate change and sustainable development are supported through renewable energy projects such as the turbines in the Pentland Firth. (S5O-01226)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Scotland is a world leader in tackling climate change. We have made sustained progress against ambitious statutory targets and we are introducing new legislation to ensure that we maintain that leading position.

We know that a variety of low-carbon generating capacity will be required by 2050 to achieve our binding climate change targets. Our support for innovative renewable energy projects such as the MeyGen tidal array in the Pentland Firth, which is the first large-scale array of its type in the world, is just one illustration of our commitment to building a modern, integrated low-carbon energy system.

**Colin Beattie:** Will the cabinet secretary outline the support that the Scottish Government is giving

to sustainable and renewable initiatives in my constituency, Midlothian North and Musselburgh?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Since 2008, 986 awards have been made in 622 communities around Scotland through the climate challenge fund. In Midlothian North and Musselburgh, the climate challenge fund has awarded a total of £176,000 to five different projects and, through our low-carbon infrastructure transition programme, we have provided early advice to a number of projects in the constituency. Commercial confidentiality prevents me from providing details now, but it is the programme's aim to publish all information when it is available.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I refer members to an interest in renewable energy in my entry in the register of members' interests.

On the Scottish Government's updated target to end the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2032, will the cabinet secretary clarify whether the Scottish Government has made any initial assessment of the energy capacity that will be required to meet that target and of the proportion that will come from renewable energy sources?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That work is currently on-going and we hope to be in a position to give further advice on that in the—I want to say, "in the near future", but I am looking at my colleague the Minister for Transport and the Islands to ascertain whether he wants me to say that. A number of people will want an answer to that question and we are doing a great deal of work on it.

**Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** What representations will the Scottish Government make to the United Kingdom Government over the failure to award a contract for difference to the MeyGen tidal development in the Pentland Firth?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Although the announcement of the result of the second allocation round was disappointing, I am not sure that it came as a surprise. The way in which the scheme is structured and designed means that innovative projects will always lose out in favour of bigger players and more mature technologies, which is why the Scottish Government continues to press the UK Government to commit to a fairer system that would offer early-stage technologies the chance to replicate the impressive cost reductions that we are currently seeing in offshore wind.

### **Environmentally Friendly Initiatives (Glasgow)**

**3. Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it gives to initiatives that aim to make Glasgow more environmentally friendly. (S5O-01227)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the environment and its contribution to the quality of life of our communities as well as Scotland's international image and reputation. The Scottish Government supports delivery of local environmental quality through its establishment of policy frameworks, supporting tools and funding to local authorities and other organisations.

**Annie Wells:** I am pleased to see that an inquiry into air quality has been launched by the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee and that the Scottish Government made a number of commitments last week as part of its new climate change bill. However, three streets in the city of Glasgow were recently named as the most polluted in the country, with a number of schools breaching the 150-metre safe zone. In line with the comments from the British Lung Foundation in Scotland this week regarding the need for the Scottish Government to ensure that councils improve pollution monitoring, particularly outside schools in urban areas and in line with one of the Scottish Conservatives' plans, what action will the minister take to ensure greater transparency on that, and the recording of data by local authorities?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Local authorities are responsible for air quality in their areas. It is, of course, an issue that is of concern not just to Glasgow but a number of urban areas. I am aware of the streets that are on that list. I understand that for a number of them the pollution is likely to be mitigated as time goes by because of the construction of new motorway, but there are a couple of streets where there are some very particular problems. I am also conscious of the issue around schools, about which there has been considerable publicity this week. There is a deal of work to be done on that, although again, in terms of taking the measurements, we look for local authorities to consider how best they can get that information brought in.

We are introducing an air quality fund to support local authorities with the delivery of air quality action plan transport-based mitigation and I hope that local authorities will have a look at the availability of that. We will obviously have to work with the commercial and bus sectors as well, in respect of their vehicles. There are a great many things that can be done and I very much hope that Glasgow will take up some of the offers that are available.

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** Annie Wells has raised an interesting question. What impact does the cabinet secretary expect that the doubling of the funding for active travel will have

on Glasgow and other major cities, including my own constituency city of Stirling?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The doubled funding will basically allow us to expand our programme of building segregated and, by that method, attractive cycle and walking routes in our major cities, and to create environmentally friendly places for people to enjoy. We are also supporting work on the creation of a long-distance cycle and walking route, which I know will be of great interest to many people.

Increased funding will enable us to ensure that the encouragement and support that people need in order to enjoy the new routes is in place, such as the smarter choice, smarter places programme, the cycle friendly communities programme and, perhaps more important, cycle training. Some members may be aware that I recently got on a bicycle for the first time in more decades than I care to remember. It occurred to me that as well as training teenagers how to cycle safely perhaps returner cyclists need a bit of focus.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary will be well aware that air pollution in Glasgow and the rest of Scotland kills 2,500 people each year. Does she share my view that the solution is clear? It is a four-point plan. We need to support the creation of more low-emission zones, ramp up investment in active travel, as we have just heard, introduce bus regulation, and make 20mph the default speed limit in cities. That plan will tackle climate change, boost active lifestyles and help the economy. Does the cabinet secretary agree?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The 20mph speed limits are a matter for local authorities to consider. I know that Edinburgh, for example, has brought them in already in a number of areas. I cannot speak for every single city, but no doubt consideration is being given to those limits.

David Stewart will be aware from the programme for government that low-emission zones are something to which this Government is very committed. We were already committed to introducing the first one by 2018, but we now want to raise that ambition to committing to low-emission zones in the four biggest cities by 2020 and, where evidence supports them, in other air quality management areas by 2023.

The member will have heard me refer to the consultation on low-emission zones earlier. That will contain a discussion about a number of the sorts of things that he has raised in his question and which will be important to consider. I am not sure that I want to add anything more to what I said on active travel in my previous answer.

### **Air Pollution and Climate Change Targets (West Scotland)**

**4. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how its newly announced innovation fund will impact on air pollution and climate change targets in West Scotland. (S5O-01228)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** One of the most important stages of innovation is demonstrating your technology or business model commercially—we have already had a question that referred to that in a different way. The new funding will be used to focus on innovative low carbon energy projects, building on the low carbon infrastructure transition programme.

One of the key application requirements for the phase 2 fund will be to demonstrate an anticipated carbon reduction against the business-as-usual situation, which in many cases involves gas. In phase 1, the low carbon infrastructure transition programme supported five innovative low carbon capital projects in the west of Scotland. All new funding will be made available through open and fair funding invitations announced against specific low carbon criteria.

**Mary Fee:** As we know, the cost of air pollution is too high for our environment and our health, with around 3,000 deaths a year attributed to that cause. Does the minister agree that cutting air passenger duty in the hope of increasing air travel will do nothing to meet the objectives of the Scottish Government to reduce the emissions that pollute our air?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The entire climate change plan that is currently in development will be finalised early in 2018. It fully takes into account the impact of changes to air passenger duty and balances it across all of the sectors.

Scotland is one of the world's leaders on climate change. I think that we have demonstrated our capacity to manage that across all sectors, and we will continue to do that.

**Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is vital that Scotland continues to take a global lead in tackling climate change and that taking a lead on innovation will not only be important for our environment but also hugely beneficial for our economy?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I have made reference in a couple of my previous answers to the fact that Scotland is already a global leader on climate change. The issue is an important one for the environment, but it is also important that our efforts on climate change work in concert with the

economy. Innovation has long been one of Scotland's strengths, and it is incredibly important that we build on that historic strength and encourage innovation with a focus on commercial viability, because that is key to Scotland's continuing economic success.

We already have a long record of achievement in low carbon innovation, and I think that the innovation fund that was announced in last week's programme for government means that we can look forward to further collaboration between the public sector, the private sector and academia to continue to maximise that advantage for Scotland's communities.

**Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con):** How many electric vehicle charging points will be required to meet the Government's target of phasing out new petrol and diesel cars by 2032, and how many will be put in place with the innovation fund?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Work is being done at the moment with stakeholders to establish what the network will need to look like if we are to achieve the ambition that we have set out. When there is a finalised figure, I have no doubt that it will be made public.

### **Plastic Nurdles (Beaches in North East Fife)**

**5. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the amount of plastic nurdles on beaches in North East Fife. (S5O-01229)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Presiding Officer, do not smile. Nurdles are small plastic pellets, about the size of a lentil, that are produced by industry to be used in the manufacture of plastic goods. I dare say that Willie Rennie attended Greenpeace's lobbying event, and that that is where he, like me, discovered the existence of these items. They make their way into our seas and on to our shores as the result of spillages that occur when they are handled or transported by business.

Unfortunately, the Scottish Government does not collect data on the amount of plastic nurdles on beaches in North East Fife—one can imagine how difficult that would be, given the size of the area. Surveys are undertaken by volunteers.

**Willie Rennie:** Ruby Bay beach in North East Fife is polluted by hundreds of thousands of those plastic beads, but Fife is not alone. It is estimated that about three quarters of beaches in the UK are polluted, which poses a risk to wildlife and the environment. Operation clean sweep works with industry to cut the spillage of nurdles, but not every company that handles that plastic is participating. Will the minister consider legislation



to ensure that every company will participate in future?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I would never rule anything out, although I am not sure how practical that would be. That is my superficial response, and I am happy to discuss the matter with Willie Rennie if he thinks that that route will be helpful. He is right to flag up the very serious nature of the extent of marine litter, particularly of plastics, in our ocean, which is why we gave considerable focus to that issue in the programme for government.

## Rural Economy and Connectivity

### Stagecoach and FirstGroup (Meetings)

#### 1. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government when the Minister for Transport and the Islands last met representatives of Stagecoach and FirstGroup, and what was discussed. (S5O-01235)

**The Presiding Officer:** I call the minister—sorry, cabinet secretary—Humza Yousaf.

**The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf):** I am definitely a minister, Presiding Officer.

I last met with representatives of Stagecoach on 7 August at the bus stakeholders group and with representatives of FirstGroup on 11 September, when a number of issues were discussed, from bus to rail policy and much in between.

**Monica Lennon:** As the minister may be aware, his previous meetings with FirstGroup and Stagecoach on 28 and 30 March this year became part of the growing list of ministerial meetings that, through freedom of information requests, we know have not been minuted. Given the on-going issues about transparency at the heart of the Scottish Government, and given that important issues that relate to the forthcoming transport bill are likely to have been discussed at those meetings, will the minister explain further the reasons why no minutes were taken? Were minutes taken at his recent meetings?

**Humza Yousaf:** A lecture from a supporter of North Lanarkshire Labour Party about transparency is like a lecture from Donald Trump on responsible Twitter usage; it is a pathetic attack to make. If Monica Lennon wants an idea of what was discussed, I am more than happy to write to her. We have a shared agenda in bus policy of seeing an increase in bus patronage, as opposed to a decline.

As for the meetings that the member discussed, introductory meetings are just that—an opportunity for us to get to know one another and to understand the basic issues that trouble the bus

sector and what the Government can do to help to rectify them. If Monica Lennon wants an explanation of each meeting and what was discussed, she can write to me and I will be happy to provide it. I am sure that that information will be substantiated by FirstGroup and Stagecoach.

**The Presiding Officer:** I am sure that the minister meant to strike a slightly more humorous tone than came across. I encourage all members to be courteous to one another across the chamber.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** On a constructive note, will the minister explain how the Scottish Government plans to provide local transport authorities with improved options to influence the provision of bus services in their areas to better meet local users' needs?

**Humza Yousaf:** I thank Angus MacDonald for his constructive question. A constructive answer is that we look forward to introducing the transport bill. The bill will have a bus element; the consultation on that was launched today and we will consult on a number of issues, such as local franchising, municipally owned bus companies, enhanced partnership and open data. All those elements will give local authorities more powers to shape bus services that will help their communities.

On top of that, we will continue our support through the bus service operators grant and our support for the national concessionary travel scheme, which we will look to extend. All in all, we hope to drive up bus patronage, which has been declining not just for years but, I am afraid, for decades.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** The minister will no doubt be aware of the impact that peak-time congestion has on commuters who use buses and coaches. Does he have plans to extend bus and coach priority to other parts of the trunk road network, given the perceived success of what is happening on the A90? What are his views on usage of the motorway hard shoulder during peak-time congestion?

**Humza Yousaf:** I am more than happy to take constructive suggestions such as that and to look at what more we can do on the trunk road network. When bus operators speak to me about congestion, it is usually at the local level. Glasgow and the west of Scotland perhaps have some of the worst congestion across the country. What more can be done on that is up to local authorities and bus operators, but of course they can have a conversation with the Government about how we can help to address that congestion, and low-emission zones might be part of that conversation.

I am more than happy to take away some of the suggestions that have been made. If the member

wishes to write to me with more details, I will explore what more can be done on the trunk road network. We are doing some work on that with Transport Scotland but, if the member has more specific suggestions, I will examine and explore them. I highlight that we need to tackle congestion at a local level to reverse the trajectory of decline in bus patronage.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** In future discussions with Stagecoach, might Humza Yousaf be willing to take up the issue of a reduction in services in Caithness in the far north of Scotland? That is not only having an impact on travellers in the Caithness area but disrupting connections with ferry journeys to and from my Orkney constituency, which can only result in fewer people taking the bus and using it as an option.

**Humza Yousaf:** That issue was raised with me on my recent visit to Orkney. We were delighted at that time to announce the reduction in ferry fares to the mainland, but the point was made that, when people use the Scrabster to Stromness route in particular, there need to be enough bus services to take them the length of their journey thereafter. I am more than happy to raise that issue with Stagecoach.

Stagecoach is a commercial entity, so the decision is a commercial decision for the bus operator to make. If the member would like to make his representation to Stagecoach, I advise him to do so if he has not already done so, but I am more than happy to raise the issue at my next meeting with Stagecoach.

### **Fibre Broadband (New Housing Developments)**

2. **Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that fibre broadband is installed in new housing developments. (S5O-01236)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** From 1 January this year, amendments to the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004 have set a new standard for in-building physical infrastructure for high-speed electronic communications networks, which will enable easier installation of fibre at any time. I understand that Openreach also now offers fibre-to-the-premises connectivity to developments of 30 properties or more, as well as a tariff proposal for smaller housing developments.

For homes that are delivered under the affordable housing supply programme, the Scottish Government issued guidance to local authorities and registered social landlords that advised that homes should include ducting to

future proof access to internet and broadband services where possible.

In new-build developments where there is commercial demand for superfast broadband, we expect it to be delivered commercially without the need for public funding.

**Fulton MacGregor:** The vast majority of my constituency has had fibre broadband installed, which is welcome. However, thousands of new houses are planned for Coatbridge and Chryston and hundreds of households already do not have fast broadband and will not have it for many years to come. I welcome the response that I have had, but will the cabinet secretary work with the housing minister to ensure that Openreach and housing developers are working together to install fibre broadband as part of any new-build programmes?

**Fergus Ewing:** We are working with the private sector. We have good relations with the main players, with whom we engage regularly. The building warrant requirement for new homes is a step forward—it is a good thing—but, of course, it does not affect existing homes. We have been able to extend access to broadband to 750,000 homes and premises as a result of our contracts with BT, but there is more work to do. I assure the member and other members who are interested in the issue that we very much share the objective of ensuring that such access is universally available.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 3 has not been lodged.

### **Access to Superfast Broadband**

4. **Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what changes it plans to the next BT contract for 100 per cent access to superfast broadband by 2021. (S5O-01238)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** I should first make it clear that, contrary to the premise of the question, we are making no assumptions about who will win the contracts—neither BT nor anyone else—to deliver our reaching 100 per cent commitment contracts. We seek to ensure competition in the procurement process.

**Alexander Burnett:** I note the cabinet secretary's point on procurement.

Too often, residents who are told that their postcode has access to superfast broadband, and who are therefore included in the coverage statistics, do not have access in reality. An example is that in Keig, which is a village in my constituency of Aberdeenshire West, the superfast fibre cable passes the very road on which residents live, but they do not have access to it.

Will the Scottish Government revise its definitions of the terms “fibre enabled” and “have access to fibre” in its new contract—whomever it goes to—to ensure a more accurate representation of superfast broadband?

**Fergus Ewing:** The supplementary question was certainly well disguised by the original question, which was entirely general. If Alexander Burnett cares to write to me about the specific instance, I will look into it.

That said, I remind him that responsibility for regulation of the mode of introduction of access to superfast broadband—and therefore the power to regulate what must be done—rests entirely with the United Kingdom Government under schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998. That is sad, because the UK Government has not taken the outside-in approach to ensure that rural areas get access to broadband as quickly as urban areas. That access has not happened because the UK Government has not chosen to use the regulatory powers that it possesses and which it could have used—as other countries have done—for precisely that purpose.

#### **Scottish Food and Drink Fortnight**

**5. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of it being Scottish food and drink fortnight, what advice it has on supporting the food and drink industry, and what action it recommends the public takes as part of the fortnight. (S5O-01239)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** Scotland’s food and drink sector is one of our great success stories. Food and drink fortnight aims to encourage producers and suppliers to promote Scottish produce and pride in our farmers, fishermen, crofters and distillers and in others who make our great food and drink.

This year, the key message is “change one thing”, whereby everybody—whatever their connection to the industry—is encouraged to change one thing about their relationship with Scottish food and drink to make a positive contribution to the industry.

**Bruce Crawford:** Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the growth of the food and drink sector in constituencies such as mine has been supported in recent years through grants from the European Union?

Last week, I visited Katy Rodger’s artisan dairy in Stirlingshire. In June, Katy received funding for new equipment that would help to expand her business. Will the cabinet secretary advise whether the UK Government has guaranteed that, if we leave the EU, it will provide financial support in the future for such innovative food-and-drink businesses?

The cabinet secretary should note that I have committed to eating more of Scotland’s fantastic dairy produce as part of the fortnight. I hope that he will agree that that should not be too much of a hardship for me.

**Fergus Ewing:** It is an excellent thing that Mr Crawford has adopted. Having had a look at Katy Rodger’s website, I recommend that everybody visit it as well as her premises, which I believe are near Balfron and which produce high-quality yoghurt products. That is the advertorial part of my answer.

On the substantive question, the UK Government has confirmed that contracts that have been entered into at the point of UK exit will be guaranteed. However, that is only 18 months away. What will happen after that? We do not know in respect of this particular form of grant finance, which is important especially to small businesses such as that of Mr Crawford’s constituent. Therefore, my advice to Mr Gove is that he get on with the day job. He should get on with the work of sorting out how we are going to continue to help our food and drink industry to grow with the grants and financial assistance that we have come to expect to be available from the EU.

