



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 24 October 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 24 October 2017

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. Before I introduce our time for reflection contributor, I remind members that we have a ministerial statement later today on the launch of the British Sign Language national plan. BSL interpreters are present in the chamber and will be interpreting this afternoon's business. I am sure that members will join me in welcoming them, along with the BSL users in the public gallery, to the Parliament today. Our time for reflection leader today is Dr Sean Morrissey, Bahá'í Community of Scotland.

Dr Sean Morrissey (Bahá'í Community of Scotland): Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

This weekend, around 5 million Bahá'ís and countless more friends, neighbours, family and co-workers gathered in localities across the world to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith.

The Presiding Officer: Dr Morrissey, forgive me for interrupting. There is a problem with the microphones in the chamber. I suspend the meeting so that it can be resolved.

14:03

Meeting suspended.

14:14

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, everybody, for your patience. As you can tell, the sound system has been fixed. I ask our time for reflection leader, Dr Morrissey, from the Bahá'í faith, to start from the beginning.

Dr Morrissey: Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thanks again for the opportunity to address you today.

This weekend, around 5 million Bahá'ís and countless more friends, neighbours, family and co-workers gathered in localities across the world to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith. The weekend's festivities, involving people from diverse ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds,

constituted a powerful demonstration of global solidarity in a world seemingly ever more divided. The joyful, reverent and uplifting celebrations provided rich opportunities for those present to reflect on Bahá'u'lláh's life and teachings and their implications for today's society.

Bahá'u'lláh was born in Iran in 1817. Though blessed with saintly character and uncommon wisdom, he was made to endure 40 years of suffering and exile. Yet Bahá'u'lláh's teachings speak to the nobility of the human spirit—the good in us all. The society that he envisioned is founded on principles that will safeguard that virtue and integrity.

At the heart of Bahá'í teachings is the principle of the oneness of humankind. Bahá'u'lláh compared the world of humanity to the human body—an organism whose functioning is governed by co-operation and reciprocity. Once viewed with scepticism, this fact—that humanity constitutes a single people and our world is essentially interconnected—is now widely accepted.

The oneness of humankind has far-reaching implications. It implies a transformation of the very relationships that bind society. It demands that all forms of prejudice be eliminated. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that prejudice in its various forms destroys the edifice of humanity, whereas the light of unity is so powerful that it can illuminate the whole earth.

The oneness of humanity also demands an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, including universal access to education. It calls for a set of economic relationships that allow wealth to serve the interests of the entire human family.

The oneness of humankind affirms the principle of unity in diversity. Fundamentally, the Bahá'í writings see every person as a spiritual being with unique talents and capacities; every person is

“a mine rich in gems of inestimable value”.

Everyone has a part to play in carrying forward an ever-advancing civilisation.

May your work as parliamentarians, who are serving in a period of unprecedented global change, reflect the principle of the oneness of mankind and all that it implies for a vibrant, unified Scotland playing its part in an interconnected world.

Topical Question Time

14:18

Institutional Racism (Police Scotland)

1. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports of institutional racism in Police Scotland. (S5T-00720)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson): Police Scotland's evidence to the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing highlights the positive action that it is taking to support our "Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030". For example, the introduction of a new training and mentoring programme for ethnic minority candidates is already helping to ensure that Police Scotland's workforce better reflects the diversity of Scotland's communities: more than 10 per cent of the police recruits who joined Police Scotland in September 2017 came from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Through an internal review of hate crime policy and procedures, Police Scotland is also seeking to improve the recognition, recording and reporting of hate crime and incidents across the country. An extensive and detailed programme of training is in place to support an understanding of and effective response to equality and diversity issues.

As Police Scotland itself acknowledges, there are areas for improvement in how it serves and represents minority ethnic communities, but I do not doubt its determination to do so. I will continue to receive updates on the progress that is being made.

John Finnie: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the Macpherson report was seen as a pivotal, watershed moment and that it has always been the holy grail for many to have the police admit to institutional racism. What has given rise to my question today is the report from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights giving the stark facts that only 1 per cent of officers and police staff come from a BME background, which is relatively unchanged since 2013, that the proportion of BME police officers has never risen above 1 per cent and that BME officers and staff continue to leave in high numbers. Those facts could certainly be construed as being institutional failings. Setting aside the issue of recruitment, can the cabinet secretary advise what he is doing to establish why BME staff leave in higher numbers and what he is doing to ensure that BME staff are retained?

Michael Matheson: The member raises an important issue. As I outlined in my initial response, Police Scotland has already taken

forward work to recruit more individuals from BME communities. Progress has been made on that and the recent intake into Police Scotland demonstrates the significant progress that it has achieved over the course of the work that it has taken forward. Part of the work that we are doing as a Government is through the race equality framework, which sets out key priorities and themed areas with set goals that the police must take forward to address issues of racial equality. That framework will be taken forward over the next 15 years.

Within that, a number of specific goals have been set for Police Scotland, which include that it be more reflective of the communities that it serves. In its response to the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing's call for evidence, Police Scotland set out the actions that it is taking. For example, the positive action team has been established to support greater recruitment of individuals from BME communities into the police service, which has helped to improve uptake, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks. Alongside that, Police Scotland has a mentoring programme in place so that individuals from BME communities who join the police service have someone in the service who can support them.

It is important to recognise—I am sure that the member will acknowledge this—that Police Scotland is putting in place a number of different programmes and initiatives to improve the representation and the retention of individuals from BME communities in the service. That is being driven by the race equality framework, which was published in March last year and which sets out key objectives for Police Scotland to take forward, which it is committed to doing in the work that it has already started.

John Finnie: Of course I applaud the work that is being done with recruitment and positive action. Indeed, the CRER was involved in the race equality framework, which will continue to 2030. Of course, we have had laudable statements from senior police officers and, indeed, the staff associations. I note that part of the training that is taking place is about organisational culture, but it is evident that that is not always resulting in positive action on the front line. Again, that has to be seen as an institutional failure. As I am sure the cabinet secretary is aware, the CRER asks for four key improvements in the police service, which are that it be more representative, more responsive, more collaborative and more accessible, particularly with regard to issues of transparency. Those seem entirely reasonable to me. What will the cabinet secretary do to ensure that those improvements are made?

Michael Matheson: The four key areas that have been outlined by the CRER are all valid and I

know that Police Scotland will give active consideration to them. I am updated on a regular basis on the progress that Police Scotland is making against the objectives that have been set out in the race equality framework and I will continue to engage with it on that initiative. I will also be interested in the outcome of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing's investigation into the issue and in its report on that.