#### **Animal Welfare (Installation of Closed-circuit Television in Abattoirs)**

**6. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on whether it plans to legislate for the mandatory installation of CCTV in abattoirs to monitor animal welfare. (S5O-01240)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** The Scottish Government has already recommended the installation of CCTV as best practice in the monitoring of animals at the time of killing, and I am advised that an estimated 95 per cent of animals that are sent to abattoirs are slaughtered in plants where CCTV has been installed voluntarily. As was announced in the programme for government, in 2017-18 the Scottish Government will consult on the introduction of compulsory video recording of slaughter at abattoirs in Scotland to aid the enforcement of welfare requirements by abattoir management and Food Standards Scotland.

The current advice is that CCTV does not by itself prevent welfare failures or secure welfare compliance. Therefore, 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.

**Patrick Harvie:** I was pleased to see in the programme for government the commitment to consult on the mandatory installation of CCTV because, although Mr Ewing and I may disagree on other issues from time to time, I am sure that neither of us would want it to be said that he was falling behind the aforementioned Mr Gove in making progress on the issue.

Understandably, Mr Ewing says that CCTV does not in itself ensure compliance with welfare standards and should not be a substitute for good management, but will the consultation clearly set out how the mandatory installation of CCTV could form part of the good management of such facilities and will the consultation be on the question of how and not whether that should be done?

**Fergus Ewing:** I think that we share the approach of wanting the highest animal welfare standards. My answer reflected the fact that the expert Farm Animal Welfare Committee, which provides independent scientific advice to all Great Britain Administrations, has provided the advice that

“CCTV cannot act as a substitute for direct oversight by management or veterinarians”.

Further, as I think Patrick Harvie knows, that group of experts said:

“By itself, CCTV does not prevent welfare failures or secure welfare compliance.”

That expert committee did not recommend that CCTV be made a legal requirement; instead, it recommended that CCTV be promoted by assurance scheme operators. I am pleased that Quality Meat Scotland has updated its processor assurance scheme standards to add a new animal welfare section that applies to slaughterers. That might be of interest to the many members who have raised this important issue in the chamber.

As with all consultations, it is right that the consultation sets out matters factually, in detail and comprehensively and that it gives those who are interested—particularly those who have an interest in the industry and in animal welfare—all the facts. The consultation should set out those facts dispassionately and in a neutral fashion. That is the right way to do it, because, in conducting consultations, we do not prejudge the outcome; we want to see the responses to the consultation before we decide what to do.

### **Rural Economy Support (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch)**

**8. Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the rural economy in that well-known island of Skye, and in Lochaber and Badenoch. (S5O-01242)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** I am very familiar with the island of Skye—I am sure that all members are—and there is nary a one who is not aware of that fact.

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting sustainable economic growth across Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch with a range of actions through our enterprise agencies as well as direct activity such as supporting the GFG Alliance’s purchase of the former Rio Tinto Alcan aluminium smelting plant in Fort William. I stress that it is early days, but the predicted investment will add £1 billion to the local economy over the next decade.

**Kate Forbes:** The cabinet secretary will agree with me that broadband will be transformational in the rural economy. I warmly welcome the commitment in the programme for government to put rural Scotland at the front of the queue in the R100—reaching 100 per cent—roll-out. Is the Scottish Government committed to working with community broadband groups such as Locheilnet and Badenoch Broadband in that process?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, we are committed to working in that way. The community-led broadband networks, some of which have been supported by community broadband Scotland, have had a positive impact. Indeed, Locheilnet is an excellent example, having connected, I believe, 390 premises and having benefited from £91,500 of CBS funding.

Through our R100 programme, we want to provide broadband access to every home and business premises in Scotland by the end of the parliamentary session, and we are committed to doing so in our manifesto.

**Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):** I remind members of my entry in the register of members’ interests.

Given that the less favoured area support scheme is an important part of supporting the remote areas that Kate Forbes has spoken about, what does the Scottish Government plan to do with the savings from the LFASS parachute payments option?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am not sure that there will be any savings from LFASS. Perhaps Mr Chapman means that, because the current intention is that LFASS payments, according to European Union rules, are to be paid for the forthcoming year at 80 per cent of the previous entitlement, there is a question about what happens to the remaining 20 per cent. We considered the matter carefully, and rightly so. It would have been contrary to EU rules for us to have devised a back-door route to make up that 20 per cent loss directly to LFASS recipients. That would have been a clear

contravention and would simply have resulted in disallowance on a major scale.

As I presume that Mr Chapman knows, the European Parliament has urged the European Commission to reconsider the introduction of 80 per cent LFASS this year and is urging that that happen next year. I understand that the Commission is considering that proposal. As soon as we get further information, we will report back to the Parliament. Were that to be the case, I would have to find £13 million from my portfolio to make up the payment. I would certainly want to do my damndest—if that is not an unparliamentary term, Presiding Officer—to do just that.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that Lochaber and Skye enjoyed a busy tourist season this year. However, that has brought its own problems, given the lack of infrastructure to cope with the tourists. The single-track roads on Skye that lead to iconic attractions are at gridlock, as is the A82 through Fort William. What will the cabinet secretary do to improve the essential infrastructure, to enable tourists to enjoy the sites and to enable locals to go about their business?

**Fergus Ewing:** Kate Forbes has made me aware of that important issue through her assiduous work over the summer in meeting local groups. I am pleased to hear that Rhoda Grant shares those interests.

In some ways, Scotland is a victim of its own success. Tourism has become so popular, with things going extremely well thanks to the leadership of VisitScotland, assisted from time to time by the minister for tourism, that pressures are coming from that success. Members should not forget that the value of the money that comes into the economy is great. The extension of the shoulder season and attractions such as the north coast 500 are helping to make a step change in the contribution that tourism is making to the Highland economy.

Overall, that is a great thing. I know that a lot of effort is being made locally by businesses and people in Skye—Kate Forbes is involved in that—to tackle the problems that come with success, particularly at some of the sites that are extremely busy and, as Rhoda Grant is right to point out, at the end of single-track roads. Highland Council is also making efforts in that regard—I have discussed the matter informally with Margaret Davidson. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes, with the public and private sectors working together, to see what can be done in practice. I am delighted that tourism is doing so well in Scotland.

## Housing

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-07613, in the name of Adam Tomkins, on housing.

14:43

**Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con):** Scotland faces a housing crisis on a scale that has not been seen since the second world war. We urgently need to talk about it, and to act.

Housing, alongside health and education, should be right at the top of the Scottish political agenda. To help to put it there, Ruth Davidson gave a keynote speech on housing at the Institute for Public Policy Research last month, and the Scottish Conservatives are using our parliamentary time this afternoon to debate housing.

Opposition debates in this chamber can serve different purposes. Our purpose today is not to seek to give the Government a bloody nose and to inflict on it another parliamentary defeat, which it can then proceed to ignore, but to start a national debate, in which, I hope, politicians in all parties will want to engage. We have got to act to solve Scotland's housing crisis, and if the Government will not use its time to lead a debate on how we do that, we will use ours.

When policy makers talk about the housing shortage, they tend to talk in numbers. We know, for example, that 10,000 fewer homes are being built each year compared with pre-recession levels. We know that over a five-year period, between 2007 and 2012, the number of new homes built by the private sector dropped by a staggering 54 per cent. We know that there are up to 150,000 families in Scotland on local authority waiting lists. We also know, based on analysis by Audit Scotland, that it could be more than 20 years before there are enough new homes to meet the projected increase in households in Scotland.

Those statistics paint a stark picture of the crisis before us, and of the immense challenges that lie ahead. It is little wonder that the governor of the Bank of England has emphasised that problems with housing are the biggest risk to the UK economy, or that the Confederation of British Industry has warned that

“A perfect storm is brewing in the housing market”,

adding that the time to act is now.

However, what is often overlooked is the human cost of this crisis. A house, after all, is not just four walls and a roof. It is where memories are made and families are formed. It is part of a wider community. For many, it is the very essence of

aspiration. Our belief on these benches is as fervent as it ever has been, that everyone should have the chance to own their own home.

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Adam Tomkins:** Let me make a little progress, and then I will give way.

In her recent report, "The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland", Naomi Eisenstadt observed that setting up home is one of the major challenges of successful young adulthood. She said:

"For nearly all of us, a sense of home, of community, and of a network of family, friends and colleagues, all help define our lives."

That is what good housing policy is really all about. However, young people are having to defer their futures because they cannot afford to get on the housing ladder. The charity Shelter has said that almost a quarter of 18 to 40-year-olds across the United Kingdom are delaying starting a family because of a lack of affordable housing—some by up to six years.

**Elaine Smith:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Adam Tomkins:** I give way to Elaine Smith.

**Elaine Smith:** I hope that the member is not implying that the only house worth having is a bought house, as there is a good place for public rented housing in our housing debate.

**Adam Tomkins:** Of course, which is why we think that half of the houses that should be built in Scotland should be affordable housing. However, I will not make any apology for a policy that enabled half a million Scots to own their own homes.

Relationship choices are also being constrained, and ties to communities are being severed, with half of renters believing that they will not be able to afford a home in their local area in their lifetime. That is not to mention the difficulties of saving enough for a decent deposit.

Those are the issues that we face, and there is no mystery as to what is driving them. The same issues come up in any review or evidence session: the availability of land at reasonable prices, the lack of infrastructure or delays in delivering it, planning system delays and conditions, disconnect between agencies, nimbyism, and housing not being seen as a priority by Government. That is the background against which we should view the housing shortage, but the Scottish National Party's response to the crisis has been poor.

In 2007, a full decade ago, Nicola Sturgeon conceded that far too many people in Scotland were unable to satisfy what she called the basic aspiration of home ownership, but in the intervening years, the SNP's commitment to build 35,000 new homes a year has dwindled to less than half that. Homes for Scotland has argued:

"The single most effective way to address concerns about housing need and affordability is to increase the supply of new homes. Indeed, in order to make our country a better place in which to live, work and invest, it is essential that Scotland has enough homes of the right types in the right locations to meet the diverse housing needs and aspirations of its growing population."

The SNP pledged in its manifesto to build at least 50,000 new affordable homes over the course of this session of Parliament, but the latest statistics show that last year only 7,300 such homes were built. At that rate, only 36,000 homes—not 50,000—will be completed by the end of this session of Parliament, and the SNP's target will not be achieved until well into 2023.

The Scottish Government cannot shoulder the blame entirely for the crisis—the economic downturn had its part to play—but it is the Government's responsibility to create the right conditions for improving housing outcomes, and we have not seen anything like the leadership on the issue that we need. Perhaps it is unsurprising that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has questioned the adequacy of the policy systems that are in place to address the housing crisis. As it pointed out in 2014, patterns of housing needs and demands are changing, but policy responses are failing to adapt at the necessary pace.

I will set out what we would do to change that. Presently, housing sits alongside local government as a ministerial portfolio under the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, but if we want housing to be recognised as a key Government priority, it should be elevated to a cabinet secretary position, thereby increasing levels of co-ordination and accountability.

Apart from the availability of land, the lack of appropriate infrastructure is the biggest barrier for house builders and also one of the primary concerns for existing residents, in terms of both road capacity and public services. Key development decisions are increasingly caught in the congestion of the labyrinthine planning system—Government statistics suggest that it takes 64 weeks for a major development to get planning permission.

The Scottish Government's 2016 review of the planning system called for

“A national infrastructure agency or working group with statutory powers”

to

“be established, involving all infrastructure providers as well as planning representatives.”

However, the Scottish Government’s subsequent consultation on the future of the Scottish planning system has not acted on that recommendation and, indeed, appears to have rejected it.

**Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD):**

The member has not, so far, mentioned social housing. My questions are genuine. Is that deliberate and by design, or is it by accident? Does the member want to see more social housing, as well as private housing?

**Adam Tomkins:** Perhaps Mr Rumbles has not been paying attention. I have already been asked that question. My answer was yes, of course we do.

Our view is clear: Scotland needs a new housing infrastructure agency to lead on the medium and long-term infrastructure development that our economy needs, placing housing at the centre of its considerations. Homes for Scotland agrees—it was damning of the Scottish Government’s recent consultation on planning reform, reflecting what it calls its “great disappointment and frustration” at ministers’ refusal to confront

“the main planning barriers to delivery”.

We can only hope that Kevin Stewart has been listening as he prepares his long-awaited planning bill.

Among other matters, the new agency would herald a new relationship between the Scottish Government and local authorities when it comes to housing and infrastructure. Our motion calls for a new deal on housing. An option for delivering that would be a whole series of housing deals. The first generation of city and growth deals is still being negotiated and rolled out across Scotland, but we should be thinking hard about a second generation of bespoke deals—including on finance—tailored specifically to the housing needs of Scotland’s cities, towns and rural communities.

**Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP):**

Since the Tories took office in Westminster, levels of house building in England are at their lowest since Baldwin was Prime Minister in 1923. Why do Tory action and rhetoric in the area of housing not match up?

**Adam Tomkins:** Why does the Scottish National Party want to talk about English history while the Scottish Conservatives want to talk about housing policy for Scotland now and in the future?

Like the first generation city and growth deals, housing deals need to be focused on regions, allowing clusters of local authorities to work together to bid for the package of support that they think best fits their need. That is happening in England, which Ash Denham wants so much to talk about, notably in the corridor between Oxford and Cambridge, and it needs to happen here in Scotland, too.

If delays in putting infrastructure in place are one of the main barriers to development, the new housing and infrastructure agency could also take the lead in designing innovative funding mechanisms to unlock that, such as developer infrastructure loans. Such loans need not be confined to road and transport infrastructure. Digital infrastructure, as well as necessary public services, such as primary schools, general practitioner practices and health clinics, could also fall within the agency’s remit.

Finally, I turn to new towns and garden villages. RICS proposed reviving the concept of new towns in its 2014 report:

“We encourage the Scottish Government to endorse effective provision in growing areas by enabling the delivery of six to eight major new communities. These could be formed as new towns, strategic regeneration within existing towns, or as extensions to current locations of growth.”

To that we say, “Let’s get on with it.” Again, that is already happening elsewhere in the United Kingdom and it needs to happen here, too. A new wave of garden cities and towns is being supported by the UK Government, from Northamptonshire to Oxfordshire to Essex, with quality design and cutting-edge technology creating local job opportunities, accessible green space and a high-quality public realm.

**Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Adam Tomkins:** I have given way three times already.

Those are ambitious, locally led proposals. They are supported by central Government and will create new communities that work as self-sustaining places, not merely as dormitory suburbs.

A new Cabinet position, new Government agency, new housing deals and new towns—those are just some of the ideas that we are bringing to the table. We need to talk about housing, and we need to act. The housing shortage is not a looming crisis or a distant threat. We are already living in it and we need political leadership to tackle it.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that the lack of housing supply is one of the biggest challenges that Scotland faces and believes that the planning system needs urgent and

radical reform; considers that a new deal on housing is required; believes that a national housing and infrastructure agency should be established and that the First Minister should appoint a cabinet secretary for housing and infrastructure; urges ministers to examine the case for a new generation of new towns and garden villages; recognises that improving existing properties and bringing empty ones back into use should form a core component of housing policy, and highlights the importance of housing for improving health and wellbeing and for meeting climate targets through energy efficiency and sustainable development.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you very much. I encourage both the giving and receiving of interventions, and I praise Mr Tomkins for taking three interventions and keeping within his time. I encourage all members to do similarly.

I call Kevin Stewart to speak to and move amendment S5M-7613.2, in the name of Angela Constance—[*Interruption.*] The cabinet secretary is going to speak to and move the motion in her name.

14:56

**The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance):** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

It is somehow ironic that on the day on which the Tories have chosen housing as the topic for their debate, the National Audit Office has pointed to Tory welfare cuts as being the main driver of a significant rise in homelessness. Citing the benefit cap and local housing allowance as examples, the National Audit Office criticised the UK Government for failing to evaluate the impact of its benefit changes on homelessness. Will Ruth Davidson's new towns be suitable for all those families who have borne the brunt of harsh and punitive welfare cuts?

We all know that good-quality, warm and affordable homes are absolutely vital to securing economic growth, to supporting and creating jobs and to ensuring a Scotland that is fair for current and future generations. Therefore we are determined to increase and accelerate housing supply of all tenures.

That is why this Scottish Government, through times of austerity that have been imposed by the UK Government, has invested more than £4 billion to deliver more than 69,000 affordable homes.

We not only ended the right to buy, thereby preventing the sale of up to 15,500 houses over a 10-year period, but reintroduced council house building—the first central Government to do so in a generation.

**Adam Tomkins:** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Angela Constance:** I will give way in a moment.

We have built social housing at a faster rate than any other part of the UK has. We have supported more than 23,000 households to buy homes over the past 10 years, and nearly three quarters of those who have benefited are 35 years old or under.

**Adam Tomkins:** In her report this year, "The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland", Naomi Eisenstadt—who supports the Government's closure of the right-to-buy policy—said this:

"one result of right-to-buy was that it did allow people on lower incomes to access owner-occupation and thus build up housing wealth. Now right-to-buy is no longer able to provide that function, government must do more to help low income households build up housing wealth."

What is the Government's response to that?

**Angela Constance:** I say to Mr Tomkins that the Government's response has been to accelerate housing supply increasingly across all tenures. Our help-to-buy schemes have also supported young people into home ownership.

We have already given a commitment to implement the work of Naomi Eisenstadt, because she makes very valid points about the life chances of young people. However, Adam Tomkins must recognise the results of the toxic Tory legacy of removing half a million houses in Scotland from social rent. What has that done to the life chances and the prospects of young people who are struggling to get on the housing ladder or to find a home that they can afford to rent?

**Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Angela Constance:** I might give way later. I will say, though, that if Ruth Davidson was so committed to the debate, she would have been in Mr Tomkins's shoes instead of sitting on the back benches.

Last week, the First Minister set out in our programme for government how we will continue to improve access to high-quality, energy-efficient and affordable homes. Our more homes Scotland approach supports the increase in the supply of homes across all tenures, and means that we work closely across the housing sector to promote construction of new homes, and to support jobs in the construction industry and inclusive growth in the wider economy. That work also includes a wide-ranging review of the planning system to improve the effectiveness of planning processes.

We are investing more than £3 billion in affordable housing to deliver at least 50,000 affordable homes over this session of Parliament. That is a 76 per cent increase on our previous



five-year investment, and it shows that this cabinet secretary for communities is far more interested in spending time and money on building houses than on a new national infrastructure agency.

It is also important to recognise that 35,000 homes in the 50,000 homes target will be for social rent. We never hear the Tories talk about targets for social rent, but I point out that our 35,000 target is a 75 per cent increase on our previous social rented housing target, and will ensure an average of between 12,000 and 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs in construction and related sectors.

Crucially, our more homes Scotland strategy provides certainty to Scotland's councils and housing associations. To continue that momentum, we have this year, for the first time, committed to a year-on-year funding increase to be shared by councils over the next three years. That equates to an allocation of £1.75 billion across Scotland.

Last year saw a level of activity in the affordable house-building sector that has not been seen since the early 1980s, with more than 10,000 affordable homes approved—an increase of nearly 30 per cent on the year before. Instead of taking the rather simple Janet-and-John approach of breaking targets down on a year-to-year basis, our approach is to increase the number of starts, completions and approvals on a year-on-year basis by investing now and giving housing associations, councils and other partners the confidence and assurance that they need in order to invest. We have to increase the supply of housing year on year; yesterday, the latest affordable housing supply statistics showed that our pace is being maintained as affordable housing continues to be approved at a higher rate than it was the previous year.

I am conscious that time is short, Presiding Officer, but I think that in focusing on housing, we must also look at what is being done to help those who do not have a place to call home. In 2012, we introduced a world-leading homelessness target, which is something that we, as a nation, can be proud of. Moreover, we announced last week the creation of a short-life expert group to lead change in the area, and a new £10 million a year ending homelessness together fund to support the group's recommendations. Kevin Stewart will say more next week about how we will redouble our efforts, in that respect.

It has been suggested that new towns are the solution to all our needs. As an MSP who represents a new town, I am a big fan of them—the new town of Livingston, in particular. However, it is important to recognise that it is not for the Government to impose new towns on communities, but to provide the framework to

allow communities to put the right developments in the right places.

Of course, planning drove the new towns forward, and it has helped to enable the delivery of many more sustainable communities, both before and since. As part of our more homes Scotland strategy, a major programme of planning reform is on-going, and we will introduce a planning reform bill at the end of this year. Planning reform is absolutely crucial in ensuring better synergy between planning and development and infrastructure investment. One example of that is the £9 million support that we announced for the Highland Council as part of the Inverness and Highland city region deal. The Highland infrastructure loan fund was established as part of the deal to support and accelerate delivery of affordable housing across the region. That shows that we are committed to homes across all of Scotland, including rural Scotland.

I am sure that, in his closing remarks, Kevin Stewart will say more about energy efficiency and our plans around the warm homes bill.

To conclude, I say that we are, as a Government, always open to debate—there is, indeed, no monopoly of wisdom—but we will not take any lectures on housing this afternoon, or at any other time, from the Conservatives. The Tories will be hoping that we all have short memories, but I assure them that we do not. We have not forgotten their toxic legacy of removing housing benefit from our young people.

**Adam Tomkins:** More history.

**Angela Constance:** I say to Mr Tomkins that it is not history. His Government very recently removed housing benefit from young people under the age of 21.

**The Presiding Officer:** You should conclude, cabinet secretary.

**Angela Constance:** God only knows how that will improve their life chances. It was Mr Tomkins's Government and party that defended the bedroom tax.

**The Presiding Officer:** You should conclude, cabinet secretary, please.

**Angela Constance:** That has an impact on 70,000 Scottish homes. Mr Tomkins's Government introduced universal credit with delays in payments resulting in rent arrears, and his party sold off half a million Scottish homes—all that, before we even begin to see the impact of Brexit.

**The Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, please.

**Angela Constance:** I will finish my remarks there, Presiding Officer. I will not support the Conservative motion.

I move amendment S5M-07613.2, to leave out from “the lack” to end and insert:

“good quality, warm and affordable housing is vital to ensuring a Scotland that is fair for this and future generations; welcomes the 69,000 affordable homes delivered since 2007 and the commitment to deliver 35,000 social rented homes, as part of the Scottish Government’s wider aim to deliver 50,000 affordable homes over the current parliamentary term; acknowledges the longer-term funding of £1.75 billion made available to all councils to support them with their plans for accelerating affordable housing delivery; recognises the steps taken to safeguard social housing for the future by abolishing the right to buy; welcomes the Scottish Government’s commitment to action on planning, land and infrastructure to secure the housing developments that the country needs, including measures to strengthen community engagement; recognises that the Scottish Government’s housing infrastructure fund will help unlock key development sites; welcomes the continued commitment to delivering housing as a key way of promoting inclusive growth, and condemns the welfare changes that have been introduced by the UK Government that have led people to be insecure in their homes, including the introduction of the so-called bedroom tax, removal of financial support for housing for under 21s, and the six-week delay in receiving the first payment of universal credit, which is leading to housing arrears.”

**The Presiding Officer:** I can see that this might be a heated debate. I encourage all members to refrain from overly personal attacks.

15:06

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** If we all agree that living in a warm and affordable home is a basic right—I hope that we do—we are a long way from that being a reality. It is a fact that the social housing sector is shrinking. It was 32 per cent of households in 1999 and is now 23 per cent. We are not building homes fast enough to grow the sector.

“Generation rent” has been adopted as a phrase as the private housing sector trebles in size. Rents are rising, and there are huge barriers to home ownership. However, that is only part of the story. The greater story about housing is not just about a housing shortage—we have heard about that from Tory members; it is important to realise that the increasing housing issue is a signifier of divisions in society and deepening inequality across the United Kingdom between the haves and have-nots. That is the real housing story that is the challenge for the Parliament.

We are in the middle of a housing crisis with a severe shortage of affordable housing. Over the past decade, wages have flatlined, and there is no sign of that changing. Rough sleeping appears to be on the rise, and a shocking number of people died on our streets only last year—I am sure that we all condemn that. The roll-out of universal credit has added to the crisis by fuelling rent arrears, and social landlords are genuinely worried about the impact of that.

I agree with Adam Tomkins, who has called for a national debate, but it cannot simply be about ideas about new towns, although I hope that we discuss them. There is a lot in the Tory motion that we can agree with. We agree that the housing minister should be at the heart of the Scottish Cabinet, but we cannot support the Tory analysis of the housing problem while the Tories continue to deny the impact of universal credit roll-out and continue to support the austerity agenda.

There is also much in the Government’s position that we can agree with, and we will work with it where we agree with it, such as on the commitment to mitigate the effects of the loss of housing benefit for under-21s, but we believe that it should be far more ambitious on house building targets and more specific on types of housing and where houses will be built.

Yesterday’s statistics say many different things. Affordable housing looks as if it is going up by 3 per cent, but that will in no way meet the challenge of the housing crisis.

We are proud of Labour’s record in government, our commitment to the principle of community-based housing, our far-reaching action on homelessness, which was seen as Europe’s most radical legislation, and our investment in Glasgow’s housing stock, which was on a scale that is not likely to be seen for some time to come. We are pleased that our pleas to the minister and the third sector to include the stock transfer authorities in the waiting figures have been recognised, because that means that a greater number of people waiting for a house will be shown.

We agree that there is a chronic shortage in housing supply and that that is the biggest challenge, so to that extent we agree with the motion. According to Shelter, over half a million people struggle with bad housing and homelessness, so we need a step change. We need to be imaginative about how to put things together to ensure that we do not waste another parliamentary term without making serious progress on the issue. It is for that reason that we believe that social house building should be a national project on the scale of that for the new Queensferry crossing, which has been successfully completed. It should be Scotland’s major infrastructure project and allow for local delivery plans across every council that would identify the capacity, available land and resources to be able to deliver more homes for social rent. It should also identify the skills that we need to build houses and ensure that we do not lose them because our big projects have been completed. Figures released this week show a 6 per cent drop in social housing completions this year compared to last year, so we must increase the pace.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that the change in wealth distribution across the generations has been driven by a reduction in home ownership among young adults—both Adam Tomkins and Angela Constance talked about that—but the biggest barriers to home ownership are stagnating wages and large deposits. The average deposit for a first-time buyer in Scotland is a staggering £21,500. It is important to note that first-time buyers make up virtually half of all house purchasers financed by a mortgage. For many people, home ownership is out of reach.

Worrying statistics were released yesterday on the completion of houses in the private sector, showing that they were down 9 per cent on the previous year. I am sure that other members will say more about this during the debate, but more must be done to remove the blockages in the planning and infrastructure system to ensure that the current situation does not continue. If it does, I suspect that there is no way in which the minister will reach the 50,000 target that he has set for this parliamentary term.

Encouraging and supporting home ownership is vital to ensure choice, fairness and affordable home ownership. The extension of the help-to-buy scheme is an essential part of that support. I would like ministers to clarify this afternoon whether the scheme will be extended beyond 2019 and whether there will be any reform of it to ensure that those with the lowest incomes get the most help. It is important for developers to know that, because they are planning home building now for 2019 and beyond, and the help-to-buy scheme has been extremely important to them.

We believe that the Scottish Government must up its ambitions on housing and house building if we are to meet the challenges that Scotland faces. We will work with the Government and with the ideas of all political parties, including the idea about building new towns. I declare an interest here because, although I was born in Glasgow, I was brought up in Cumbernauld. Five new towns were built in the 1960s, but the Glasgow Centre for Population Health has said that new towns had a detrimental effect on Glasgow and other cities when they took the professional classes. I certainly would not like to see new houses built on that basis.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** Please conclude.

**Pauline McNeill:** I move amendment S5M-07613.4, to leave out from first “recognises” to end and insert:

“believes that a safe, warm home should be available to everybody; considers that support for social housing should be a central part of housing policy and that it should be available as a choice of housing tenure; believes in the importance of community involvement in housing;

recognises that affordable homes for those on low incomes can be a potential stepping stone out of poverty and that the current lack of such homes in Scotland is pushing people into poverty; believes that delays to universal credit payments are leading to increasing housing arrears and potential homelessness, while flatlining incomes are making it increasingly difficult for people to afford a home; agrees that a long-term national infrastructure project with a focus on social housing is required to deliver the homes needed across Scotland, in particular in rural areas; recognises that this would also provide the certainty that the construction industry workforce needs; believes that a well-resourced planning system that strikes the right balance between communities and developers will be key to this, and recognises that there should be a continued focus on upgrading Scotland’s current housing stock and that, to truly tackle fuel poverty in the private rented sector, a minimum standard of Energy Performance Certificate of Band C should be introduced by 2025.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Andy Wightman to speak to and move amendment S5M-07613.3. You have six minutes or thereabouts, Mr Wightman.

15:13

**Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green):** I thank the Conservatives for bringing this debate on housing to the chamber today. Much of the debate has been, and might continue to be, highly political in nature. I could join others, for example, in criticising the Tories for their decades in power and for presiding over at least one housing bubble and crash, or for their role in welfare cuts and the impact that those are having, particularly on young people. I could also cite Labour’s record in government. For example, Gordon Brown, in his first budget in 1997, promised that he would not let house prices get out of control, but when he left office a decade later they had tripled. I could also cite Nicola Sturgeon and the targets that she set a decade ago that have not been realised.

However, my constituents, particularly the generation of young people who are being frozen out of affordable housing, are looking for ideas and practical solutions. Those exist in the realms of planning and housing policy, and books and academic papers have been written about them and I have invited academics and architects into Parliament to talk about them. Reviews such as that of the land reform review group recommended a number of them, and we had a few in our manifesto last year.

To the risk of my own political career, I congratulate Ruth Davidson on her recent speech. We do not agree with some of the ideas in it or some of the assumptions that lie behind it, which we want to explore further, but she highlighted a number of ideas, many of which are Green Party policy.

She was right, for example, to draw attention to the scale of private renting, which happens not

through tenants' choice but through a lack of real choice in the housing market. She was right to draw attention to the fact that swathes of existing housing have fallen into serious disrepair. She was right to note that we need to take on vested interests and to advocate direct Government intervention to procure land. Above all, she was right to admit that the big issue is land and that we should consider repealing legislation that ended local authorities' ability to acquire land at existing-use value.

I and my party commit to continuing the conversations that we have been having with Ruth Davidson's MSPs and MSPs from other parties to use the next four years to design and enact a far better system of housing and planning than the broken system that we have now.

The current housing system is broken. We need to take a new approach to new build and building maintenance and to accelerate energy efficiency, create more nuanced use classes for domestic property—for example to tackle the scourge of short-term lets—reform housing taxation and tackle homelessness.

**Elaine Smith:** This is similar to the intervention that I made earlier. Mr Wightman does not seem to have mentioned affordable public rented housing. Is that part of the Green approach?

**Andy Wightman:** It is indeed and I will say something about it in a minute.

Greens advocate a target to eliminate the speculative volume house-building industry within 10 years. Unlike the Tories, we think that that model is redundant. It is time for a new model that reflects well-established practices in much of Europe, including Germany and the Netherlands, which Ruth Davidson noted.

The new model would be based on public-led development with high-quality, community-based planning. It would put consumers in control of procurement—including housing associations—restore the professional role of planners and architects and boost the skills, opportunities and talents of small and medium-sized enterprises in the building sector.

We advocate a new approach to land acquisition based on restoring local authorities' right to acquire land at existing-use value. We advocate taking a new approach to housing taxation by abolishing the council tax, which the Scottish Government's own economic adviser, Sir James Mirrlees, described as "indefensibly regressive". We also support the abolition of land and buildings transaction tax, another tax that Sir James Mirrlees argued there is no sound case for retaining.

We want to see a radically different approach to housing care, repair and refurbishment, with log books, sinking funds and mandatory efficiency measures at point of sale in the private sector. More than 80 per cent of Scotland's existing homes will still be in use in 2050, so only with serious action to improve the quality and energy efficiency of existing homes will we ensure that everyone in Scotland has a comfortable, warm and affordable home to live in.

To address Elaine Smith's point, above all we advocate having a substantially expanded programme of genuinely affordable housing, using co-operatives, councils, housing associations and others to provide genuinely affordable homes to all who wish them, not simply those who meet defined income criteria.

Along with most other parties in the chamber we are committed to ending the stigma of homelessness, but past solutions are clearly not working. The work of the Local Government and Communities Committee, which has a forthcoming inquiry on that, and the indications in the programme for government reassure me that that stance is agreed.

We are particularly encouraged by schemes such as housing first, which we believe should be extended to support services to individuals who face a variety of challenging circumstances in their personal lives.

We are in the strange position of having a previous housing minister, Margaret Burgess, who stated in January 2016 that the Government expected the private housing market to operate wherever it can without Government intervention, while, just over a week ago, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives argued for direct Government intervention to procure land. As it happens, I see signs that this Government is sympathetic to that, too, but if that is the case, it needs to be much more explicit and demonstrate a greater urgency in coming forward with ideas.

As I said in my opening remarks, we stand ready to work with all parties in the chamber to pursue radical new measures through planning, land acquisition and fiscal and other policies to deliver a very different housing future for the people of Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-07613.3, to leave out from first "recognises" to end and insert:

"believes that the current model of housing delivery has failed, and that a generation of young people face greater uncertainty and inequality as a result; further believes that a bold package of land reform measures is needed to provide sufficient affordable quality and warm homes, and that housing policy should aim to make housing more affordable across all tenures; supports taxing vacant and derelict land to reduce speculative land banking, rent controls that reflect the quality of the property and limit future rent rises,

professionalising the private rented sector for the benefit of tenants and divesting public pension funds from fossil fuels and investing them in housing; opposes social security reform that puts people at risk of homelessness, and calls on the Scottish Government to set an interim target for all homes, where technically feasible and appropriate, to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate of Band C by 2025 to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency.”

15:19

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I thank the Conservative Party for raising the important issue of housing because, without question, we are in the grip of a national housing crisis.

The financial crash of 2008 hit house builders, those who were looking to own their own homes and families who were seeking to rent affordable properties across the board. Since that time, the total number of newly built houses has averaged 18,000 each year whereas, before the crash, it was 24,000. That is a remarkable 6,000 fewer properties each year, despite rising demand. Balance that reality against the fact that, on any given day in Scotland, around 170,000 people are on local authority housing lists. All too often, it is the most vulnerable citizens who bear the brunt of that dismal statistic. Official statistics that were published in January showed a 1.7 per cent year-on-year rise in the number of children who live in temporary accommodation—nearly 6,000 children, which is an increase of 126 on the year before—and the numbers have been rising for some time.

As local representatives, we members are visited by that challenge in our constituency surgeries every week in the shape of families who are desperate to move out of substandard temporary accommodation and into stable tenancies. The families often face multiple barriers and disadvantages, and each deserves, in one way or another, to be considered for special treatment; yet, sadly, each competes with other families—sometimes with hundreds of other families—for the smattering of new homes that appear on the housing portal every Friday morning.

In many ways, it is a crisis of our own creation, through decades of housing policy that, though seemingly well-intentioned at the time, means that now we reap a dreadful whirlwind—policies such as the right to buy and manifesto commitments to build homes for social rent that are fundamentally disconnected from what was delivered. For example, in May 2011, the SNP manifesto promised 30,000 homes for social rent but, a mere six months later, that target was revised down to just 20,000, with the rest being private homes for sale. Increasing the stock of so-called affordable homes is desirable, but only if people can manage to scrimp together the deposit to make that a

target that matters. In the debate so far, the Tories seem to have conflated the issue of socially rented homes with affordable houses to buy, but the business end of the crisis is in the lack of homes that are available for social rent.

**Andy Wightman:** Does the member agree that the definition of the curious word “affordable” needs to change? Many so-called affordable homes are not affordable for a lot of people I know.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** I absolutely agree with Mr Wightman and I will come to that point later in my speech.

What is important in our triangulation of the issue is that we first answer the needs of those who are adrift of the housing market by recognising the yawning gulf between the demand for social rented housing and its availability. We must also recognise that young people, in particular, might be facing a perfect storm of low economic activity, prohibitive private rental markets and the inability to access housing benefit, while those who are in work and seeking to start a family cannot hope to own a home and must wait for considerably longer than their parents had to.

This Parliament is vested with the powers to answer much of that challenge; we lack only the political will to do so, although today’s debate is a start. I talk about needing political will, because we need to talk about a fundamental redesign of our approach to housing and development in this country.

At present, my constituency, Edinburgh Western, is a microcosm for all that is wrong with planning and housing growth. While huge tracts of brownfield land lie fallow in more industrial areas of the city, the picturesque greenbelt surrounding areas such as Cammo and South Scotstoun is eyed for development, not because of the fantastic roads infrastructure, the capacity of its schools or its doctors’ surgeries—all of which are woefully inadequate—but because developers know that they can expect to charge the highest property prices in the country for their output. To address Mr Wightman’s point, such is the ambient house price in those communities that the affordable stock provision in new developments is still crushingly out of reach for even the most well-heeled of first-time buyers.