We have been working with Police Scotland to support work that it can take forward within the organisation. For example, we have provided funding to support ethnic minority police employees in the organisation through the Scottish Police Muslim Association. However, Police Scotland is also conducting an internal review of its procedures and the way in which it takes forward matters relating to hate crime. That sits very closely beside the work that we are doing in the review of hate crime legislation in Scotland to ensure that we have the right legislation in place and that Police Scotland has the right type of response in its organisation. Alongside that, Police Scotland is providing training on diversity and equality, which again feeds out of the race equality framework. There are regular updates on the progress that is being made through the race equality framework.

I can assure the member that actions are being taken and that we have a process in place that allows us to measure the progress that Police Scotland is making on those matters. I am regularly updated on the actions that it is taking. I am determined to ensure that Police Scotland is doing everything that it can in this area and I am confident that the executive team in Police Scotland is determined to do that as well.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I will allow three more brief questions on the subject.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary talks of recruitment into the force, but none of the current executive team that he mentioned is from a BME background, and the number of BME officers in senior roles is lower than in the force in general. Does he believe that that is acceptable? Can he outline any steps that he has taken in his time in office to encourage the promotion of BME officers to senior level in Police Scotland and ensure representation at the top level?

Michael Matheson: The short answer is no—it is not acceptable. Part of the challenge has been that, historically, there has been a poor approach to succession planning in the organisation to make sure that individuals who could progress to senior ranks are encouraged and supported to do so. However, the Scottish Police Authority is now taking proactive action to support that.

I am sure that the member will recognise that, in order to get to the senior ranks in the police service and, in particular, the executive team, officers need to have a considerable level of experience, and it will take time to recruit more individuals into those posts from BME backgrounds—and from the other gender, because at present it is largely dominated by male officers, with the exception of Deputy Chief Constable Rose Fitzpatrick.

The service recognises that it needs to take more action on that, and I have been working with it to encourage it to do so. A key part of that is effective succession planning and making sure that those within the organisation who have the skills and talents to progress are being encouraged to do so. The Scottish Police Authority is working with officers to ensure that that type of succession planning is now being taken forward on an on-going basis.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights raises many important concerns. Will the cabinet secretary commit to reviewing the way in which we record police incidents and to regularly publishing data concerning the engagement of the BME community with Police Scotland, to ensure that there is transparency and greater accountability?

Michael Matheson: The four key areas that the CRER has highlighted are all valid areas on which Police Scotland can take further action, and it has already committed to engaging on the four points that have been highlighted. However, I also refer the member to the submission that Police Scotland has made to the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing, which highlights the extensive range of work that it is already undertaking in this field. That also has to be recognised.

As I mentioned, there is already an internal review within Police Scotland of both its policy and its procedures around recording and dealing with hate crimes, and that sits very closely with our review of the hate crime legislation in Scotland.

However, where there are areas in which we can strengthen transparency and accountability in this area, I am always prepared to make sure that that action is taken. Of course, we will welcome the final report from the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing and consider what further measures it believes are necessary to support further progress in the area.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary provide any detail on how much confidence the Scottish public—across all sections—have in their local police force?

Michael Matheson: Confidence in policing in Scotland in general is high. The most recent data

that we have is from the Scottish crime and justice survey, which found that the majority of adults had confidence in the police force in Scotland. Additional developmental analysis, which was based on the combination of data from three large household surveys, found that people from ethnic minorities reported a higher level of confidence in policing in their local area.

Overall, confidence in the police service in Scotland remains high, but Police Scotland has also recognised that we need to take further action to make sure that it is engaging effectively with minority communities, and that is a key part of the developmental and improvement work that it has already started to take forward.

Suicidal Thoughts (Young People)

2. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking in response to reports that Childline has recorded a record number of young people expressing suicidal thoughts in the last year. (S5T-00711)

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): We welcome an increase in the number of young people who are seeking help with suicidal thoughts. It illustrates that the stigma and discrimination that have long been associated with mental health problems are decreasing, and it provides more opportunities to deliver the support that is required.

We take our young people's mental health very seriously and we want every child and young person to have appropriate access to emotional and mental wellbeing support. All public services that come into contact with children and young people have a role to play in supporting their mental health and wellbeing.

We have commenced a national review of personal and social education in schools, which includes consideration of the role of guidance and counselling in local authority schools. We have in recent years invested additional funds in child and adolescent mental health services, and we are putting an additional £150 million into mental health over five years, some of which will be used to improve prevention of mental ill health and to improve treatment in CAMHS.

I commend all those who volunteer as Childline counsellors, who are making a real difference to children's and young people's lives.

Michelle Ballantyne: In September, ISD Scotland published a report about how long children and young people wait for mental health services that are provided by the national health service in Scotland. It found that in the quarter that ended in June this year, one in five children did not begin his or her treatment in CAMHS within

the 18-week target. What action is the Scottish Government taking to improve that figure and to ensure that no child is allowed to slip through the net or miss out on treatment that might save his or her life?

Maureen Watt: As Michelle Ballantyne might know, we were the first Administration to introduce targets for waiting times for CAMHS: we introduced a 90 per cent target for 18 weeks referral to treatment. Although some health boards are making real progress on reducing their waiting times, we are not yet seeing the consistency that I would like in movement towards meeting the targets and sustaining that. However, Michelle Ballantyne might want to know that in the second quarter of 2017, 29 people waited more than 53 weeks to start treatment, which was an improvement on the figure of 74 for the previous quarter, and on the figure for the equivalent quarter in 2016, when 151 young people were waiting. Therefore, we are making progress, but there is still work to do.

Michelle Ballantyne: It is good to hear that some progress is being made.

In the minister's first response, she mentioned teachers taking on some of the workload in helping young people with mental health issues. Will she tell us a little bit about how teachers will be trained to deal with that very important issue? Given that it is often very difficult to get teachers out of the classroom and out of school to receive training, how will that training be scheduled?

Maureen Watt: As I said in my first answer, we have already commenced a review of personal and social education in schools. It is not just teachers who are involved in that; everyone who is involved in schools is involved. For example, Education Scotland is rolling out to all local authorities Scottish mental health first aid—SMHFA—training for children and young people, and some of the extra money is being used to train staff in the secondary school community to increase their confidence in approaching pupils who they think may be struggling with mental health problems.

North Ayrshire Council provides a good example. It is using the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills's attainment fund to fund Place2Be, which is participating in a research project to deliver targeted counselling services in a limited number of schools to see what the impact is and whether we should roll out the services. There is on-going work.