All too often, developers such as AMA (New Town) Ltd, which built the Brighthouse Park development in my constituency, pull out of commitments to planning gain, as with AMA’s promise to build a pavilion and sports field on the old Cramond campus, only to leave it as meadow and wasteland. That is another example of a developer throwing up houses but leaving no

element of community in its wake. We in this place need to start thinking like place makers, recognising the housing shortage but never losing sight of the community shortage.

The outlook is also deteriorating in the teeth of Brexit. Economists know that inflation and job insecurity are only going to get worse as we leave the European Union, but skilled house builders are already leaving this country, and the exodus will continue throughout the Brexit process. Who will build our homes when they are gone?

Bold and radical action is vital to tackling the housing crisis. Successive Scottish and UK Governments have been aware that they were under-building but did nothing about it. As we have heard, Shelter Scotland says that we need 60,000 homes by the end of this session, and yet this Government's target is a full 10,000 homes adrift of that. We need to lift our ambitions at least enough to answer the call of the experts in the field. As we grow new settlements in Scotland, we need to ensure that in each of those ventures we are building communities that have health services, schools and transport infrastructure in place before residents start to take occupancy.

I will conclude, Presiding Officer. If we get affordability right, we can build a society where young people at the margins and professionals alike can either rent or buy a home, with the stability that that affords, because adequate housing is the key to social mobility.

I move amendment S5M-07613.1, to leave out from "a national housing" to second "infrastructure" and insert:

"this should have a particular emphasis on building new homes for social rent, with increased targets to re-establish it as a valid long-term option for people; considers that, alongside an increase in housing supply, changes to social security are required to improve options and security, such as returning housing benefit to young people; recognises that the aspiration to build new properties and transform hundreds of thousands of existing properties into sustainable warm homes is dependent on the availability of skilled labour; believes that college cuts and the UK Government's policies in relation to Brexit and immigration jeopardise the ability to find this".

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you very much. I am sorry that I am having to be strict, but we have no time in hand. In the open debate there is a tight six minutes for all speakers.

15:26

**Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con):** I agree with the First Minister's declaration that part of creating a fairer and more prosperous society is everyone having

"a safe, warm and affordable home".

That ambition should be applauded and my party will give full backing to it. We will also seek to hold the Scottish Government to account when it fails to achieve targets or fails to put in the correct mechanisms to deliver our common goals.

Let us look at the SNP's record. Under the SNP, the number of new homes being built has plummeted by 40 per cent. Scotland has been forced to make do with less than half the 35,000 new homes a year that the SNP promised in 2007. Moreover, rates of home ownership, which is one way to boost low-income households, have fallen. The SNP's target to eradicate fuel poverty by last year has also been missed and can be added to the catalogue of failures.

If we set those failures aside, there is another number that needs to be highlighted, and it points to perhaps the biggest housing challenge that we face. That number is that more than 80 per cent of existing homes will still be in use in 2050. To put it another way, although it is not the only solution, improving the current energy-inefficient housing stock will have a huge impact on fuel poverty and climate change.

**The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart):** Mr Golden makes a good point about homes being in existence for a long time. Does he agree that it is a bit daft that there is no VAT on new-build homes but that there is VAT on dealing with the problems in existing homes? Will he support me and others in the Parliament in calling on the UK Government to remove VAT altogether from home repairs, which could create a level playing field and allow investment in existing houses?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Golden, I will give you an extra 30 seconds, as that was a long intervention.

**Maurice Golden:** It certainly was. I would happily support the minister in increasing the number of new homes started, which has fallen by 40 per cent since 2006. I would certainly support him in increasing the number of new homes completed, which has fallen by one third since then. I would also support him in increasing the rate of home ownership, which has fallen by almost 4 per cent. That is another catalogue of failures that have to be added to the minister's copybook, not to mention the 150,000 people who are on the waiting list for a new home.

The warm homes bill must effect change by bringing properties across Scotland up to a higher level of energy efficiency. Doing so would be a win for all those who are struggling to keep warm, a win for our national health service, with fewer health problems that relate to cold homes, and a win for the planet, with reduced carbon emissions.

**Andy Wightman:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Maurice Golden:** I would like to make progress.

That sort of transformative change is exactly what the Scottish Conservatives propose. We want every property, where possible, to be upgraded to at least energy performance certificate band C by the end of the next decade. WWF Scotland has said that that would help 1.5 million households to deal with cold homes, and dozens of organisations, including the existing homes alliance, Barnardo's and Friends of the Earth, want action on energy efficiency. Where is the commitment from the SNP? It certainly is not to be found in funding for energy efficiency measures, which has stagnated since 2015. We need to take seriously the challenges in home energy efficiency. That is why the Scottish Conservatives want to increase the capital budget that is allocated to energy efficiency measures.

Shelter Scotland estimates that almost a million Scottish households are living in fuel poverty.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** I hear Maurice Golden talk a lot about fuel poverty. How did he feel when Theresa May revealed in her manifesto for the snap general election her plans for means testing for, and a cut in, cold weather payments?

**Maurice Golden:** The existing homes alliance says that fuel poverty is a complex problem with multiple drivers, including issues that are covered by devolved and reserved powers. However, in this environment, the energy efficiency of homes is fully within the Scottish Government's competence, which is why my speech focuses on that.

The environmental impact of energy-inefficient housing is serious. Heating accounts for a large percentage of Scotland's energy demand, yet renewables accounted for less than 6 per cent of non-electric heating demand in 2015. That is not good enough, and the SNP must do more if it is to meet its target of 11 per cent by 2020.

In that regard, I would like to help the SNP. We need to increase the number of heat pumps in individual domestic properties as well as deliver district heating in industrial and larger-scale developments. That requires the correct financial package and regulatory environment, as well as a consumer campaign, to bring about the ideal market intervention to meet and surpass the target. The SNP Government must start to take the issue seriously and join us and the many others who understand the benefits of making Scottish homes more energy efficient. We must bring every home up to EPC band C as a minimum, maximise solar energy capture and do more to make people aware of the benefits of smart meters.

For the sake of the environment, the economy and, most of all, our fellow Scots, it is time that we recognised that warm words will not heat our homes.

15:33

**Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP):** When my mother was young, my grandmother lived in a two-room flat in a tenement. When my mother was 14, the family moved out to a brand-new council flat in a brand-new town, which gave them an indoor bathroom for the very first time. A month after I was born, my gran got the keys to her brand-new council house. She loved that house and lived there until she died about 40 years later. It was then made ready for the next council tenant to make it their home.

That house and homes like it represented to my gran and millions like her security and stability. That is the effect of policy being made into reality. However, that was not to last. As Thatcher's right-to-buy policy spread throughout the country, stories such as my grandmother's became less and less common. In 1979, 42 per cent of the UK's population lived in council housing but, by 2014, the figure had plummeted to just 8 per cent. Failure to replace the housing meant that the stock of homes was decimated. Therefore, when Ruth Davidson and the Scottish Tories come to this Parliament and say that they have ambitions to build more affordable homes or to build a new generation of new towns, it is difficult to take them seriously. How can anyone take seriously a party that says one thing and consistently does another?

In her speech to the Institute for Public Policy Research earlier this month, Ruth Davidson said:

"the lack of housing supply in Scotland ... is ... one of the biggest challenges of our time."

What she failed to acknowledge was that that challenge was largely born out of her party's right-to-buy policy, which diminished the availability of affordable housing.

Ruth Davidson said that property ownership in this country is akin to an "oligarchy"—a system that is in the hands of a minority rather than the masses. She did not mention that about a third of former council homes that were sold off in the 1980s are now under the control of private landlords, who reap wealth from what could be a decent home for someone who needs it.

Ruth Davidson called for a new housing agency to support development, streamline planning and ensure that public services are on a par with increased housing. The irony of the leader of the Scottish Tories calling for more services, while simultaneously supporting tax cuts for the rich, is

lost on no one. It is easy to demand services when how to pay for them is never clarified.

What is worse is that, in all the supposedly fresh ideas in Ruth Davidson's speech on housing, there was only a passing reference to homelessness. I guess that that is not surprising when it is the Conservative Party's woeful austerity policies that have pushed more people into poverty and escalated levels of homelessness across the UK.

As in many areas of public service, the SNP Government has taken bold action on housing to mitigate the destructive effects of barbarous Tory policy that emanates from Westminster. The Tories' bedroom tax policy would have negatively impacted 70,000 Scottish households, 80 per cent of which include a disabled adult. A University of Newcastle study linked that policy to higher levels of hunger, poor diet, anxiety and depression. Since 2014, we have provided funding to ensure that no one in Scotland pays the bedroom tax, and we will abolish it completely at the first possible opportunity. The SNP also ended the right-to-buy policy in Scotland, to safeguard the future availability of valuable social housing.

On top of that, the SNP Government exceeded its five-year target of delivering 30,000 affordable homes and exceeded its target of delivering 5,000 council homes between 2011 and 2015. More than £1.75 billion has been allocated to local councils for affordable housing development. I will put that into perspective: in Edinburgh this year, that represents £30 million of investment. By the end of this parliamentary session, we will have made good on our promise to deliver a total of 50,000 affordable homes.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** In the previous parliamentary session, when I admit that I was not a member, why did the SNP deliver only 70 per cent of the social rented housing that it had promised at the beginning of the session?

**Ash Denham:** The NAO report that was published today blamed Tory policy for driving up homelessness levels. It speaks to saying one thing and to the action that is required to deliver that. The report also says that Tory ministers are slow to understand that link—the Conservative members here seem to be a bit slow to understand it as well—and that the ministers have no strategic approach. Conservative credibility on that issue is in tatters.

This year's programme for government announced further action on housing to bring vacant properties back into use and to strengthen and simplify the planning process, and it dedicated £10 million a year to the ending homelessness together fund. All that action from the SNP comes as the UK Tory Government's budget for social

housing has taken cut after cut. The Conservatives are fond of their Orwellian rhetoric, but in housing, as elsewhere, sensible policy matched with appropriate funding and action is what will work, and that is what is working in today's Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must conclude.

**Ash Denham:** I know that the Conservatives—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must conclude. "Conclude" means conclude.

**Ash Denham:** —are very new to the concept of policy development.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please sit down.

**Ash Denham:** However, their record—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry; when I say "conclude", I mean conclude. Please sit down.

15:39

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** It is important that we have this debate on housing and I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak and to support Pauline McNeill's amendment to Adam Tomkins's motion. Good-quality housing is central to physical wellbeing and mental health, so ensuring that everyone has a safe, warm home to live in is key to improving general wellbeing and creating a stronger economy.

Frankly, solving Scotland's housing crisis should be higher up the political agenda, but I have to say that when I hear from the Tories about new Cabinet positions, new towns, new deals and new agencies, I fear that we are hearing from the same old Tories, because there is no recognition of what it takes for people to afford to get into a home in the first place and to sustain a roof over their heads.

Adam Tomkins mentioned Naomi Eisenstadt's "The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland" report. He cherry picked from that report—he said nothing about Naomi Eisenstadt's findings on low pay and insecure work and their impact. Perhaps we can hear more on that at the conclusion of the debate.

I spoke about the "housing crisis" because that is exactly what we have in Scotland today. The rising cost of housing is pushing more and more people into poverty. The private rented sector continues to grow, with rents rising faster than inflation, resulting in a growing housing benefit bill for the Government that goes straight to private landlords. Around one in four households who rent privately are families with children.



The average cost of a house rose by 75 per cent between 2003 and 2013 and only a quarter of people under the age of 34 own their own home, which is down from just under half in 1999. It is unfair that this generation of young people will not be able to access something that previous generations, including many of us, took for granted.

Tackling the housing crisis will require a range of targeted approaches. We have heard some good ideas, including from some members on the Tory benches; some of their analysis is correct. The thinking that Andy Wightman has been leading on is good work that we can look at and build on.

We need to invest in and build social housing for a new generation. As someone who grew up in a council house, I am only too aware of the unfairness of the fact that another generation of young people are growing up without that option or are being forced to wait for years and years and years on housing lists that are impossibly long.

We also need to ensure that help-to-buy policies help everyone—Pauline McNeill touched on that—because we have a system where those who are on the lowest incomes remain locked out of home ownership.

The target for 50,000 affordable homes—including 35,000 homes for social housing—over this parliamentary session is welcome, but targets can be met only if greater support is given to the construction industry and the supply chain involved in the construction of homes. I was working as a project manager for a major house builder in 2008, when the recession hit, so—like many others—I was made redundant. We have seen many skilled people leave the sector. We know that we need 12,000 new construction workers in Scotland between now and 2021; we need to do much more to make that happen.

Adam Tomkins did not take my intervention when he was in full flow about the planning system. What I wanted to raise is that if we are serious about investing in and delivering social housing, it has to be backed up by a well-resourced and reformed planning system that puts communities at its very heart. On the ambitious programme to deliver new towns and new deals, I was interested in finding out what the Conservatives propose to do to support the planning workforce, which has diminished by 20 per cent in recent years.

When the planning bill comes before Parliament later this year, it will provide a unique opportunity to be bold and radical about how we reshape the planning system so that communities feel that they have a voice rather than being dictated to, as it sometimes appears.

I hope that the Government will engage with the planning democracy movement as the bill progresses through Parliament. I have made clear my disappointment that, so far, it appears that the Government is not that keen on a rights-based planning model that would give communities a real say in the decisions that are being made about the places where they live. Alex Cole-Hamilton is not in his seat right now; he talked about placemaking and I think that that is the approach that we have to get involved in. I would welcome a change in direction from the Scottish Government on that.

In its briefing for today's debate, Homes for Scotland expressed concern over the lack of detail in the planning review proposals, following the "Places, People and Planning" position statement in July, especially in relation to the local development plan gate check and the introduction of an infrastructure levy.

For a long-term house building strategy to work, we need to invest in the planning workforce to facilitate the strategy. There has been a loss of skills and a loss of confidence in a sector that has become very reactive.

A huge amount of land is already zoned for housing or has planning permission. The issue is not about simply increasing the size of land banks; we must have an honest audit of where housing consents lie. Are they in the right place? We can reinvent the wheel and build new towns, but we need an understanding of what has already been consented and whether that fits the needs of communities.

15:45

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):**

One thing that I admire about the Tories is their pure brass neck. Miles Briggs talked about the national health service but refused to talk about the NHS south of the border and did not mention the humanitarian crisis that the British Red Cross described or the strike by junior doctors. The Tories should remember that south of the border is where they are in control and their words must be turned into actions.

We get Murdo talking about the economy but refusing to talk about Brexit and the impact that it will have: 80,000 fewer jobs and a reduction in gross domestic product by 5 per cent. I will call him Murdo Fraser, because I do not want to be accused of being rude. My apologies, Murdo. *[Laughter.]*

Today, we have Adam—Tomkins. *[Laughter.]* Adam Tomkins knows very well that I am very fond of him, but for him to get up and talk about housing as if it is a major issue for the Tory party is laughable. The next thing we know, the Tories' education spokesperson will propose free school

milk and their economy spokesperson will say that there should be jobs for the miners. It is just rewriting history.

Ensuring that everyone has a safe, warm and affordable home is, and has been for many years, a real priority for the Scottish Government. That is why we are investing more than £3 billion in affordable housing to deliver at least 50,000 affordable homes in this parliamentary session.

Maurice Golden made a big play of the targets that the Scottish Government did not achieve and had to change, which takes me back to my earlier comment. He seems to have missed out something very important that happened around 2007 or 2008: a big financial crash. He might not remember it, yet he should, because he was knee deep in it. Everything had to be looked at again after that financial crash. Our budget was cut and money that we got to spend on housing was no longer available. Obviously things had to change then, but we have reached our targets since. If members look at what is happening down south and compare it to what is happening here, they will see that if we had followed the level of house building down south we would have built 40,000 fewer houses over the past 10 years. That would mean—I hate to say this with George Adam here—that a town the size of Paisley would be missing from Scotland. Would that be a good thing or a bad thing? I do not know, but we can be proud of our record on housing.

The right-to-buy scheme has been touched on, but what has not been mentioned is that the scheme was brought in for purely political reasons. It was not brought in to help people to buy houses and make their lives better. It was brought in because she thought that if people bought their houses, they would turn into Tories. That is what it was all about. We can tell that, because local authorities were barred from reinvesting the money in housing. If the Tories were serious about housing, that is exactly what they would have done with that money.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** Does James Dornan agree that encouraging local authority pension funds to invest in social and affordable housing ticks many boxes and provides pension funds with an ethical investment and decent return? That has already happened with the Falkirk pension fund, of which I should declare that I was a governor.

**James Dornan:** That is a great idea. I would hope that the Strathclyde pension fund, which serves the workers of my city, would consider that.

The right to buy meant a loss of houses for council tenants. Ash very eloquently put forward her case about her grandmother—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I know that you are trying, but please could you use full names?

**James Dornan:** I do not think that I am that trying, Presiding Officer, but I will do. I was talking about Ash Denham.

We did not get a council house until I was 16. Before that, we stayed in a room and kitchen with an outside toilet. When we got our council house, it had three bedrooms with an inside bathroom and toilet and it was just heaven. Thatcher came along and said to people, “We’ll give you that house for next to nothing. It’s a big bargain—there you go.” Eventually, because buying the house was cheaper than renting it, my parents bought the house. They did it with great regret, but they could not afford not to do it. However, they did not read the small print that meant people would have to pay huge bills that they had never had to pay before. They were not aware of the knock-on effects. In the same close that they moved into in 1969—I point out for the members who do not know what a close is that it is a tenement that has lots of different houses in it—the two top flats are owned by private landlords.

**Jamie Greene:** Will the member take an intervention?

**James Dornan:** No.

Both of those landlords’ businesses went bankrupt and the two flats are now lying empty, which means that the close is not what it was when my parents bought the house and over the 30 years that they have stayed in it.

That is the downside of what the Tories have done. I do not take them seriously for one instant when they talk about why they are having this debate. They are doing it because Ruth Davidson has had bad press all summer and she wanted to get something to deflect attention and show that they are the good Tories rather than supporters of the rape clause, the Democratic Unionist Party deal at Westminster and Brexit.

**Maurice Golden:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is in his closing moments.

**James Dornan:** That is what this is all about. It is not about housing or helping the people of Scotland; it is about trying to help the Scottish Conservative Party and its failing leader.

15:51

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate and I am pleased that the Scottish Conservatives are using our first business slot in this new parliamentary year to debate housing, which is an issue of importance and concern to individuals and families

across Scotland, including in my own fast-growing Lothian region. We have seen today that some parties want to engage positively. I very much welcome Andy Wightman's contribution to the debate, although not so much some other members' contributions, such as the one that we have just heard.

I will focus my remarks on the impact on health of poor, damp and cold housing and how we need to ensure that our existing housing stock and new housing do not create additional health inequalities. Housing can have a number of direct and indirect effects on physical and mental health and is a significant driver of health inequalities. NHS Health Scotland's 2016 report "Housing and health inequalities" sets out the challenges that we face in tackling health inequalities around housing. The Scottish public health network's report from earlier this year "Foundations for well-being: reconnecting public health and housing" is another welcome contribution to the debate on the connection between housing and poor health.

Poorly insulated homes that are difficult to heat push people into fuel poverty. Cold houses and flats impact disproportionately on the elderly, disabled and infirm. The stress of struggling to heat a home can create or exacerbate mental health conditions. Almost a fifth of households state that their heating keeps them warm in winter "only sometimes". The latest Scottish house condition survey indicates that only 37 per cent of houses were in energy performance certificate band C or better, and 5 per cent of homes in Scotland remain within the two lowest energy efficiency bands, F and G.

Although we welcome the Scottish Government's intent around the proposed warm homes bill, we are clear that it does not go far enough and we will continue to push for a commitment to upgrade the energy efficiency of all properties to EPC band C rating or above by the end of the next decade. That would of course reduce carbon emissions as well as household heating bills.

It is a real concern that so many Scots live in cold and damp homes, given the effect that that has on many conditions, notably respiratory illnesses.

**Maree Todd:** As the member knows, I represent a rural constituency in the far north of Scotland. Does he agree that one thing that might help the people living in my constituency, who pay more for their electricity than those in the rest of the country pay, would be to have another look at the market prices?

**Miles Briggs:** I thank the member for her intervention; she has been raising that issue in the Health and Sport Committee, too. We need to look

at innovative ways of reducing bills, and just this week the member brought a project from the Highlands to the Parliament, to highlight such approaches. Our party would like the Parliament to debate such matters. We should get away from just attacking each other and instead look at issues that can make a difference to people's lives.

Some studies suggest that people who live in damp homes—*[Interruption.]* Scottish National Party members should maybe listen to this: people who live in damp homes might be as much as 40 per cent more likely to suffer from asthma, compared with those who live in better accommodation, and those who live in dark, poorly ventilated homes are 27 per cent more likely to report poor health conditions, including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

In its submission to the Health and Sport Committee's recent inquiry into the preventative agenda, the British Lung Foundation Scotland identified damp housing as a key challenge. It said:

"There is a growing body of evidence highlighting the negative impact of mould and fungus from damp homes on lung health, as well as complementary research showing that dry homes can improve lung health."

The costs to our NHS of dealing with the consequences of respiratory and other conditions that are caused or made worse by damp, poorly ventilated housing are significant, so investment in improving our housing stock must be an important element of the preventative agenda in future.

Overcrowding is another issue to which we must give attention. Around 3 per cent of households in Scotland—some 70,000 people—are thought to be living in overcrowded accommodation. That can have a negative impact on mental health, in particular, and children who live in such accommodation have poorer educational outcomes.

The proposals that we have set out on increasing the number of new homes that are built in Scotland, with a new national housing and infrastructure agency and a cabinet secretary for housing and infrastructure to drive forward the delivery of housing, would make a difference.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the member give way?

**Miles Briggs:** I am sorry, I do not have time.

Refurbishing the 34,000 empty homes in Scotland, through a help-to-rebuild programme, should also be a priority. I hope that the Government front bench is listening to and considering that proposal.

I welcome today's debate, and I call on the Scottish Government to ensure that the health

issues that I have raised are embedded in housing policy. As the Scottish public health network said:

“We owe it to those whose so-called home is a risk to their health, to strive harder to address these problems and to maximise the housing contribution to the health of the people of Scotland.”

I support the motion in the name of my colleague Adam Tomkins.

15:57

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** Effrontery, arrogance, nerve, audacity, downright cheek: all those words describe the Tories’ motion on housing. But I am with James Dornan—pure “brass neck” is a better description.

The Tories demand additional spending every day in Parliament. They never say how it would be paid for, they demand tax cuts in the same breath and they ignore the effect of their party’s austerity, which will result in the Scottish Parliament’s budget being cut by 9.2 per cent in real terms over 10 years of Tory Government. Now they come to Parliament with completely uncostered proposals for a new housing quango. I am sure that that will be a vote winner.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Joan McAlpine ought to reflect on the statistic about the Parliament’s budget that she has just given. If she reads her own Government’s budget documents carefully, she will see that, in real terms, this Parliament’s budget in the current year is higher than it has been at any point in the past. Will she withdraw her untrue statement?

**Joan McAlpine:** No, I will certainly not withdraw what I said. I refer Murdo Fraser to the Fraser of Allander institute, which says that over the next four years the Government’s funding will fall by 6 per cent. The cut that I cited is over 10 years; the member can use that or the statistic from the Fraser of Allander institute, which confirms drastic cuts to Parliament’s budget.

As for the proposed new towns, we have been given no detail of where they would be built or how much they would cost. We do not know which rich Tory landowners would benefit. Perhaps one of the lairds on the Tory back benches could spare Ruth Davidson’s blushes by donating some of their expansive acres for this strange project.

The Tories’ timing is terrible. As members have said, they come to Parliament to talk about the housing crisis on the very day when the National Audit Office has said that it is likely that homelessness in the UK has been driven very much by the UK Government’s welfare reforms—in particular, the freeze on housing benefit.

We have seen a 60 per cent rise in the number of households across the UK in temporary

accommodation, and a shameful 134 per cent rise in the number of rough sleepers since the Conservatives came to power. Indeed, according to official statistics, which are backed by the Chartered Institute of Housing, the number of new Government-funded houses that are being built for social rent each year in England has plummeted by 97 per cent since the Tories came to power.

The situation is set to get worse, because the legislation to extend the right to buy to housing associations in England will mean it is likely that another 800,000 social rented properties will be sold off, just like the 1.5 million council houses that have already been sold off under the right to buy. That was a policy that was imposed on Scotland by the Tories before this Parliament was established. I think that it is a great testament, on the anniversary of the Scottish Parliament’s foundation, that we can look on our legislation to end the right to buy as an example of how the Parliament has made a big difference to people’s lives, and how it is reversing Tory policies. It is just a shame that the previous Labour-Liberal Democrat Governments here did not have the courage of the SNP to do that earlier. I am proud that the SNP Government has taken that step.

**Elaine Smith:** I commend the Government for doing away with the right to buy, but the Lib-Lab coalition did take steps in that direction, and I think that we should acknowledge that.

**Joan McAlpine:** It is all very well talking about taking steps, but perhaps what Elaine Smith is referring to is previous Labour leader Iain Gray’s comments that his party had passed excellent homelessness legislation but had not built the houses for people to live in. I believe that the Labour Government built six council houses, which is very disappointing. I am pleased that the SNP has absolutely topped that by building 5,000 council houses during our time in office, as well as the 30,000 affordable homes that we have delivered.

I return to the Tories and the duplicity of their motion. Andy Wightman was a little bit too generous when he praised Ruth Davidson for her sudden conversion to intervention in the market. I would like to look at their record. The most recent piece of housing legislation that was passed in Parliament was the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016, which gave more security to tenants in private rented homes—including all the young people whom the Tories claim to care about—and gave local authorities the power to apply to ministers for a cap on rent increases in certain areas. The Tories voted against that legislation: Ruth Davidson voted against it, and I do not hear the Conservatives making very much noise now. You should bloody hang your heads in shame.

Excuse me, Presiding Officer. That was unparliamentary language.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** Yes—I should think so, Ms McAlpine. Could you come to a close, please?

**Joan McAlpine:** The Tories do not have any credibility at all when it comes to house building. They are not the party of housing rights; they are the party of the right to buy, and I do not think that people in Scotland will be taken in by their public-relations-driven motion.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind all members that I do not like rudeness, so I ask you to be very careful with your language.

16:03

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** For as long as I can remember, I have had a passionate interest in housing, probably because, as a child in a working-class family, I lived in a privately rented tenement building with an outside toilet and a bed recess in the kitchen. We moved to a council house and the luxury of a bedroom and a bathroom due to a massive house-building programme by the Labour Government of the time. I then did my honours thesis on housing, and I was a homelessness officer.

In fact, the first falling out that I had with my party whips was over housing, back in 2001. At that time, I wrote an article for the *Scottish Left Review*, saying:

“I believe that a home is a fundamental human right yet, in Scotland today, thousands of people are homeless. A walk along the streets of Glasgow or Edinburgh of an evening is a chilling experience if you care to notice the number of souls lying in the shadows with their begging bowls in front of them. These people are the more obvious homeless. Many others are on seemingly never ending waiting lists, some of them living in intolerable housing conditions including overcrowding or sharing with friends or relatives.”

Sadly, not enough has changed in the 16 years since I wrote that article—although I must say that Labour’s housing policy is now more in tune with my views.

We should commend the Labour-led Government in 2003 for its approach to homelessness, because it was deemed to be the most progressive in Europe. Unfortunately, 20 years after devolution and after 10 years of the current Government, we still have a huge homelessness problem, with rough sleeping on the rise.

Shelter Scotland tells us that we face a housing crisis due to decades of undersupply in affordable rented housing and to homes having been lost to the right to buy—the right-wing housing policy of the Thatcher years. There is no doubt that, in a

civilised 21st century Scotland, we need to sort out our housing problems once and for all. A home is a human right. We should approach the debate from that perspective—not from the perspective of housing wealth, as the Tories want to do. To thousands of people I know, housing wealth means a secure, warm, public rented home—not a property portfolio of ex-council houses.

I am pleased that the Labour Government—Labour Government? That was wishful thinking. I meant to say that I am pleased that the Local Government and Communities Committee is undertaking an inquiry into homelessness, which might have helped to encourage the Government’s welcome commitment in last week’s programme for government to address rough sleeping.

An opinion that is held by some people about homeless people is not only extremely intolerant, it is wrong. It does not recognise that anyone who faces unemployment or financial problems could easily face homelessness. People become homeless for a variety of reasons, including their fleeing domestic abuse, the breakdown of a relationship, job loss and so on—or maybe they are one of the more than 5,000 kids who are living in temporary accommodation.

The Local Government and Communities Committee is looking at the housing first approach, which Shelter Scotland first developed in 2008. We must from the outset strive to place homeless people in safe and secure permanent tenancies, with comprehensive support. However, until we realise that aim, temporary accommodation must be subject to minimum standards on, for example, cooking facilities. We must also consider that rough sleepers are being helped by—mainly Christian—charitable organisations. Although such help is commendable, the state must think again about the need for night shelters. Homeless people should not have to be dependent on charity, church halls, sleeping bags and soup kitchens.

There is no doubt that the lack of secure affordable housing causes many problems for people—aside from the obvious ones—including ill-health, by exacerbating poverty and exclusion from the democratic process. As we have heard in the debate, too many people depend on private landlords. Some of the housing that they provide—let us face the reality—is the Rachman-type that was abolished in the 1960s.

Unbelievably, the private sector is now bigger than the local authority housing sector. However, I hope that that is changing, and I applaud North Lanarkshire Council—my local council—for its programme to build thousands of new council homes.

Housing is undoubtedly an issue of class politics—the Tories knew that when they successfully attacked council housing in the 1980s and the 1990s. They undid the post-war Labour Government's good work, and specifically undermined Nye Bevan's vision of the

"living tapestry of the mixed community"

in which professionals including doctors and teachers lived beside manual workers, with no difference in the type or quality of their houses. The vision was, of course, based on an understanding that housing should be a universal public provision, like the national health service.

In 1979, more than 20 per cent of those in the top 10 per cent of earners lived in council housing, but as a result of right to buy and the encouragement of owner occupation, by 2005 fewer than 5 per cent of households in the top half of income distribution lived in social housing.

A continuation of Labour's earlier housing vision would have avoided people scrambling to burden themselves with never-ending mortgages. It would have meant that we would not be dealing with this housing crisis. It would have, instead, resulted in a decent affordable home truly being a right of every citizen. I doubt that that is the Scottish Tories' vision for their new towns.

The right to buy and stopping councils building houses were right-wing Tory policies that have underpinned the housing problems that we now have. There is no doubt about that. More recently, introducing the bedroom tax, removing financial support for housing for under-21s and taking six weeks to give people their first payment of universal credit all exacerbate the housing problem. Although I do not object to the idea of having a national debate, Tory members here must recognise that, before they can be taken seriously on housing in Scotland, they must think about what they have done here over the past few decades.

At least we are moving on—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close now.

**Elaine Smith:** —and addressing the housing crisis, albeit that we are doing it slowly, but we must urgently address homelessness.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are really pushed for time. Unless the last three members in the open debate voluntarily cut half a minute from their speeches, I will have to cut the closing speeches.

16:09

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** Today's motion from the Tory benches calls for

"a new generation of new towns and garden villages".

As a constituency member for Glenrothes, it would be remiss of me not to begin today by discussing our, as it were, old new towns.

Next year marks Glenrothes's 70th birthday. It is a post-war new town, and it was originally planned that Glenrothes would be a garden town in which there would be created a self-contained and balanced community—much like Holyrood, then. The Kingdom centre was, for a time, the largest indoor shopping centre in Scotland. Today it is owned by Mars Pension Trustees Ltd, which is a private company: it owns the civic face of our town. Much as my charm has been known to allure even the most surprising of subjects, Mars Pension Trustees will not speak to me. It put me on to an American real estate company, Jones Lang La Salle, and an individual. It transpires that the said faceless individual does not want to speak to me, either. He works in London—a long way from Glenrothes.

Although I appreciate that the Government is currently reforming the planning system and that legislation is imminent on the issue, can I ask the minister to look critically at the ownership of town centres by private companies, including in Glenrothes? I understand that other new towns are in the same situation.

Bricks and mortar do not build a community. Civic space is important for giving people pride in the place that they come from. It is important for mental health, for education, for health and for life chances. That is why we need to go back and look at how we support our old new towns, the ones that exist today—Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Irvine, Livingston and Glenrothes—unlike those in the Tory motion.

Along with SNP colleagues, I am supporting a resolution that has been submitted by the Cumbernauld branch to our national party conference, which reads in part:

"our New Towns also have shared challenges and opportunities as a result of their planned nature and time of development. It would be beneficial for these towns, and for Scotland, to develop a New Towns Action Plan, with a clear focus on helping to shape a sustainable future for these towns."

Presiding Officer, when people talk about Glenrothes, they often talk about our roundabouts. What they do not mention are the private landlords—the folk who bought up the cheap council-owned housing stock and now rent it out, and who often do not care about the livelihoods of the people who inhabit their properties. The

Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016, which Joan McAlpine mentioned, is of vital importance in this respect. That legislation protects people from the prospect of unforeseen and unfair eviction and from unpredictability in rent increases.

As has already been stated by colleagues today, Shelter has argued that it was the Tories' right-to-buy policy that resulted in the loss of more than half a million homes. It was under this SNP Government that the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 ended the right to buy for all social housing tenants in Scotland, thereby protecting the existing stock that is available for social rent and, crucially, stopping the sale of up to 15,500 homes.

We also know that when housing stock is sold on to private landlords, safety is not always of paramount concern. The right to buy not only decreased Scotland's housing stock. In written evidence to Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations stated:

"where properties within blocks are purchased by owner occupiers or private landlords, fire doors are often removed and replaced with doors that aren't fire rated".

In a post-Grenfell era, that warning carries added significance.

Today, Scotland is building social housing at a faster rate than any other part of the UK is. Social rented completions have exceeded the target of 20,000; between April 2011 and December 2015 20,854 houses for social rent were completed. The Scottish Government also offers significantly more grant funding for each unit of affordable housing, with units in Scotland being supported by an average of £52,400, compared to just £25,300 in England.

The Tory motion—perhaps unsurprisingly—makes no mention of homelessness. Homelessness causes pressures on the housing sector, and every good parliamentarian in this place should consider why. Fife has the third-highest homeless population in Scotland by council area, with 515 in adults and 353 children in temporary accommodation in 2016-17. Just yesterday, the *Courier* in Fife reported that Fife Council is now asking for homelessness agencies to fill the gaps in its service provision. Through housing benefit cuts alone, Fife will lose £3.2 million by 2019-20. The council attributes that to the Tories' welfare reforms and cuts to housing benefits.

As has already been stated, today the National Audit Office reported a 60 per cent increase in homeless families in England. That independent public services watchdog agrees with Fife Council's analysis, when it states that Westminster's benefit reforms are

"likely to have contributed to the increase in homelessness."

According to the Scottish Government's research on the total financial cost of the Tories' welfare reforms, North Lanarkshire, Fife and Edinburgh all stand to lose £65 million—each of those areas will lose that—by 2020-22, which accounts for 22 per cent of the total reduction in welfare spending in Scotland.

Ruth's rape-clause Tories do not care about community, and they are not interested in building bridges. Instead, they have sown the seeds of division through draconian welfare reforms that contravene human rights legislation—*[Interruption.]* Oh! So, you are awake. Their reforms punish Scotland's poorest, marginalise the underrepresented and enable a culture of blame—as long as we do not point the finger of blame at the Democratic Unionist Party.

Let the Tories pontificate today about garden villages, new new towns and building community. As a party, they have actively worked to destroy the social fabric that has bound working-class communities in Scotland together for generations. Those of us who represent the new towns know everything we need to know about the Tories and their record on housing.

16:15

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I welcome this debate. It is clear that housing supply in Scotland is not keeping up with the need and demand being generated by demographic change, and it raises an important concern that many in Scotland share about a growing housing crisis that risks being neglected by an SNP Government that is obsessed with looking south to deflect the concerns that we have in the north.

Although home ownership is an aspiration that is shared by many, it might never materialise. Under the SNP, it has fallen. For example, the percentage of owner-occupied housing stock has declined from 62.1 per cent in 2006 to 57.9 per cent in 2015. In absolute terms, the figure has fallen from 1.49 million to 1.48 million dwellings, and the situation does not look set to improve when we consider that, also under the SNP Government, the number of new homes completed has fallen by more than a third. In 2006, 25,305 new homes were completed, but in 2016, the figure was 16,498.

**Joan McAlpine:** If the member is so keen on new housing developments, why has she stood up in this chamber and repeatedly criticised housing developments in East Lothian, including those in Gullane, Dirleton and Humble, and asked the housing minister why they should go ahead?