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Like other members around the chamber, I welcome the news from the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland that the number of young people who are being treated in non-

specialised wards has fallen dramatically. I congratulate the minister on that decrease. What investment is the Scottish Government making to increase the mental health workforce?

Maureen Watt: As Maree Todd has pointed out, mental health is a priority for the Scottish Government, as we have shown by our increased investment of £150 million. That investment includes £54 million to support the reduction in waiting times, £4.6 million to Healthcare Improvement Scotland to work with health boards to improve service capacity and increase the supply and training of the workforce, £10 million to support new ways of improving mental health in primary care, and £15 million to support better access to CAMHS and innovation. A great deal of work is being done to help to improve the waiting time targets and to ensure that our young people get help as quickly as possible.

Motion Without Notice

14:34

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Before we move on, given the earlier technical difficulty with our sound system, I am minded to take a motion without notice, under rule 11.2.4 of standing orders, to move decision time to 5.15.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 11.2.4, Decision Time be taken at 5.15 pm.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Motion agreed to.

British Sign Language (National Plan)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move to the next item of business. I assure members that the following statement from me is intentional and is not a reflection of our earlier microphone difficulties.

The Presiding Officer made a contribution in British Sign Language and provided the following translation:

Good afternoon. Welcome to the Scottish Parliament for a debate on the launch of the British Sign Language national plan.

The Presiding Officer continued in English.

I ask members who wish to speak in the debate—I am sorry; I mean those who wish to ask questions following the statement, as there shall be no debate, please—to press their request-to-speak buttons. I ask the minister to deliver his statement.

14:36

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Mark McDonald): It is a privilege and an honour to introduce Scotland's first British Sign Language national plan, which I launched this morning at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. It is the United Kingdom's first and only BSL national plan, and it was particularly symbolic to meet students of the UK's first and only degree in the performing arts that is run in BSL. The plan provides yet another example of the forward-thinking and progressive approach that we are taking to social policy in Scotland.

The chamber debated the draft plan in April, and I am delighted to share the final plan. It has been shaped by more than 1,000 individuals and dozens of organisations that participated in the consultation online in BSL or English or in one of nearly 100 events across the country.

When we debated the draft plan—and when we unanimously passed the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015—the public gallery was full of BSL users, as it is today. It is great to see so many of them here. In particular, I welcome members of the BSL national advisory group, which we call the NAG, and I recognise their important role.

The NAG is a collaboration of deaf and deafblind BSL users that has worked alongside Scottish public bodies for the past 18 months to help to shape Scotland's first BSL national plan. A truly co-productive approach has been taken, and I thank the NAG members for their dedication and support.

Our long-term aim is ambitious. We want to make Scotland the best place in the world for people whose first or preferred language is BSL to live in, work in and visit. That means that deaf and deafblind BSL users will be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland as active, healthy citizens and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

The BSL national plan sets out 10 long-term goals for BSL in Scotland, which cover early years and education; training and work; health, mental health and wellbeing; transport; culture and the arts; and justice and democracy. The legislation requires the plan to cover the next six years, but we are ambitious for change, so the plan sets out 70 actions that we will take in the next three years, and it will be followed in 2020 by the publication of a progress report that will include a further set of actions that we will deliver by 2023. Future plans, which we will publish every six years, will take us even closer to our 10 long-term goals.

I will say more about the goals and about some of the actions that we will take by 2020. We recognise the critical importance of language in the early years. We will ensure that families and carers with a deaf or deafblind child are given information about BSL and deaf culture and are offered support to learn to sign with their child. We will also increase the provision of information, advice and support services in BSL for deaf parents and carers of babies, children and young people from birth and throughout childhood and adolescence.

In education, the Scottish Government's goal is that all children and young people should reach their full potential at school and beyond. The plan sets out more than a dozen actions that we will take to ensure that that applies equally to children and young people who use BSL. The actions in the plan will improve the experience of pupils and students who use BSL, enable teachers to provide them with a better service and encourage deaf parents to be more actively involved in their child's education.

We want more children to be able to learn BSL in schools. My visit to Stoneywood primary school in Aberdeen over the recess showed me how much children enjoy learning BSL. We will work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to develop new qualifications in BSL, which will make it a more attractive subject choice as part of the Scottish curriculum. When pupils approach the end of their school days, we will provide a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL to support their career and learning choices and the transition from school to college, university or the workplace. When they move into the world of work, we want them to feel supported to develop the necessary skills to become and remain valued

members of the Scottish workforce and to progress in their careers.

I turn my attention briefly to the range of actions in the plan to improve the health and wellbeing of BSL users in Scotland. For example, we will increase the availability of relevant health information in BSL, which will include ensuring that information on national health screening and immunisation programmes is routinely translated into BSL and is easy to access. We will also develop a learning resource for national health service staff to raise awareness of BSL and deaf culture.

There are 70 actions in the BSL national plan and I have been able to mention only some of them. There are also actions to improve access to information and services in transport; in culture, leisure, sport and the arts; and in justice. There is a range of actions on participation in democracy and public life—in particular, I highlight our commitment to provide funding to enable deaf BSL users and people with disability-related costs to put themselves forward for election to the Parliament in 2021 through our new access to elected office fund. Perhaps, by the time we discuss Scotland's second BSL national plan in 2023, we will have an MSP who uses BSL.

The BSL national plan covers all national public bodies that are directly answerable to the Scottish ministers. That means that we have been able to take a strategic, co-ordinated approach at the national level. Other public bodies—including local authorities, regional NHS boards, colleges and universities—and the Scottish Parliament will have to publish their own plans next year. We are keen to share our learning and to support public bodies to develop their own plans. We will do that through a series of roadshows across Scotland and through guidance, which will be uploaded to our new British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 website.

Over the next three years, we will offer public bodies practical support through the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 partnership, which was formerly known as the deaf sector partnership. The partnership, which includes the British Deaf Association, Deaf Action, Deafblind Scotland, the National Deaf Children's Society and the Scottish Council on Deafness, has been awarded funding of £1.3 million to continue its important work. I take the opportunity to thank all those organisations, and others that work in BSL, for their contribution so far and for the work that they will do in the months and years ahead to help to ensure that the 2015 act makes a difference to people across Scotland.

Our approach to BSL has been warmly welcomed by the United Nations in Geneva, by our BSL communities and the organisations that

represent them and by the Parliament. I hope that my statement will also gain the crucial cross-party support that the BSL legislation enjoyed so that we can work together across political parties, across Scotland and with deaf and deafblind BSL users to promote and support BSL and to support all those who use it.

I commend the BSL national plan to the chamber and look forward to taking questions from members.

The Presiding Officer: We have around 20 minutes for questions.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the minister for giving prior sight of the BSL plan and for his statement. I warmly congratulate the Scottish Government and all those who have helped to make significant progress on ensuring that all people who are deaf and who have a hearing impairment are much better served in education and by all the public bodies with which they come into contact. That is very good news indeed.

As the minister acknowledged, the changes are substantial and will continue well into the future. I ask him three things. First, what estimate has the Scottish Government made of the numbers of specialist staff who will be required throughout Scotland to implement the changes? Secondly, what efforts have been made to provide an accurate estimate of the continuing costs of training those staff? Thirdly, in light of some of the evidence that was originally presented to the committee, when young people expressed concerns about their experiences at colleges and universities, will the action in the BSL plan mean that changes will become part of the outcome agreements for further education and higher education institutions, or will the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council provide separate guidelines?

Mark McDonald: On Liz Smith's initial question about the relevant numbers, we have not attempted to put fixed numbers in the plan, because we recognise that there will be varying needs in the different sectors across Scotland. We accept and understand that there are variations in interpretation services with the pool of interpreters who are already there and we will be ensuring that courses are available and that there is capacity across the colleges and universities that provide BSL qualifications to ensure that we have the throughput of interpreters that is required to support the work that we are doing.

On the budget, all the actions in the plan are being taken forward and the work that I have identified that the Scottish Government will be doing in relation to the actions over the coming three years is fully budgeted for.

On her question about colleges and universities, each college and university will be required to produce its own BSL plan under the terms of the legislation and we will be working closely with colleges and universities on that. We will also be looking carefully at their approach to widening access, and the work that is highlighted in the action plan in relation to colleges and universities improving people's experience of and access to universities will be taken forward alongside that, with the aim of each college and university producing a BSL plan that reflects the experience that BSL users should have when they attend university or college.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I warmly welcome the publication of the strategy and the ambition shown within it. I thank the minister for giving me advance sight of his statement and of the strategy and for the volume of work that he and his officials have clearly put into producing the strategy. I also thank the BSL national advisory group for the work that it has done on the strategy, as well as everyone who responded to the consultation.

Through the strategy, what steps will the Government take to increase the number of much-needed BSL interpreters? How will it ensure that BSL users do not have to rely on a family member to interpret sensitive information during a medical appointment? Has the Government given any consideration to how it could support deaf BSL users who would like to participate in the Deaflympics?

Mark McDonald: I again put on record my thanks to Mark Griffin, who took the BSL legislation forward as a member's bill in Parliament and worked in a collaborative manner with my colleague Alasdair Allan and with the wider BSL community. I said in my statement that the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 is an example of the progressive approach that we are taking to social policy in Scotland and a fine example of the kind of cross-party approach that we can take on such issues to achieve positive outcomes.

On the points that Mark Griffin raises about interpreters, I mentioned to Liz Smith that we would be taking forward work to increase the number of interpreters out there, and over the next two years we are going to sponsor two new training programmes, one at Heriot-Watt University and one at Queen Margaret University, designed to support BSL interpreters to work in the specialist fields of health, mental health and justice. That perhaps addresses the second part of his question, about increasing the availability of interpreters to work in the field of health. As well as that, as the requirement for local plans rests with health boards, health boards themselves will

have to give consideration to the point that Mark Griffin raises about ensuring that it is not just left to family members to interpret for BSL users at health appointments. As he rightly identifies, there might be sensitive information that they do not wish to disclose with family members present.

I will take away his third point, about support for participation in the deaf olympics, and discuss with my colleague, the Minister for Public Health and Sport, how we can encourage and promote participation in the deaf olympics. I will get back to Mr Griffin in writing about that.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): In order to tackle the interpreter shortfall in the long term, we need to ensure that BSL interpreting is promoted as a career choice to young people, so I welcome the new qualification noted in the minister's statement. Perhaps considering the short to medium term, will the minister advise what steps might be taken alongside that to restore pathways for deaf people to become tutors?

Mark McDonald: Yes, absolutely. We are looking not just at tutors but at positions throughout the education system. We have committed to exploring with the General Teaching Council for Scotland how we can remove some of the barriers that prevent deaf people from entering the teaching profession. We will look at how we can remove barriers, where they exist, to enable deaf people to access the opportunities that we believe they should be entitled to access. I give Graeme Dey the commitment that we will be exploring that line of work.

The Presiding Officer: I call Michelle Ballantyne.

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer. Sorry, Presiding Officer, I just demoted you.

I welcome the content and sentiment of today's statement. Last year, the National Deaf Children's Society reported that 90 per cent of deaf children have hearing parents who have limited knowledge of deafness and are unlikely to be using any form of BSL. How will the Scottish Government ensure that parents are given the resources to help their children, to ensure that they are able to get the best start in the family home setting?

Mark McDonald: Action 10 is about improving access to early years services for parents whose child is diagnosed as deaf or deaf-blind, by developing information about BSL and deaf culture for service providers who support parents, such as health visitors. Action 11 is about assisting families of deaf and deaf-blind children, ensuring that they have access to BSL resources as early as possible in their child's life. That will include consulting with BSL users and other stakeholders to assess the most appropriate platforms for

signposting and disseminating information and working with partners to determine the best way of enabling families and carers to learn BSL, so that they can communicate effectively with their deaf or deaf-blind child in the crucial early years.

We will be coming back in 2020 with further actions to develop towards 2023. Some of the action points are about determining the best vehicle for delivering the outcomes that we want to see and once we determine that, we will take the work forward—either before or when we set out further actions when we report back to Parliament in 2020.

Therefore, a range of actions in the plan will address the points that the National Deaf Children's Society and Michelle Ballantyne have raised about ensuring that support is available to parents when they need it.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Action 17 of the strategy commits the Government to undertake additional investigations into the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff who work with deaf and deaf-blind pupils in schools. Will the minister assure us that he intends that to be a precursor to moving towards a minimum required level of BSL for such teachers?

Mark McDonald: In the consultation, we heard about the variable nature of the qualifications and levels of BSL among teachers and communication support workers. This is about us undertaking a more comprehensive analysis of what the actual picture is. I give Iain Gray the commitment that I want to see people being supported to the most appropriate level. If that requires us to set a minimum standard, that is what the Government will do.