**Rachael Hamilton:** I will not take that point from Joan McAlpine. She has made some ridiculous accusations today, and I will not engage with her. The SNP is not willing to engage on this very important housing crisis that has been brought on by your Government. I think that you should get your shovel out.

The SNP is again on course to fail housing commitments.

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** My God.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Well, you are. The 2016 SNP manifesto pledged to build at least 50,000 new affordable homes over this session of Parliament. However, the latest statistics show that only 7,336 such homes were completed in 2016-17. If that situation continues, only just over 36,000 homes will be completed to March 2021, and the SNP's target will not be achieved until two years later, in 2023.

The SNP Government's proposed warm homes bill is welcome. However, it was announced in the previous programme for government and never presented. Even with the delay, the bill will not go far enough; it should include a commitment to upgrading the energy efficiency of all properties to an EPC rating of C or above by the end of the next decade to reduce carbon emissions as well as household heating bills. Another mystery is the reluctance to include a commitment to upgrading energy efficiency. As we have heard, Shelter Scotland has said that 940,000 live in fuel poverty. Given that the proposed bill will set a new statutory fuel poverty target, why will the Scottish Government not commit to an energy efficiency target that will help reduce the costs of heating a home and alleviate fuel poverty?

Of course, with any new housing development must come the infrastructure. Building new homes is only step 1; the next step is to fill them, and nobody will move to a new town or development that does not have the appropriate infrastructure in place to accommodate it. In that respect, we need improved broadband, roads and transport links. That situation is particularly felt in the Scottish Borders, which has long suffered from those issues. It does not entice people to come and live in the Scottish Borders or indeed allow the Borders to be recognised as a place that it would be worth investing and building more homes in. I believe, however, that new housing in the Scottish Borders can work in tandem with improvements to broadband and roads and an integrated public transport network, and there is a strong case for undertaking strategic economic, transport and housing planning in a co-ordinated manner. Rural constituencies with huge opportunity for growth—such as mine—face a form of geographical inequality because they suffer from a lack of

infrastructure investment, which puts off potential investment.

The issue is not only that new homes need to be built; the more prevalent issue is the number of empty homes in Scotland. There are 34,000 empty homes that should be refurbished and brought back to use. The Scottish Borders is not immune to that problem. While I was canvassing, I was alarmed by the number of empty homes, which were vacant or in disrepair. It has been estimated that the Scottish Borders has 1,000 long-term empty homes.

Those who wish to refurbish homes or to sell or rent them to help ease the housing crisis should be encouraged, but numerous constituents have contacted me about their efforts to do those things and make uninhabitable houses into homes. They now suffer financially from an increased council tax of up to 200 per cent for owning a vacant home. The Conservatives' proposal of help to rebuild would allow councils to implement incentives to owners of empty homes.

We have focused on the housing crisis in Scotland. There is a crisis, and the SNP needs to understand that. Fresh thinking is needed, but the issue does not have to be looked on as a singular one. Instead, we can see housing as an opportunity to alleviate fuel poverty, encourage investment in rural areas and see infrastructure improvements for all. The Scottish Borders would certainly benefit from such an approach.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind all members that they should always speak through the chair and not directly to each other.

16:21

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** Last week, there was the unfortunate spectacle of Tory MSPs boldly trying to claim in one debate that universal credit was an unmitigated success and then, in another, trying to pin the blame for rising child poverty on the Scottish Government, despite sound evidence to the contrary. This week, Tory MSPs have come to our Scottish Parliament chamber with a motion on housing that completely ignores the staggering damage that has been caused and continues to be caused by the party that they represent and completely fails to recognise the many achievements of the SNP Scottish Government.

Let us start with some examples of the damage that the Tory motion conveniently ignores. We could cite the right-to-buy policy which, since its introduction in 1980, has meant nearly half a million council and housing association homes being sold off with little replacement. That scheme was introduced by Thatcher and is still being expanded by the current Tory UK Government.



We could cite the shameful bedroom tax, which the United Nations condemned as having

“failed to recognize the specific living arrangements that persons with disabilities require”.

Most recently, there was the axing of housing support for 18 to 21-year-olds, despite warnings from charities and from across the political spectrum that that will force vulnerable young people on to the streets.

The Tories have some nerve coming to the chamber posing as concerned housing campaigners.

The motion refers to

“the importance of housing for improving health and wellbeing”.

I agree that a good-quality warm and safe home is crucial for health and wellbeing, but do the Tories really have so little self-awareness? A party whose policies the UN has described as a “human catastrophe” for disabled people talks about health and wellbeing. Without an acknowledgement of the harm that the Tories’ policies have done to communities, I just cannot take them seriously on the issue. It feels like the new Tory concern for housing, health and wellbeing is nothing more than an unconvincing public relations stunt.

As well as ignoring uncomfortable facts about the Tory party’s record, the motion avoids any mention of the positive steps that the Scottish Government has taken. The SNP Government has an extremely strong track record on housing. It is building social housing at a faster rate than any other part of the UK, at 64 per 100,000 population compared with 51 per 100,000 population in England, 40 per 100,000 population in Wales and 39 per 100,000 population in Northern Ireland. Since 2007, the SNP Government has built over 40,000 homes more than there would have been if we had matched the lower rate of our neighbours.

Over the session, the Government will invest more than £3 billion to deliver 50,000 affordable homes—that is a 76 per cent increase on our previous five-year investment and a massive investment to back up an ambitious target. The Government exceeded its previous target of 30,000 affordable homes by more than 10 per cent, and it is important that it ended the right to buy. That was a major step in building a sustainable housing policy for the future and safeguarding our crucial social housing stock so that it is there when people need it most.

The Government is spending millions of pounds on mitigating the harmful impact of UK Tory welfare cuts on Scottish households. That money is, of course, then unavailable to be invested elsewhere in things such as affordable housing.

The Tories have repeatedly opposed progressive measures to improve conditions for tenants and protect social housing stock. Since the SNP came into power, the Tories have opposed introducing improved security for tenants; protecting tenants against high rent increases; giving local authorities the power to implement rent caps in areas where there are excessive rent increases; and abolishing the right to buy to protect the remaining social housing stock. Given all that, it is clear to me that the Tories are one of the biggest roadblocks to housing progress and that they have a brass neck coming to this chamber pretending otherwise. We will not take any lectures from the Tories; the SNP is cleaning up their mess when it comes to housing.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you for giving us extra time, Ms Maguire. We now move to the closing speeches. It is disappointing to note that not all those who took part in the debate are in the chamber for the start of the closing speeches. I call Alex Cole-Hamilton for a strict six minutes, please.

16:25

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:** A roof over your head and three square meals a day is not much to ask for, is it? It is a social aspiration that has echoed down the centuries in this country, but the first part of that goal is increasingly hard to come by, whether because of the slowdown in house building since 2008, the fact that people are living longer and therefore not releasing or vacating housing stock as quickly as they used to, or the monstrous accommodation gap in the social rented sector. Those are the tenets of this debate. I thank those who have offered consensus in the debate, because that is the answer to many of the problems before us.

At the top of the debate, Adam Tomkins reminded us of the words of Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, who stated that problems in housing represented the biggest risk to the UK economy. He was referring not just to the vagaries in the housing market but to the fact that there is a causal link between the health of our housing sector and the health of our nation in terms of the ability of people to hold down jobs, to have good physical health and to exert less of a demand on the welfare state. Mr Tomkins offered a well-crafted speech, but he was rightly intervened on by Elaine Smith, who challenged the Tory assertion that the only house worth having is one that is owned. At no moment in his speech did Adam Tomkins refer to the social rented sector. Throughout the debate, the Conservatives have sought to conflate the concept of affordable homes to buy with the social rented sector. My exchange with Andy Wightman about the idea of affordability

should give the lie to that, because it is blindingly obvious that 75 per cent of £500,000 is still out of reach for most first-time buyers.

The cabinet secretary referred in her speech to the need for planning reform and the nascent planning review being undertaken by her colleague Kevin Stewart. I take this opportunity to record my thanks to the minister for the time and access that he has offered me and others who hold a housing brief to feed into that review. I reiterate my call to him to look at amendments to things such as section 75 orders around planning so that we can build communities with health services, roads infrastructure and schools. We must give planning officers far more teeth than they have at present to address the backlog in building control, which is causing a material hold-up in terms of building capacity, and the issue of land banking, which Monica Lennon rightly raised.

Monica Lennon's colleague Pauline McNeill rightly pointed out the diminishing proportion of our housing stock that is given over to the social rented sector. It was also right and important that she pointed out how we undercount the extent of homelessness in this country, because the problem is far bigger than we think. She also took the time to evoke the image of the popular new landmark in my constituency: the Queensferry crossing. She is right that, when it comes to its legacy, the SNP Administration will be recognised far longer in history if it can meet the rising demands in our housing sector and the need for social rented housing than it will be for what has been uncharitably referred to as the longest three-span traffic jam in the world.

The issue of housing should unite the chamber. In that regard, we saw a somewhat unlikely love-in between Andy Wightman and the words and intent of Ruth Davidson in her recent contributions to the national debate on housing. The Liberal Democrats stand together with the Green Party on issues such as the need to reform local taxation and the obligations of developers with regard to land use. I welcome Andy Wightman's contribution to that debate. It is clear that the chamber is largely agreed on the nature of the problem, even if we have different ideas about how to solve it.

Given the stock that we need, it is clear that we have to address the issue of material capacity. That issue will be exacerbated by two problems, both of which are addressed in my amendment. The first is the impact of a hard Brexit. There is not a soul in the chamber who does not understand the importance of our European migrant workforce to the construction industry. For decades, those workers have contributed skills, experience and innovation in the building of Scotland's homes. Brexit is fundamentally undermining the security of their status here, and they are leaving, which

poses an existential threat to our country's capacity to build homes. We cannot expect to meet that challenge using apprentices coming out of Scotland's colleges, because they simply do not exist. The quiet erosion of the further education sector has led to a fundamental skills gap, which we must also take steps to close by reversing the cuts to Scotland's colleges and college places.

I submit the Liberal Democrat amendment to the will of this chamber. There was much in the contributions to the debate around which we can coalesce and on which we can build consensus, not least the fact that having a stable home is not just the foundation for but the prerequisite to social mobility. As Sol Hurok, the American impresario said:

"The sky's the limit when you have a roof over your head."

16:31

**Andy Wightman:** This has been a good debate, which we are having exactly one year on from the previous, very short Government debate that we had on 13 September last year. I hope that we will not have these debates just on an annual basis, because many of the points that members have raised are far too important for that.

Despite the understandable political ding-dongs and critiques, which I am happy to engage in at any time—although perhaps not in valuable chamber time when we are looking for solutions—there is a lot of agreement. As I indicated at the outset, we want radical change, and we are convinced that it is possible to achieve that with the powers of this Parliament. Given what members have said, I am encouraged to think that some of that radical change could, with the political will, command a majority in the chamber. Some of the things that divide us are assumptions about how we should proceed and priorities for housing.

James Dornan explained that the failure to meet the 2007 target set by Nicola Sturgeon was due to the financial crash. Monica Lennon indicated that she had been a victim of that in a professional capacity. The aftermath of that crash was a consequence of the financialisation of housing. It was not a response to any fundamental failure in our ability to acquire land and build houses; it was entirely due to the financialisation of housing. We have the powers to ensure that the consequences are overcome, principally by tackling the key component of that financialisation, which is the land issue.

I reiterate and recognise that the speculative volume house-building industry is part of the problem, given its financial model. Our priority should be to eliminate that industry within a

decade. I regret that that analysis is not shared more widely, but I am happy to speak to members about some of the assumptions that underpin it.

It was, in fact, well illustrated by George Osborne—I seem to remember that he was chancellor some years ago—when he went to Dublin in 2006 and gave a speech in Trinity College, in which he claimed that

“Ireland stands as a shining example of the art of the possible in long-term economic policy making.”

Of course, soon after that, the Irish economy crashed and burned on the back of €420 billion of debt secured on a mountain of land and property speculation.

As I said at the outset, I agree with Ruth Davidson that we should look to countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, where, as she correctly said, 60 or 70 per cent of housing is self-build—it is self-procured and customers are in control. The SME sector is much more powerful, and competition between house builders is not for land; it is between companies that want to build people the best possible house—one that is as energy efficient as possible and will last as long as possible. Those are not the competitive pressures currently in place in the volume house-building industry.

In addition, municipalities in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands have the legal power to acquire land at existing-use value—which is below the cost of land that has planning permission to a factor of 20 or 100—to service those plots, to master plan them and to sell them on. They have had those powers since the post-second world war reconstruction period, as did we before they were abolished in the 50s.

As a consequence, Germany and the Netherlands have higher-quality homes with lower energy costs and which last far longer than the design life of most new-build property in the United Kingdom. I recently read about an example of something that is entirely normal in the German experience: a group of women in their 50s, whose families had left home, got together and built a new tenement block in the heart of Berlin. That kind of project is entirely unexceptional and is undertaken with the assistance of the local council and within an ecosystem of highly professional, technically skilled and innovative builders and designers.

Labour’s Elaine Smith pointed out that housing is a human right, on which we agree. Pauline McNeill said that housing should be part of the national infrastructure priorities, and we agree with that, too.

One point that I have frequently made in relation to the care, repair and refurbishment of properties

and energy efficiency is that, strictly speaking, tenements in places such as Edinburgh are not private property. They might be private property in law, but they are part of the public infrastructure of the city. They have been there for longer than some of the streets or other public infrastructure. The private interest occurs as a consequence of the fact that people occupy the tenements for short, temporary periods of time, yet it is still incredibly difficult to get the appropriate maintenance and upgrade that common property needs.

Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned affordability, and we think that a priority for Government is to redefine what affordability means. Just yesterday, the UK Government’s house price index showed a 4.8 per cent increase in house prices in Scotland, which is the only part of the UK where house price inflation is growing. A two-bedroom flat in the private rented sector in Edinburgh costs £950 a month, which is a 6 per cent increase on last year, and there has been a 32 per cent increase over the past five years.

We agree with Maurice Golden that the warm homes bill will provide an incredible opportunity, and we welcome discussions about mandatory interventions in the privately owned market to upgrade properties at the point of sale.

Miles Briggs made some good points about health, and Jenny Gilruth regaled us with the wonders of new towns, much of which I agree with. I do not have time to tell the story about my favourite author, Ian McHarg, and his bid to develop Scotland’s third new town.

The Greens have exciting ideas and, through the forthcoming planning bill, we want to implement some of them. I thank members for their contributions, I commend our amendment and I look forward to further discussions.

16:37

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I draw members’ attention to my entry in the register of members’ interests.

I always welcome the opportunity to speak about housing in the chamber, because homelessness, house building, availability of housing and housing support are massive issues for people in Scotland. Like Adam Tomkins, I feel that those issues do not get the coverage that they fully deserve.

Monica Lennon said that housing is central to people’s physical wellbeing, mental health and education, and to a strong economy. Like others, I have said before that solving Scotland’s housing crisis must be higher up the political agenda.

Affordable housing is a platform on which those on low incomes can build their lives; it is a potential stepping stone out of poverty. Under the SNP and the Tories, housing costs have pushed more people into poverty, rent arrears are increasing as a result of benefit changes and social sector evictions are on the rise. It is frankly absurd for Ruth Davidson to suggest that the Tories have answers to the housing crisis when her party is doing so much to make it impossible for people to afford a warm, safe home.

Housing is a key pillar of the welfare state, but that seems to have been forgotten. Only Labour has at the centre of its philosophy the right to a warm, safe home for everyone. In our 2016 manifesto, we committed to building 60,000 affordable homes over the parliamentary session, three quarters of which would have been available for rent.

We can be in no doubt that there is a housing crisis in Scotland, as there are so many individual statistics and indicators of that. The number of Scottish householders renting privately is almost three times the level that it was in 1999, and the number of social housing tenants renting from a local authority or housing association is down by a third over the same period. Last year, housing costs pushed 170,000 more people into poverty.

That growth of the private rented sector, coupled with private sector rents that are rising faster than inflation, means a growing housing benefit bill for the Government and more of it going to private landlords. In 2015, almost half a billion pounds of Government money was spent on the private rented sector through housing benefit. How far could that half a billion pounds have gone towards building new energy-efficient and safe homes?

Evictions are increasing in local authorities and housing associations, people are finding it harder and harder to buy their own home and a third of all households in Scotland are living in fuel poverty. I can go on and on, talking about different statistics and indicators. It should be clear to everyone that there is a housing crisis in Scotland, but that does not seem to have been acknowledged. I might be wrong, but I do not think that a single SNP speaker addressed or acknowledged the fact that we have a housing crisis.

Labour has been clear about there being a crisis, and we have set out a range of policies to start addressing it. We need more truly affordable homes, and that means building more. The Government is committed to building 50,000 affordable homes by the end of this session of Parliament, including 35,000 for social rent, but we believe that we need more. Shelter Scotland's recommendation was for 60,000 new homes and we agree. We also need guarantees that the

Government is on track with its home building. When questioned, the Government points to statistics that give no guarantees that its end target will be hit and demonstrate no national strategy.

Social sector evictions have increased in areas where universal credit is being rolled out, driven in particular by the six-week waiting period for the first payment. In full service areas of universal credit, Citizens Advice Scotland has reported a 15 per cent rise in rent arrears compared with a national decrease of 2 per cent, and an 87 per cent increase in crisis grants compared with a national increase of just 9 per cent. Citizens Advice Scotland also published research earlier this year that found that 22 per cent of the public had no savings to fall back on, while a further 24 per cent had savings of less than two months of their income. Shelter Scotland has warned that cuts to housing benefit and the roll-out of universal credit could have a considerable impact on rent arrears and evictions. The roll-out of universal credit should be halted and the six-week waiting time should be scrapped.

Rent rises in the private sector have increased faster than the rate of inflation, and we welcome the Scottish Government's reversal of its opposition to rent controls. We are also calling on the Government to ensure that all private sector properties reach an energy performance certificate rating of at least band C by 2025. Although that level has been recommended by the Government's strategic working group on fuel poverty, the Government has chosen to disregard it and set a minimum standard of EPC band D. That lack of ambition comes after the Government missed the target for the eradication of fuel poverty that was set by Scottish Labour, and 33 per cent of homes in the private sector are in fuel poverty.

The scale of the challenges in the housing sector is clear and we call on the Tory Government to reverse its crippling welfare reforms, which are making things worse, and the Scottish Government to step up its response to the same scale as the challenges that the sector faces.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. I am aware that the sound has gone a bit strange; we are investigating that at the moment. Meanwhile, I call Kevin Stewart to echo through the chamber for up to seven minutes.