I want to ensure that if we do establish a minimum standard, we are able to put in place the necessary support for those individuals who do not yet meet it, lest we end up creating a shortage as a result of lifting the standard. That is what the work is about: undertaking the analysis to find out what the general picture is, then considering how best we can support individuals who are maybe not at the level that we would like them to be at, so that they can get to that level, to their benefit professionally and the benefit of the people they support.

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Like everyone else in the chamber, I greatly welcome the national plan.

The minister will be aware of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's recent work on the budget, in which we looked at widening access to university for those who use BSL as their first language. The limited options for potential students to access a suitable application process were one issue that we uncovered. What will the

national plan do to ensure that those who want to access higher and further education are able to do so through a contextualised application process?

Mark McDonald: There are a number of actions in the plan that relate to further and higher education, including ones to improve access and support. Application processes are matters for individual institutions and might be better taken forward as part of their local plans, which the Scottish Government and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council will be working to support to ensure that application processes are as open and accessible as they can be. They are also part of our wider consideration of the approach to widening access.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I commend the good work that is taking place.

I return to the implications of the capacity issues, which have already been touched on. Often, young people have to rely on family and friends for support and there can be confidentiality and privacy issues, in particular in relation to medical appointments. What priority has the minister given to that? I appreciate what he has said about the role of the Government and health boards, but those are key issues for young people.

Mark McDonald: I accept that entirely and we need to look at that area very carefully in prioritising the actions that we take forward. As I have said, we recognise that there are gaps in the general interpreting capacity and in specific areas of Scottish public life in which there is not the level of interpreters that we want to see to support the kind of work that John Finnie has highlighted. That is why we are sponsoring new training programmes.

Before people come through those programmes, we need to look at how to address the issue in the here and now. We will give that careful consideration, but I cannot give a firm commitment immediately on what will happen. We have set out the actions, acknowledging the issue that was raised in the consultation, and we have put in place work to try to increase capacity, which will, I hope, address the point that John Finnie raises.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I warmly welcome the minister's statement about the national plan and support Graeme Dey's point about the desire that has been expressed by many people in the deaf community in Moray and elsewhere that tutors from the deaf community should be employed to teach BSL in local colleges. Does the minister feel that that would be good practice and, given his reference to local plans, could it be included in local plans?

Mark McDonald: I certainly think that the practice could be included in local plans, but I

must be careful because I do not dictate or determine what goes into local plans. Where required, the Government will seek to support the development of local plans, which will be produced a year from now.

As Richard Lochhead and Graeme Dey highlighted, we want to ensure that opportunities are available for BSL users. On Iain Gray's point, we also want to ensure that those who are involved in the teaching of BSL have the required qualifications and that they have access to the qualifications that would enable them to take up the posts that we want them to take up.

There are different actions across the action plan that will remove some barriers, and the local plans provide a vehicle for removing barriers at the local level.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): The Liberal Democrats welcome and support the commitment from the minister to ensure that more information about treatment in the NHS will be made available in British Sign Language. Can he be more specific about the information that will be made available in BSL for those who are suffering from or seeking advice about mental health issues?

Mark McDonald: Action 45 states that we will

"Ensure that—in line with Scotland's Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027—BSL users ... get the right help at the right time, expect recovery, and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma."

It commits us to ensure that, by 2020,

"NHS Boards and Integration Authorities ... take action so that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users"

and

"information about mental health accessible for BSL users"

is developed

"through 'NHS Inform'".

It also states that

"NHS 24 will explore how telemedicine initiatives like 'Breathing Space' can provide counselling in BSL as an easy-to-access mental health support."

Those are three specific measures in the plan to 2020. There will be a progress report in 2020 with further actions up to 2023, and we will continue to look at what we can do to improve access to all levels of support for BSL users, in terms of mental health and general health and wellbeing.

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I welcome the fact that the national plan includes the development of SQA awards in BSL as a long-term goal. Dingwall academy, which is in my constituency, is really keen—as am I—for there to be an accredited school qualification in BSL and

for BSL to have the same status as other languages.

I will follow on from Mr Rumbles's question. Partly because of social isolation, BSL users are disproportionately affected by poor mental health. How will the plan address that?

Mark McDonald: I look forward to visiting Dingwall academy next month. Maree Todd has, at every opportunity, assiduously highlighted the academy's work on BSL, and I look forward to seeing its work.

I had the opportunity to see the fantastic work that is being done by Stoneywood school, which is in my constituency. It was quite inspirational to watch primary 4 children acting as teachers to teach other children BSL.

Maree Todd asked about poor mental health. As well as access to mental health support, we must also remember the root causes of mental health problems, which Marie Todd highlighted. The action plan as a whole should be viewed as a vehicle for improving the mental health of BSL users on the basis that many of the barriers and challenges that they face are contributory factors to poor mental health. If the consequence is that the plan tackles and addresses those barriers and challenges, we should, I hope, see improvement in BSL users' mental health.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I, too, warmly welcome the launch of the British Sign Language national plan and applaud the effort that has been made in trying to improve the lives of deaf people. I note that BSL as a language choice will be offered in schools. Will the minister give details on how the Scottish Government will counter any issues that may arise from a lack of qualified teaching staff? What discussions are taking place with the General Teaching Council for Scotland to progress matters?

Mark McDonald: First, I cannot give a blow-by-blow account of the discussions that are being had, but we are committed to ensuring that the barriers that prevent deaf BSL users in particular and BSL users more generally from becoming teachers are addressed as part of our approach to increasing the number of people who are able to access the teaching profession. I hope that that will go some way to address Annie Wells's point about ensuring that, if we want to create an accredited qualification in BSL, we have the teacher capacity to teach it. In addition, the creation of that accredited qualification will perhaps make it easier for people to gain access to routes into teaching, given that they will be teaching a subject that has an accredited qualification attached to it.

We will continue to discuss those matters with the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the

General Teaching Council for Scotland. As I said, I cannot give a blow-by-blow account of those discussions, but Annie Wells should rest assured that they are on-going. When we can update members about them, we will seek to do so.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I, too, welcome today's announcement. I take the opportunity to praise Holly Kinsella, a young woman from my constituency who has campaigned on BSL issues through the National Deaf Children's Society in Scotland. I invited her to come along today, but she could not make it because she is at university.

How will the plan address unemployment and underemployment issues for BSL users? Will the plan also help to tackle the issues faced by those in employment?

Mark McDonald: First of all, I commend Fulton MacGregor for highlighting Holly Kinsella's work. I know that he brought her to Parliament as his local champion on the basis of her work to raise awareness of and campaign for improvements in relation to BSL.

The plan sets out a wide range of actions on employment and underemployment. For example, we will look at working with Skills Development Scotland and the developing the young workforce programme. We will also look at awarding the highest level of modern apprenticeship funding for BSL users within their chosen framework and at promoting foundation apprenticeships for schoolchildren who use BSL to try to address the issues that Fulton MacGregor rightly highlights on underemployment and unemployment, as well as, perhaps, a lack of access.

We also want to ensure that we get the message out to employers. For example, we will work alongside others to raise awareness of access to work schemes, which can help to ensure that, once they have achieved access to the workforce, the parity of esteem that BSL users so often do not feel that they have achieved is there.

Unconventional Oil and Gas

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-08341, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on unconventional oil and gas.

15:06

The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse): On 3 October, I set out the conclusion of the Scottish Government's extensive investigation into unconventional oil and gas. I made it clear that, following our assessment of the evidence, the Scottish Government does not support the development of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland, and an effective ban using our devolved planning powers is now in place, pending the outcome of the required strategic environmental assessment. Today, I reaffirm that position and, honouring the commitment that I made on 8 November last year, I give Parliament an opportunity to endorse our carefully considered and robust position on unconventional oil and gas.

The Government has undertaken one of the most far-reaching investigations of any Government, anywhere, into unconventional oil and gas. It began in 2013, when my predecessor, Fergus Ewing, established an independent expert scientific panel to examine the evidence on unconventional oil and gas, including hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, and coal bed methane extraction. The panel reported its findings in July 2014.

After carefully considering those findings, we introduced a moratorium on onshore unconventional oil and gas in January 2015. That created space to explore the specific issues and evidential gaps identified by the expert panel, and to undertake a period of comprehensive public engagement and dialogue.

In early 2016, we commissioned a further suite of independent research reports to address the evidential gaps identified by the panel. The reports, covering health, economic and environmental matters, allowed us to consider further independent expert scientific advice, including from the British Geological Survey, Health Protection Scotland, KPMG and the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change.

The research reports were published in full on 8 November last year, allowing stakeholders and the people of Scotland almost three months to consider the evidence in advance of our public consultation. That consultation, "Talking 'Fracking'", was launched on 31 January this year. It took a number of innovative steps to encourage debate, dialogue and wide participation. The

consultation findings were published in full on 3 October this year, in advance of my statement.

Members should be in no doubt that ours has been a considered programme of investigation that explored the issues in depth, and encouraged an informed and balanced dialogue across Scotland. In coming to a view on unconventional oil and gas, we carefully considered the findings of our extensive research alongside the results of our public consultation.

In reviewing the research findings, I had particular concerns about the insufficiency of epidemiological evidence on health impacts highlighted by Health Protection Scotland, which also noted that a precautionary approach to unconventional oil and gas is warranted on the basis of the available evidence. The position we have taken on unconventional oil and gas is a clear deployment of the precautionary principle.

The UK Committee on Climate Change report set out that the additional emissions generated by unconventional oil and gas extraction in Scotland would make meeting our existing climate change targets more challenging. The committee forecast that greenhouse gas emissions from an industry in 2035 could range from 0.4 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent to 2.6 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent under central and high production scenarios, depending on the scale of the industry, and the extent of regulation.

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

Paul Wheelhouse: I will make some progress and bring in Mr Findlay later.

I remind members that Scotland's statutory annual climate change target for 2032 is 26.4 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent. Indeed, as the committee set out in its report, in order to be compatible with Scotland's climate change targets, new emissions from unconventional oil and gas production would need to be offset through reductions in emissions elsewhere in the Scottish economy, with consequential costs for the sectors affected.

I will bring in Mr Findlay now, if I may.

Neil Findlay: Given that, in the minister's words, there is now an effective ban and that there is no longer any issue of commercial sensitivity, will he now release all correspondence between the Scottish Government and Ineos regarding the discussions around fracking?

Paul Wheelhouse: What to say, Presiding Officer? It is little worth taking that point, but Mr Findlay can continue to press for information if he wishes. I want to get on with my speech.

Our consultation embodied our commitment to enable local communities to participate in decisions that matter to them. The overwhelming majority of respondents were opposed to the development of an unconventional oil and gas industry in Scotland. Although it was not a referendum, approximately 99 per cent of responses were opposed to unconventional oil and gas extraction in Scotland, and fewer than 1 per cent of responses were in favour.

It is our responsibility as a Government to make a decision that we believe is in the best interests of the people of this country. We must be confident that the choices we make will not compromise health and safety or damage the environment in which we live. Having considered the matter in detail, it is my view and that of the Scottish Government that there is no social licence for unconventional oil and gas to be taken forward at this time, noting strong opposition in the 13 local authority areas most likely to be impacted by fracking. The research that we commissioned did not provide a strong enough basis from which to address those communities' concerns.

I have noted calls that have been made by some groups—

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the minister not accept that the consequence of his ban will be that Scotland will simply import fracked gas from other countries? Can he tell us today whether there are any other countries that he would rule out taking fracked gas imports from?

Paul Wheelhouse: As Mr Fraser knows, I am the minister for energy in Scotland; I do not have any role in terms of impacting on energy policies in other countries. It is a commercial matter for Ineos—[*Interruption.*] We have been clear throughout this process that it is a commercial matter for Ineos.

Our consultation embodied our commitment to enable local communities to participate in decisions that matter to them. The overwhelming majority of respondents were opposed to the development of an unconventional oil and gas industry in Scotland. Although not a referendum, as I said, approximately 99 per cent of the responses were opposed.

I have noted calls that have been made by some groups for new legislation to ban fracking. The view appears predicated on the opinion that the position we have adopted on unconventional oil and gas is not robust enough. I am confident that our approach is sufficiently robust to allow control of unconventional oil and gas development in line with our stated position. The pursuit of unnecessary legislation would tie up this

Parliament's time in the face of other significant issues such as Brexit.

In coming to our position, I sought legal advice and considered precedents, including our position on not supporting new nuclear power stations or underground coal gasification. The approach that we have adopted, using our fully devolved planning powers, is to set out a robust and effective ban, using planning policy. Our approach ensures that decisions on onshore unconventional oil and gas developments will be made in line with planning policy and procedure, and within the framework of Scottish Government policy—policy that does not support unconventional oil and gas extraction in Scotland.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): Will the minister take an intervention?

Paul Wheelhouse: I must make some progress, but I will try to bring in Mr Wightman later.