16:43

**The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart):** That will be a joy for everyone with the voice that I have, Presiding

Officer. I probably do not need the microphone, but there we go.

I welcome the opportunity to close the debate for the Government. We, as a Government, want to maintain a range of housing options to suit not just a range of individual circumstances but how those circumstances change over time. Where we live can shape us and our life chances. We have already heard from a number of speakers about their experiences as children. My family got our first council house when I was four and I know how grateful we were for that.

The places in which we live include the homes that we grow up in, the homes that we have when we enter adulthood—student accommodation, social or private rents and first owned homes—and the homes that we might want to retire to, which will suit our different circumstances and also, perhaps, our changing health and mobility needs. That is why the Scottish Government is absolutely committed to delivering affordable housing across this country. We recognise the intrinsic links between building housing and inclusive growth and between providing warm and affordable homes and tackling inequalities and poverty. Since 2009, when we reintroduced council house building, we have built more than 8,500 council homes, and I want there to be many more of those council homes across Scotland. Further, as many speakers have pointed out, it was the SNP Government that ended the right to buy, a move that has protected the existing stock of social rented homes and prevented the sale of up to 15,500 other houses.

In the last parliamentary session, we delivered more than 33,000 homes for affordable rent, which was 10 per cent above the target, and 22,523 of those were for social rent, which was 23 per cent above the target.

Our rate of housebuilding completions across all sectors puts Scotland ahead of England and Wales. That is borne out by the statistics that were published only yesterday and which showed housebuilding across all sectors to have been 19 per cent higher here than in England and two thirds higher than in Wales. Beyond that, yesterday's figures show that affordable housing supply approvals in the year to the end of June 2017 were up 30 per cent on the previous year, to 10,612 homes. That is a level of activity in the affordable housebuilding sector that has not been seen since the early 1980s, with almost 12,000 homes approved since the start of the target period.

Much has already been achieved, but there is much more still to be done. That is why we have invested more than £3 billion over the course of this parliamentary session to deliver that target of 50,000 affordable homes, which is a 76 per cent

increase on the previous five-year investment. Beyond that, we have given stability and guarantees to local authorities that have not had those for a long time, with three-year resource planning assumptions amounting to £1.75 billion of investment.

Beyond social housing, we have also ensured that funding has been maintained for rural housing funds and, at the instigation of some of our Liberal Democrat colleagues, we added an islands housing fund to that mix. We will continue to listen to folk on these issues.

Open-market shared equity has helped folk into home ownership—Pauline McNeill asked me a specific question about help-to-buy schemes. We have made £195 million available over the three years to March 2019. That scheme will be carefully monitored and we will consider its future in 2018. I am willing to speak to Pauline McNeill and other colleagues about that.

Beyond that, in general terms, after an independent review, we are bringing together a planning bill that should simplify our planning system and, hopefully, lead to greater growth in housebuilding.

One of the things that frustrates me, as the minister with responsibility for housing and planning, is that, often, someone who says that we need more houses will follow that up by saying in the next sentence, "We dinna want them built there." That is one of the reasons why I want community planning and spatial planning to become intertwined, something that Monica Lennon mentioned in her speech.

There is much work to be done in this area, and we have no monopoly of knowledge. I will continue to speak to colleagues from right across the chamber. However, one thing that I will not do is take any lectures on housing from the Conservatives—the party that sold off council housing willy-nilly in this country; the party that wants to repeat that mistake by selling housing association homes in England, with a new right to buy there. We will not make those mistakes here, and we will take no lessons from the Conservatives on that front.

Mr Griffin was right to point out the dangers of Tory welfare reform and its impact on housing and people in Scotland. The Tories are the party that provides no financial support for under-21s and instead introduced the benefit cap and freeze that is seeing families right across the UK—not just here in Scotland—at risk of homelessness. We will never consider that, and I believe that all of those powers should rest here so that we can make those decisions.

The Tories are the party that voted against the Scottish Government's Private Housing

(Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 that is introducing stability and predictability for tenants; instead, they brought in the bedroom tax, which affects more than 70,000 homes in Scotland and which the Scottish Government mitigates to keep people safe in their homes.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Close please, minister.

**Kevin Stewart:** Just think, if we had that money from bedroom tax mitigation we could put it into even more housing for the people of Scotland. The Government is committed to everyone in Scotland living in an affordable, quality home that meets their needs—not just the wealthy and not just those who can afford to buy a home—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Close please, minister.

**Kevin Stewart:** —but everyone in Scotland.

16:51

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** This has been a useful and important debate, with considered contributions from most sides, bar the SNP. *[Interruption.]*

Housing is too often the poor relation of political debate. It is overlooked; it does not get the press very excited and, frankly, it does not get a lot of politicians excited, although they will try to tell you otherwise. The fact that we have had only one cabinet minister in the chamber perhaps tells its own story. I thought that her contribution was something of a shambolic rant, in contrast—apart from the end section—to that of her colleague Mr Stewart.

Housing is just not seen as sexy. I think that it is. Nothing is more important to someone than having a roof over their head, a warm, well-insulated property in good condition, with security of tenure if they rent, and the right to backup if they need it, as Pauline McNeill said so eloquently.

We have heard some right old nonsense from members of other parties—mainly the SNP—who have said that housing is not an issue that Conservatives should talk about. Perhaps they are embarrassed by their own records—they certainly should be. That we have in our great cities sink estates, no-go areas and people sleeping rough should be a source of shame for the SNP and Labour. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Order, please. Order, please.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Mr Simpson give way?

**Graham Simpson:** No.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will he give way?

**Graham Simpson:** No. *[Interruption.]* Those parties have counted on the votes of people who live in the poorest areas of this country for decades and have taken them for granted.

Expert after expert says that we have a housing crisis. Crisis, the charity for homeless people, was formed 50 years ago by a Conservative, Iain Macleod. It should not exist today, nor should Shelter, whose plea for a national homelessness strategy was snubbed for so long by the SNP. I am not convinced that the measures announced by the programme for government amount to such a thing.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)** *rose—*

**Graham Simpson:** Perhaps Kevin Stewart will tell us differently next week.

**Kevin Stewart** *rose—*

**Graham Simpson:** Homelessness is the end result of a failed system—or a lack of a system. It is not some academic concept to be discussed in worthy research papers; it involves real people, some leading the most chaotic of lives. When we put housing at the forefront of our policy agenda—

**Gillian Martin:** Will the member give way?

**Graham Simpson:** —it is those people, Ms Martin, that we are thinking of, and we are proud of that. I will take Ms Martin's intervention.

**Gillian Martin:** Thank you. It is actually a question. The Tory party wants to build 100,000 new homes. How many of them would the member like to make social housing, which would affect the people he was just talking about?

**Graham Simpson:** I will come on to those new homes, but we are talking about homes across all tenures. We do need new homes, as Adam Tomkins said.

In 2015, Nicola Sturgeon said:

“Making sure that everyone has a safe, warm and affordable home is central to our Government's drive to make this country fairer and more prosperous.”

I could not agree more, but housing output in Scotland is flatlining. Just over 16,000 homes were built last year—

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Mr Simpson give way?

**Graham Simpson:** —a whopping 88 more than the year before, Mr Stewart. The number of homes being started in the same period fell by two per cent. The number of homes being built is more than a third down from 2007 levels. That means that prices and rents are still too high for many people and our youngsters struggle to get a foot on the housing ladder. We need to do more across all tenures and for that we need, as Adam

Tomkins said, imaginative policies of the kind lacking from this Government.

Ruth Davidson has called for a new generation of new towns to be built.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Mr Simpson give way?

**Graham Simpson:** I live in Scotland's first new town, East Kilbride. It is 70 years old. It is time for a new wave of settlements, designed for active travel, designed to use less energy, and designed for the people, with the people. To do that, we say that there should be a new national housing and infrastructure agency and a cabinet minister covering the same—that might benefit you, Mr Stewart—not to override councils but to lead from the front. Too often, things do not get built because of wrangles over who is going to pay for what, so we say that we need an infrastructure first approach, and Ruth Davidson has highlighted one way of achieving that—land value capture. Again, it does not sound very sexy, but it is really sexy. *[Laughter.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order, please.

**Graham Simpson:** I am glad that members in the chamber agree with me. Using land value capture could unlock £8.6 billion of additional funds in the Edinburgh city region alone over the next 20 years, according to the Centre for Progressive Capitalism—and at no cost to the public purse. It could be one feature of a dynamic, reformed planning system. Using that system, or other methods, the new agency would pinpoint and evaluate new development sites, bring forward brownfield land for development, and install any necessary infrastructure.

Agency-acquired land could be sold specifically to smaller builders or private rented sector investors, or for self-build and co-ownership. Scotland lags behind other countries in all those fields. That widening of participation will assist a vibrant SME sector and support the wider economy.

However, as Maurice Golden, Miles Briggs and Andy Wightman have said, we also need to ensure that existing homes are fit for purpose. The Scottish house condition survey that was published in December 2016 paints a harrowing picture of the current condition of Scotland's housing stock.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the member give way?

**Graham Simpson:** Certainly.

**Kevin Stewart:** I asked Mr Simpson's colleague earlier whether the Tories would support our call to the UK Government to eradicate VAT from housing repairs, which would help to a great degree in this regard. Will Mr Simpson support our

call for that eradication of VAT for housing repairs?

**Graham Simpson:** Given the state of the housing stock, particularly the stock that was built pre-1919—a quarter of Scottish dwellings are tenements and some of them are in critical disrepair; some are in critical, urgent and extensive disrepair—I think that all options need to be looked at. We need a strategy to deal with the condition of tenements, and a significant proportion of more recently developed housing is reaching a similar stage of requiring major repairs.

We have two opportunities to change things: the planning bill and the warm homes bill. The planning system is reactive and developer led. We need a system that actually plans for what we need. It is also true that planning is done to communities, not by communities.

We need to factor in the best standards of design and energy efficiency. We can already build homes that require no central heating. I have seen some near Lockerbie, which were built in a factory at Cambuslang by CCG. We should have more homes like those, which are built off site.

The warm homes bill should provide a clear statutory foundation for a new fuel poverty strategy, including the new target date for the eradication of fuel poverty, which affects a third of households in Scotland.

We have huge challenges ahead and settling for more of the same is no longer enough. Big challenges require big thinking. We on the Tory benches are up for that—we are proving it—but the Scottish Government is being found wanting. I support the motion in Adam Tomkins's name.

## Business Motions

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of two business motions: motion S5M-07647, setting out a business programme, and motion S5M-07648, on the stage 1 timetable for a bill.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 19 September 2017

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Delivering Social Security for Scotland's People  
*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Ending Homelessness Together  
*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Dignity, Equality and Human Rights for All  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 20 September 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Justice and the Law Officers;  
 Culture, Tourism and External Affairs  
*followed by* Scottish Labour Party Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 21 September 2017

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
 12.45 pm Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.30 pm Preliminary Stage Debate: Edinburgh Bakers' Widows' Fund Bill  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Contract (Third Party Rights) (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 26 September 2017

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

Wednesday 27 September 2017

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Education and Skills  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 28 September 2017

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

and (b) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on 21 September, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders to question the First Minister".

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 26 January 2018.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motions agreed to.*



## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-07655, on substitution on committees.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that Colin Beattie be appointed to replace Christina McKelvie as a substitute member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

## Decision Time

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** There are six questions today. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Angela Constance is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-07613.2, in the name of Angela Constance, which seeks to amend motion S5M-07613, in the name of Adam Tomkins, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

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

McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)

Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 61, Against 62, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Pauline McNeill is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Andy Wightman and Alex Cole-Hamilton will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S5M-07613.4, in the name of Pauline McNeill, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Adam Tomkins, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

### For

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

### Against

Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)

Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)

Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 26, Against 97, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Andy Wightman is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S5M-07613.3, in the name of Andy Wightman, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Adam Tomkins, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

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

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)

Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)

(SNP)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 6, Against 98, Abstentions 19.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S5M-07613.1, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Adam Tomkins, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)

Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)

Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 10, Against 92, Abstentions 20.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S5M-07613, in the name of Adam Tomkins, is agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### Against

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

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 31, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

*Motion disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S5M-07655, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that Colin Beattie be appointed to replace Christina McKelvie as a substitute member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.

## University of Stirling (50th Anniversary)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S5M-05050, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the University of Stirling's 50th anniversary. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament congratulates the University of Stirling on its 50th anniversary in 2017; understands that, on 18 September 1967, 164 undergraduate students and 31 postgraduates began their courses at the new Pathfoot Building and, since then, the university's alumni has grown to include over 80,000 people in 170 countries; acknowledges that many notable alumni, such as the BBC documentaries, Planet Earth and Blue Planet, cinematographer, Doug Allan, and the biotech innovator, Sunil Kadri, who founded the AKVA Group, which is understood to be the world's largest aquaculture technology supplier, have attended the university over the years; considers that the university particularly excels in the fields of research, the environment and sport as Scotland's University of Sporting Excellence, with Scottish sporting stars, such as the Commonwealth gold-winning swimmer, Ross Murdoch, and tennis superstars, Andy and Jamie Murray, using the university's facilities to train; notes that the university was the first genuinely new university in Scotland for over 400 years and considers that it has established itself as a desired place of study for students from Scotland and across the world; welcomes the fact that thousands of students continue to apply for and attend the university each year and believes that this is testament to the fantastic campus, facilities, courses and staff, and wishes everyone linked to the university the very best for the future.

17:09

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** As is traditional, I thank members from all parties who signed the motion and those who are here this evening, particularly those who are alumni of the University of Stirling, some of whom may speak this evening. I am delighted to welcome to the public gallery Gerry McCormac, who is the principal of the university and who has led that organisation with aplomb and distinction since 2010.

On 18 September 1967, the doors to the University of Stirling opened for the very first time, admitting 195 students: 164 graduates and 31 postgraduates. It was the first genuinely new university in Scotland for 400 years. The royal charter was signed in November 1967 and the great seal of Scotland was applied the following month.

Stirling's university has grown to become a global player in educational excellence, and I am delighted to lead this debate to highlight the significant history and achievements of this wonderful institution. The debate also gives us the

opportunity to consider the massive contribution that the university makes to education, culture and research.

The university has a beautiful campus, which offers a fantastic base from which to visit one of the world's most inspiring and vibrant countries. The university is currently investing an additional £40 million, to enhance student residences.

The university's first principal was Professor Tom Cottrell, who was also the university's co-founder, as well as the co-founder of the Macrobert arts centre in Stirling, which, like the university, is a thriving institution that continues to inspire to this day. Professor Cottrell's background was in chemistry—he was professor in the subject at the University of Edinburgh before he became heavily involved in the founding of the University of Stirling. I can think of no more fitting an origin story for today's University of Stirling than one that involves a chemistry professor turned founding university principal who dedicated himself to promoting the arts. The story sums up the diversity of the subjects that are taught on the campus and the knowledge on which the university is built, and it inspires new generations of students.

Since opening 50 years ago, the University of Stirling has expanded to offer more opportunities to its students. For instance, the university's contribution to sport is almost unrivalled. It is Scotland's university for sporting excellence, and it offers a number of world-class health science and sport courses. Perhaps its most notable sporting achievement is the continuing success of the swimming team. At last year's Olympics in Rio, the university was Scotland's best performer. The Great Britain swimming team took home three silver medals, and Stirling swimmers Duncan Scott and Robbie Renwick were part of the GB squad who sealed Olympic silver in the 4x200m freestyle relay. The GB team achieved its best result in 108 years, setting a new United Kingdom record, and Duncan Scott went on to smash the UK record in the 100m freestyle.

As members might imagine, a university as diverse as Stirling has tallied up impressive achievements across a large number of subjects. The university's institute of aquaculture opened in 1991 and to this day is the largest institute of its kind in the world. The university's innovation park opened in 1986 and continues to provide a hub for enterprise and business that is directly involved in research and development. It benefits from European Union funding.

The Iris Murdoch building, which Dame Judi Dench opened in 2002, is home to the world-leading dementia services development centre, which is an incredibly important focal point, given our ageing population and the increasing number

of people and families who face that debilitating condition.

Following investment of £11.5 million, the university opened its state-of-the-art library in 2011, giving students access to modern learning resources and ensuring that all students have the tools that they need to succeed in their chosen courses.

Today, the University of Stirling is ranked first in Scotland and third in the whole of the UK for graduate employment. Earlier this year, it was named in the list of the top 50 universities in the world under the age of 50. Three quarters of all the research that is conducted in the university was ranked “world leading” in the 2014 research excellence framework exercise.

The international student barometer benchmark places the university first in Scotland for welcoming students from around the world, and in the most recent *Guardian* university guide, this marvellous institution was ranked first in criminology, education, media and film, and social policy, and was ranked second in sociology. That shows the university’s remarkable track record.

I wish that the debate provided more time to talk about the university’s achievements, because there is much more to say.

There are more than 82,000 alumni of the University of Stirling, including people of 169 nationalities. Many of them have gone on to serve with distinction in many fields. Today, 14,000 students currently attend the university, with 20 per cent of them coming from overseas. With the 1,500 staff included, there are more than 120 different nationalities represented on campus today.

In its relatively short 50 years, the University of Stirling has grown to become an institution that offers education and life experience opportunities to thousands of people of all walks of life from across the globe. When, in preparing for this debate, I asked staff at the University of Stirling to sum up their ethos and what the university is about, they responded to me with this:

“Stirling staff, students, and alumni challenge the status-quo and make significant difference to society; we are driven by transformative thinking, innovative action and the desire to use our knowledge and skills to shape the world in a positive way.”

Presiding Officer, I think that I will just leave the last words to them, because they are both powerful and meaningful.

17:16

**Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP):** I congratulate Bruce Crawford on securing the debate. I suspect that the University of Stirling will

want to bottle his speech and make it the heart of its marketing strategy, because he summed up all the many fantastic attributes of the university. I also offer the University of Stirling warm congratulations on its 50th anniversary.

I speak as one of the university’s 82,000 alumni, and I want to give a few personal insights on my alma mater, because the person who stands before Parliament today was largely shaped by my time at the University of Stirling. It certainly enriched me as a person. It was the first time that I had left home to live elsewhere, and I was also the first person in my family to go to university—I had never met someone from my family who had gone to university, so it was a big move for me and an enriching experience that has shaped my outlook on life. I have many fond memories of my time there.

As Bruce Crawford mentioned, the outstanding location and beautiful surroundings at the university are the first things that strike anyone who goes to the campus. They add to the learning experience for young people at the university. I spent many a time lying on the grass staring at the stars. I am not sure whether the stars were induced by the alcohol that I consumed at the Gannochy or at the Meadowpark hotel, but it was an amazing environment to walk through every night to go back to the halls of residence.