On 3 October, I wrote to Greg Clark, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, setting out our position on the future of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland, and seeking his assurance that licensing powers will be transferred to this Parliament as soon as possible and that no power grab by the UK Government will take place. When those powers are finally fully devolved, we will discharge them in line with our position on unconventional oil and gas.

After this debate, we will issue a written policy statement on our position on unconventional oil and gas. That will support the preparation of a strategic environmental assessment, which I propose will commence shortly and conclude in summer 2018. We will then formally set out our finalised position, which will be reflected in future iterations of Scotland's energy strategy.

Our decision has been welcomed by many across Scotland, particularly in those areas that would be most affected. Of course, on an issue that has stimulated such intense debate, there are some who do not support the position that we have reached. However, listening to the views put across by some, including those on the Conservative benches, people would think that we were talking about developments taking place miles away from any population. That is simply not the case, as fracking was proposed across areas of the densely populated central belt of Scotland.

Creating employment and inclusive economic growth will always be key priorities for this Government but such objectives cannot come at any cost. We will, of course, continue to work with industries to help to improve Scotland's competitiveness and economic growth. We closely considered all the evidence, including the potential

economic impact from an unconventional oil and gas industry.

Under a central production scenario, researchers at KPMG concluded that, on average, an unconventional oil and gas industry would add just 0.1 per cent annually to Scottish gross domestic product if fracking was given the go-ahead, and would generate up to 1,400 direct, indirect and induced jobs in Scotland at peak production. To put that in context, in 2015, 58,500 jobs were supported by the low-carbon and renewable energy sector in Scotland, generating turnover of £10.5 billion. The offshore oil and gas sector employs more than 100,000 people.

KPMG also concluded that the volume of natural gas likely to be commercially recoverable from unconventional oil and gas reserves in Scotland would not have an impact on global gas prices. Consequently, there would be no noticeable effect on energy costs for households. That view has also been expressed by Lord Browne, the former chairman of oil and gas operator Cuadrilla Resources.

The real risk to Scotland's economy comes from a hard Brexit. [*Interruption.*]

I note that Mr Fraser laughs, but he might want to pay attention. The Fraser of Allander institute estimates that a hard Brexit threatens to cost our economy around £11 billion a year by 2030, and will result in 80,000 fewer jobs when compared with those in the remaining members of the EU single market and the customs union. Mr Fraser really should pay attention to that.

I fully understand that our decision has disappointed the companies that received licences from the UK Government, including Ineos, the operators of the Grangemouth petrochemical facility. On unconventional oil and gas extraction, we have formed a different view from theirs, but on their desire to see a long-term, sustainable future for both the chemicals and refinery businesses at Grangemouth we are agreed. We recognise the contribution to this country that is made by Ineos, and that the chemicals and refinery businesses are strategically significant assets for Scotland. We will continue to work with Ineos to understand its wider business needs and to improve its competitiveness.

Before I close, I will take Mr Wightman's intervention, if I may.

Andy Wightman: I am very grateful to the minister. As I think he knows, I do not doubt the sincerity with which he speaks today on his intention to ban fracking. However, does he accept that the mechanism that he has chosen is an executive action that could be undone by any future Government, even if it were in a minority in

this Parliament and even if the Parliament as a whole were to be against fracking?

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise Mr Wightman's point, but it is within the scope of this Parliament to express a strong view here today in support of the Government's position, and I make it clear that that view was supported by the people of Scotland in the consultation that we have undertaken. If I might read the runes, I say that there is only one party in this chamber that would even contemplate allowing fracking to proceed at this moment—and we can all work to prevent it from becoming the Government of Scotland.

Those whose livelihoods depend on employment at Grangemouth are important to us, and we will never lose sight of that in our efforts to support innovation and investment.

We have considered the scientific and economic evidence, we have engaged in the debate and we have listened to the views of people across Scotland—the Conservatives do not appear to want to do that. The motion that we have lodged today, which I ask Parliament to support, is a clear and robust response to the evidence and the views expressed through our consultation.

The Scottish Government has concluded that it is in the public interest to say no to fracking. The steps that we have taken have given immediate effect to that position. It is now time for all members in this chamber to set out their views.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees with the Scottish Government's position of not supporting the development of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland; endorses the government's decision to introduce an immediate and effective ban on onshore unconventional oil and gas developments using its devolved powers in line with the Scottish Ministers' statutory responsibilities, and notes that this position will be subject to a strategic environmental assessment before being finalised.

15:18

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is difficult to know which aspect of the Scottish National Party's ludicrous ban on fracking in Scotland is worst. Is it the Government's abandonment of evidence-led policy making, is it its contempt for science, or is it the sheer hypocrisy from a party that, in the past, has been happy to champion Scotland's hydrocarbon industry, but now simply wants us to rely upon imports of fracked gas from elsewhere in the world, wherever that may be?

Let us start with the science, for we know exactly what the science on fracking tells us. We know that because the Scottish Government commissioned its own expert scientific panel to give an independent report, which was published

in July 2014. That report was quite clear: fracking could be conducted safely in Scotland, provided that appropriate safeguards were put in place. That view is widely shared by scientists and by those in industry.

The leading geological expert Professor Rebecca Lunn, of the University of Strathclyde, has slammed the SNP's position as

"uninformed ... ethically appalling ... passing the buck".

Professor Paul Younger, Rankine chair of engineering at the University of Glasgow—someone who has been held up by the SNP in the past as "an energy engineering expert", and a member of the Government's expert scientific panel—has slammed the Government's position, saying that its justifications for an indefinite moratorium were "all made up" and "completely feigned". He said that he felt

"completely violated as a professional"

following the announcement of a moratorium.

Even the former leader of Greenpeace Stephen Tindale said that the Green movement needed to have an "urgent rethink" on energy sources and that it was time for Green campaigners to stop saying "Frack off" and to start saying "Frack on".

We have a report that the Scottish Government commissioned from expert scientists that it has ignored and treated with contempt, and we have a body of scientific opinion that is very clear that fracking should proceed and can be done safely, which has also been ignored. We have an SNP Government that is dancing to the tune of the Green Party rather than listening to the experts and the science.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): What is the position of the Scottish Tory party on the climate change science, which is irrefutable and which Mr Fraser has so far failed to mention?

Murdo Fraser: The position on climate change is perfectly simple. If all that we do is import fracked gas from other jurisdictions, the ban will have no impact on reducing climate change emissions in this country. I would have thought that that was very clear.