Of course, the education that takes place there through tutorials and achieving a degree is exceptionally important, but it is part of the wider education that people receive when they go to the University of Stirling—or, indeed, any university—because they encounter other cultures. Stirling is an international university, as has been mentioned. The Japanese contingent was there when I was, and there were many Norwegians and a huge contingent from Northern Ireland, so I got to meet people from all those countries. That opens people’s eyes to what is out there in the big world, and to all its diverse cultures.

Some educational specialisms have been developed at the university, over time. When I was a cabinet secretary for nine years in the Scottish Government, I was responsible for aquaculture, among many other things. The University of Stirling is the foremost centre of knowledge for aquaculture. It is appropriate for that centre to be in Scotland, given that we are the biggest producer in aquaculture in the whole of Europe. I recall visiting the university as cabinet secretary and discussing some key issues with the staff there. In fact, I unveiled a plaque in the Pathfoot building, which I hope is still there.

The University of Stirling has certainly made its mark in aquaculture and in many other disciplines. There is not enough time to go through them all, but Bruce Crawford has mentioned many of them.



It is important, as the university staff told Bruce Crawford, that the university challenges the status quo. It has a reputation for doing that, and I hope that it keeps it up.

A couple of days ago, I noticed a news article in which Professor Linda Bauld, who is the director of the institute for social marketing at the University of Stirling and a Cancer Research UK cancer prevention champion, talked about the need to place limits on junk food and junk food promotion as a way of combating cancer, which I support.

It is good to see academics at the university speaking out on those sometimes controversial issues, pushing the boundaries of the debate and impacting on public policy. I know that the principal of the University of Stirling is in the gallery—I welcome him—and I hope that he takes away the message that it is important that the academics and the university continue to challenge the status quo.

My sense of national identity was strengthened during my time at university because, of course, not only is the university steeped in history, but Stirling is itself steeped in history. It lies in the shadow of the Wallace monument and Bannockburn is close by.

While at the university, I was a young member of the Scottish National Party, I started off the politics society and helped to run the Federation of Student Nationalists. At the time, Dr Robert McIntyre lived in Stirling. He was the SNP's first MP, and had been elected in a by-election in 1945. I got to know him, which enriched my knowledge of Scottish political history and the SNP's legacy. He invited me back to his home and his wife served me sandwiches and coffee while he told me about his time in the House of Commons. I will always remember that experience; I will never forget it.

I congratulate the university on its 50th anniversary and I wish it all the best for the next 50 years. I hope that it continues to make its mark on Scottish education and ensures that people of all abilities go to university. That is a strength of the university; indeed, I was able to go there because of that. Here's to the next 50 years.

17:21

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this evening's debate and I congratulate Bruce Crawford on securing it.

In 2017, the University of Stirling will mark 50 years since its founding. As has been mentioned, it has more than 14,000 students and 1,500 staff. It is a huge employer and makes a huge contribution to the economy in Stirling.

To celebrate the university's past, present and future, many events are planned throughout 2017, including public lectures, exhibitions, family fun days, reunions and much more besides. I welcome the events because they give the university the opportunity to engage with the community and they give individuals the chance to celebrate its success and the anniversary.

On 17 July 1964, it was announced that Stirling would be the site of a new university. That followed the publication of the Robbins report in 1963, which highlighted proposals for a new university in Scotland. In June 1965, the first principal and vice-chancellor were appointed. Precisely 50 years ago this month, the new Pathfoot building welcomed its first intake, and in 1968 the University of Stirling conferred degrees on its first cohort of graduates. It celebrated with a small number of students at the first graduation ceremony. Since then the numbers have grown and, as we have heard, there are more than 80,000 alumni from 169 different countries.

One of the many highly notable graduates is the clerk and chief executive of the Scottish Parliament, Sir Paul Grice. He was honoured for his services to this Parliament, to higher education and to the community.

The University of Stirling's alumni are held in high regard across the world. An example of that will take place in October when, as part of the anniversary, celebrations will be held at the British high commissioner's residence in Singapore, hosted by the high commissioner, with the principal and the vice-chancellor of the university present.

I take this opportunity not only to congratulate the university on its anniversary and relatively short but illustrious history, but to look at its outstanding achievements.

In 1997, the university launched, in conjunction with Marie Curie, its unique master's degree in palliative nursing care. That is a fantastic achievement. In 2009-10, *The Sunday Times* recognised the "outstanding student experience" that was recorded at the university and the quality of teaching that was experienced there. In 2014, its research was recognised when it reached the UK top 40 and took fifth place in Scotland for research. As we have already heard, it is also well ranked in the UK for graduate employability. In 2016, Stirling management school's programmes gained the accreditation of the Association of MBAs. Lots has been achieved over the 50 years that the university has seen.

I conclude by mentioning the sporting activities that take place at the university, which have already been talked about. As Bruce Crawford said in his speech, at the Rio Olympics in 2016,

the university saw three of its students receive silver medals. A student won a gold for tennis in the Paralympics there, as well.

I congratulate all who have contributed to and supported the university, and I wish it well in its prospects for the future. It is located in a fantastic site and has the fantastic opportunity of fitting into that part of Scotland—its very centre. I look forward to attending many of the celebrations, and I will do all that I can to ensure that the university is given the recognition and respect that it deserves.

17:26

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am delighted to take part in this evening's debate celebrating the University of Stirling 50th anniversary, and I thank Bruce Crawford for his motion enabling the debate to go ahead.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the growth of the university. In 1967 it was the first new university in Scotland for over 400 years, and it offers a unique campus experience in Scotland. It is a beautiful university to visit. Situated within a 330-acre estate, it is designed around a loch and the 18th century Airthrey castle. I was fortunate enough to spend a week there at a conference when I was a postgraduate student. It is fair to say that I spent more time in the social areas than I did enjoying the natural landscape, but as one of the MSPs for the area, it is always a pleasure to visit the campus throughout the seasons and to admire its location. It has won many awards and merits for its campus environment.

The establishment of the University of Stirling was part of an expansion in higher education across the United Kingdom during the 1960s. At the time, the country faced an increasingly young population, and the number of full-time students in higher education doubled during the 1960s. There were rising expectations of better-qualified school leavers who had stayed at school longer, and there was a growing belief that investment in higher education was a means of procuring national prosperity. All that resulted in a number of new universities being established.

Although those universities were created to cope with an expansion in student numbers, they were also seen as a way to inject fresh thinking into the university system. They played a significant part in expanding opportunities for more people to go to university. Many such students were the first people in their families to have access to that level of education.

Stirling has always been an outward looking and innovative university. Perhaps because it was not weighted with the expectations or traditions of the ancient universities, it was free to create a modern

identity—one that valued its students, was open to working with others and sought to make a difference.

The university has always been highly rated for its student experience. I note that a number of members are graduates, and alumni also include John Reid, now Baron Reid of Cardowan, who described his time as a Stirling student this way:

"You have a vital community with critical thought, mental rigour, and an environment second to none. Just walk around the place, why would you want to go to any other university in the world?"

It is also more than a university. The location of the MacRobert arts centre there is hugely advantageous to the university and students, as well as being a huge benefit for the local area. The expansion in recent years of sports facilities, with the designation of Stirling as Scotland's university for sporting excellence, provides excellent opportunities to competitive athletes, as well as to students. The openness of the university to the local community is important to its identity and is one of its real strengths.

The university also has a good track record of working with many partners—local to international. It has a broad range of researchers who produce excellent work with external organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors. Just last week I went to the parliamentary discussion of the "A good life in later years" research project report. The project has been carried out by community research teams of older people and has been supported by the University of Stirling and Age Scotland and funded by the Life Changes Trust. It is a really good example of the type of research that is undertaken at Stirling, in that it makes an important contribution to the public policy agenda. Stirling is one of the UK's leading research universities in health and wellbeing, the environment and people, culture and society, enterprise and the economy, and sport.

I wish the University of Stirling, all its students—some of whom are starting out on their academic journey this week—and all the staff who work on the campus the very best on this special anniversary. It is a real landmark in the university's life, and I wish everyone many successful years ahead.

17:30

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I thank Bruce Crawford for lodging the motion and I heartily congratulate Gerry McCormac, all the university staff and everyone who has contributed to the University of Stirling's success over the past 50 years.

I should declare an interest as an alumnus of the university. I was there at the same time as

Richard Lochhead; he might not remember this, but at the time we were engaged in a poster war between the Scottish National Party and the Greens. Indeed, he might not know that it was me who used to rip down his posters. There is a strong tradition of politics at Stirling and, of course, the former First Minister Jack McConnell was a student president there.

When I became a councillor, I had the pleasure of having the campus in my council ward and, over the years, I have met and worked with many generations of people who have worked and studied at the university. I have met some of the original students of 1967 as well as the students of today, who will just be starting back this week.

We all share many common experiences of being at Stirling. One that Richard Lochhead has already mentioned is the fact that the campus is a really inspiring environment to work and study in. There is something quite intense about hundreds, if not thousands, of young people on a campus, but I think that at Stirling that is counterpoised beautifully with the nature of the environment and the calmness of Airthrey loch and the Hermitage woods. Despite the many—and very welcome—expansions of the campus over the years, including the building of the national tennis centre, Stirling has always managed to keep the integrity of its natural environment and maintain that balance. That is really important; indeed, many important features of the campus echo the original Airthrey estate, and the fact that they have been retained is a great tribute to the way in which the university's estates management department has expanded the campus over time.

The other common experience is Stirling's diversity. Like Richard Lochhead, I was the first in my family to go to university, and it was the first time that I had met people from so many different backgrounds and places. That experience is really true to the vision of the Robbins report in 1963. The new universities were about ability and attainment, not background, and perhaps because of that, Stirling has always had a bit of a radical strain of politics and activism right from the 1960s to the present day. I remember how in my own time at Stirling I would get involved in campus campaigns on issues from dropping third world debt to recycling, green issues and everything else. I probably shaved a grade off my final degree as a result, but what I gained in experience was hugely important. After all, it is the well-rounded nature of one's university experience that is so important.

The university's international nature and the diversity of its students have only grown over time, and the fact that people from 120 nationalities are represented and are studying and working on the campus is a triumph. Indeed, the university has

won awards for being the most welcoming in Scotland for international students. Of course, that brings up an important point about Brexit. We need the free movement of students across the world; we need those 120 nationalities to study and stay in Stirling and to contribute to those wider communities.

If we look at the successful places around the world and the flotilla of small cities such as Tübingen in Germany, we see that they are low carbon, innovative, outward looking, smart and incredibly successful economically. They are successful because of their strong links to strong universities, and I think that there is a real opportunity for the university to play a central role in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire city deal—indeed, perhaps even more of a central role as we move forward—by driving innovation and excellence, but in a way that addresses some of the sharp inequalities in Stirling's surrounding communities. That would be a great legacy, and it would be true to Robbins's original vision of inclusion and the principles on which the University of Stirling was founded 50 years ago.

17:34

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

I, too, thank Bruce Crawford for lodging the motion and giving us the opportunity to celebrate the University of Stirling's 50th anniversary. I also extend a warm welcome to Principal McCormac.

As Bruce Crawford and other members have mentioned, only a handful of students were enrolled when the University of Stirling first opened its doors in September 1967. Since then, the university has grown in size and reputation to become a centre of excellence in academic research and innovation and for producing graduates who are sought after by employers of all sizes and in all sectors and locations. The quality of education that the university provides is clearly demonstrated by the remarkable success of its graduates. Other members have quite rightly highlighted notable alumni of the university. The university is ranked first in Scotland and third in the UK for graduate employability, with 97 per cent of its graduates being in employment or further study this year. That is quite a remarkable endorsement of the quality of teaching and education that the university provides.

The University of Stirling rightly prides itself on its ability to combine that excellence in training with excellence in research and innovation. In particular, it has an outstanding track record on research and innovation in several specialist areas, including in aquaculture, which has been mentioned, dementia and the environment, to name but a few.

As we have heard, the university is home to the institute of aquaculture, which is a leading international centre in its field and the largest of its kind in the world. With a community of 350 highly skilled staff and students from around the world, that institute brings together world-class researchers from a variety of disciplines to focus on critical questions that face not just this country, but the world, including how to support communities in developing countries so that they have enough to eat and how to develop strategies for sustainable aquaculture and aquatic food security. I am sure that members will agree that the institute and the university are addressing really important questions.

Since its formation, the institute of aquaculture has grown steadily.

**Bruce Crawford:** I thank Dean Lockhart for letting me make a brief intervention, which allows me to right an omission. I should have mentioned at the beginning of the debate, of course, that the University of Stirling is not in my constituency; it is in the constituency of my good friend Keith Brown MSP, who is here this evening. I thank Dean Lockhart very much for allowing me to intervene to ensure that I got that on the record.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are now back in the cabinet secretary's good books.

**Dean Lockhart:** I welcome Mr Brown to the debate.

I was highlighting the University of Stirling's global engagement and international reach, which play out across a lot of areas and features of what the university does. Its global reach is shown by the fact that it has international students from more than 120 countries represented on campus and more than 82,000 alumni from 150 countries. That is set to continue after freshers week this week. I am sure that we all remember the first time that we attended university or another institution and the warm welcome that can be enjoyed on occasions such as freshers week.

The university's international ambitions are also reflected in strategic international partnerships to promote excellence, innovation and teaching with a global impact. It has partnerships throughout the world, including with institutions in the USA, Australia, Canada and the far east through the study abroad programme. The university also offers undergraduate degrees to students in Singapore through a partnership with the Singapore Institute of Management. I have met students who attend the SIM. They speak very highly of the courses that are offered through that joint partnership.

As Scottish higher education continues to provide a world-class offering, I encourage the university to continue to reach out globally and

attract even greater numbers of international students to study in Stirling and to get to know the fantastic campus, the city and the countryside that surrounds the university.

I again thank Bruce Crawford for bringing this debate to the chamber, and I wish the University of Stirling all the best as it enters another 50 years.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Shirley-Anne Somerville to close for the Government. Minister, you have seven minutes or thereabouts, please.

17:39

**The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I, too, thank Bruce Crawford for bringing the motion to the chamber and allowing us the opportunity to reflect on the many achievements of the University of Stirling. I welcome the principal of the university, Gerry McCormac, to the public gallery.

Bruce Crawford and other members have rightly pointed to the beautiful campus setting of the university, which is stunning. The university is unique in many respects, but its campus life is very special. Claire Baker pointed out the important role of the MacBob centre in the campus—it is important not only to the university but to the local community, and it ties the university and the local community together in a very important way.

The growth of the university has been incredible, as members have pointed out. To go from under 200 students in 1967 to just short of 12,000 in 2015-16 is incredible. We have only to consider the contributions of its alumni to understand the impact that the university has had both in Scotland and further afield. To the alumni who are mentioned in Bruce Crawford's motion, I add Iain Banks and Jackie Kay, two of our most well-regarded literary figures, and, in the field of science and innovation, Muffy Calder. In the political world, the University of Stirling can count ministers, cabinet secretaries and even former First Ministers among its graduates. We can also point to many MSPs who are alumni of the university, such as Richard Lochhead, who spoke about his experiences at the campus both as a student and as a minister.

There will also be many ministers who have visited the campus and who will attest to the university's wide range of specialisms, such as in aquaculture or dementia, which have been mentioned in the debate. I can only hope to reach the dizzy heights of unveiling a plaque in the

Pathfoot building—an impressive feat by Mr Lochhead. Mark Ruskell pointed to the poster wars—who can forget those from our days in student politics? I am intrigued to know whether it was Mark Ruskell or Richard Lochhead who won the poster wars, but I think that it might have been Mr Lochhead.

On a more serious note, Mark Ruskell pointed to the diversity in the university, which is exceptionally important, with people from different backgrounds coming together, whether they are from families from which no one has ever been to university before or from different nationalities. Currently, there are people from 120 nationalities in the university, which is something that the institution can be very proud of. The internationalism of our higher education institutions is something that makes them some of the most respected higher education institutions across the globe. However, as Mark Ruskell pointed out, that position is unfortunately under threat from Brexit, as we have seen a drop in the number of applications from the EU coming forward. Of course, we now also lack a post-study work visa for international students. A change in both those areas would help the University of Stirling and other universities increase their international standing.

The role of the universities has never been more important. As the First Minister said when introducing the programme for government, we want Scotland to be the best place in the world to bring up children, grow up and be educated, live, work, visit and invest. Ensuring that we have a highly educated and skilled population that is able to meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy is vital for our future prosperity and wellbeing. That is why improving education is the Scottish Government's number 1 priority. The University of Stirling has made a marked contribution in that regard, with an impressive record on widening access, on which it will continue to work. I was delighted to see the appointment of a new director of admissions and access to oversee the university's projects, which, as members have said in the debate, further embrace the university's ability to attract people who are the first in their family to go to such an institution. I am sure that that area will continue to grow.

Links to colleges are also exceptionally important and are something that the University of Stirling can be very proud of. Its links with Forth Valley College, with which there is full articulation, have highly impressed me on my many ministerial visits. Recently I was at the Forth Valley College campus in Stirling when members of the university were talking about the learner journey and working hand-in-hand with employers and colleges to ensure that they are delivering for students in the local area and further afield. I am delighted to see

that commitment in the Forth valley by both the college and the university.

The recent stats from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that the university continues to be very successful in terms of outcomes for graduates—clearly, the university is getting something very right in the quality, relevance and modernity of its teaching and research.

Bruce Crawford rightly pointed to the university's sporting excellence. It was designated as Scotland's university for sporting excellence in 2008. It is clear that whether students are studying sport or participating in it, sport is very much at the heart of the university's mission. As an alumnus of the university, I have to admit that my first visit to the sports area in the university was during a ministerial visit. In my two years at the university I managed not to visit the sports centre at all. I would like to claim that I was in the library for most of that time, but I was perhaps also in the student union, specialising in student politics in my party's youth wing. Nevertheless, I am delighted to see the university's marked sporting excellence, regardless of whether I went to the sports centre.

Many speakers have pointed to the number of awards and the amount of recognition that the university has received and its strong performance in the university rankings, whether in the *Times Higher Education* world university rankings or *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* good university guide 2017. No doubt, that is due to its fantastic record in teaching and research excellence.

As someone who studied at the University of Stirling for two years as a postgraduate and had a very happy time there, I, along with colleagues who studied or worked there, am confident that the institution will build on the history that we are celebrating today. I am sure that we will be back in the chamber in years to come to celebrate its further success.

*Meeting closed at 17:46.*



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