That leads me on neatly to the issue of hypocrisy. Although fracking in Scotland is to be banned by the SNP, fracked gas will continue to be imported from elsewhere to heat our homes and power our industry. Today, 47 per cent of UK gas demand is met by imports. Centrica has estimated that by 2020 the UK will be importing 70 per cent of the gas that we need, and much of that will be fracked gas from elsewhere.

Paul Wheelhouse: Leaving aside the fact that Scotland produces 63 per cent of the UK's gas when it has 8.5 per cent of the population, will

Murdo Fraser confirm my understanding, which is that imports and trade policy are reserved to the UK Government? Therefore, we could not stop imports of gas even if we wanted to, but that is a commercial matter for Ineos. Mr Fraser is simply misrepresenting the truth to the public.

Murdo Fraser: The minister cannot get away from the hypocrisy of his stance, whereby he says that fracking is fine in every other country in the world. When I intervened on the minister earlier, I asked him to rule out fracking in any other country in the world, but he would not do it. We will take fracked gas from any jurisdiction in the world, regardless of the environmental safeguards in place, but we will not do fracking here safely.

That is why, every day, Ineos imports 40,000 barrels of shale gas. That is a very welcome development, but the imported fracked gas from Pennsylvania will have a higher carbon footprint than fracked gas that we produced here. If we produced it here, we could set the environmental safeguards rather than importing gas from anywhere in the world, regardless of the safeguards that exist there.

I do not often quote trade unionists in the chamber, but Gary Smith, the GMB's Scottish secretary, denounced the Scottish Government's decision as "dishonest and hypocritical" and added:

"Scotland is importing a huge amount of shale gas from Trump's America. If the government wants to be consistent, it will now ban shale gas imports, threatening a huge number of job losses. The government has failed to explain where the 2 million households in Scotland using gas to heat their homes will get gas from in the future".

Labour members, including Richard Leonard—I notice that he is not in the chamber—need to listen to what their trade union colleagues are telling them.

We have heard a lot from the Scottish Government about its consultation, in which 99 per cent of the responses were opposed to fracking. However, 86 per cent of the responses were campaign responses or responses from petitions that were whipped up by environmental groups. That led the minister to tell us in his statement on the matter earlier this month that there was "no social licence" to allow fracking to proceed, given the level of public opposition in the communities that were likely to be affected.

That is a breathtaking statement from a Government whose ministers have over the past decade ridden roughshod over local opinion in areas such as Perthshire, Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders, where there has been local opposition to industrial-scale wind turbine developments and where, despite local authorities rejecting planning applications, ministers have

imposed them in the teeth of substantial local opposition. This SNP Government has two different standards: one for those who live in the central belt of Scotland and another for those who live in rural Scotland. I invite the minister to come with me to meet the people in Dunkeld who feel under siege from large-scale wind turbine developments in the area, who will tell him exactly what they think about his views on the need for "social licence" for energy developments. If that concept is now to form part of the Scottish Government's policy, Mr Wheelhouse needs to apply it across the board, including to onshore wind as well as to fracking.

We know that the SNP's stance on fracking is anti-science, that the SNP has rejected evidence-based policy making and that its stance is entirely hypocritical, as it simply means that we will import fracked gas from other parts of the world rather than fracking here and so will miss out on the economic benefits and jobs that could be provided. However, if SNP members do not want to listen to science, to the experts or to us, I suggest that they listen to those in their own party. They can start with their former deputy leader, Jim Sillars, who has said—[*Interruption.*] Oh, they are laughing now, but I well remember when they all thought that Jim Sillars was the bee's knees, when he was their deputy leader.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Fraser, you must come to a close.

Murdo Fraser: Mr Sillars has told them that their party needs to think again on unconventional oil and gas extraction.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Murdo Fraser: If SNP members will not listen to us or to anybody else, they should listen to Jim Sillars. A fracking ban is bad for Scotland, bad for jobs and bad for the environment.

I move amendment S5M-08341.3, to leave out from "agrees" to end and insert:

"disagrees with the Scottish Government's position of imposing a ban on the development of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland; believes that this is an ill-thought out decision, which completely disregards scientific evidence; notes that the ban is incongruent with the research in the Scottish Government's paper, *Independent Expert Scientific Panel - Report on Unconventional Oil And Gas*, which was published in 2014; recognises the Scottish Government's inconsistency on fracking due to the continuation of fracked shale gas imports from overseas, and regrets that the thousands of jobs that could have been created and the significant economic benefit and the research opportunities that fracking could have brought to Scotland, will all now be lost to the country as a result".

15:25

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): For many people across the chamber and the country, this has been a long and hard-fought battle. Unconventional oil and gas extraction, which is commonly referred to as fracking, is an unwanted technology that is mired in uncertainties and is incompatible with Scotland's future as a green and progressive nation. There has been a solid mandate to deny fracking a place in Scotland for more than a year, since Scottish Labour's amendment against fracking was supported by the Lib Dem and Green MSPs, which made a parliamentary majority. That was a significant moment in Labour's non-stop pressure on the SNP to ban fracking in Scotland.

Since then, all public consultation on the issue has echoed that sentiment. No ifs, no buts—no fracking in Scotland. My bill proposal received 87 per cent support from public respondents—a figure that cannot be overlooked—and an astonishing 99 per cent of respondents to the Scottish Government's "Talking 'Fracking': A Consultation on Unconventional Oil and Gas" were opposed to fracking. I give credit to the activists, non-governmental organisations, unions and others who responded to those consultations. Their tireless efforts and shouts were heard loud and clear. The Green Party has also pushed on the issue. The fact that the UK Tory Government continues to disregard those voices is utterly shocking.

Scottish Labour joined the fight for the sake of our climate, communities, jobs, health and environment. John Ashton, who is a respected climate change adviser to many, said:

"You can be in favour of fixing the climate. Or you can be in favour of exploiting shale gas. But you can't be in favour of both at the same time."

This is a question of climate justice. The Paris agreement included agreement on efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C, which is vital to the continued existence of low-lying coastal and island communities. The climate science is irrefutable, which is why the Tory amendment is so out of touch. Christiana Figueres, who was recently awarded the Shackleton medal for her role in the Paris agreement, said:

"We will move to a low-carbon world because nature will force us, or because policy will guide us. If we wait until nature forces us, the cost will be astronomical."

I can understand the reasons for the SNP Government's long, drawn-out process, but it has left everyone in the dark and has caused uncertainty. As Parliament prepares to scrutinise the proposed climate change bill, the climate change plan and the energy strategy, it is absolutely welcome that we will know that fracking is firmly out of the question. The long-term

damage would far outweigh any short-term value that might be gained—a value that has been significantly overinflated by the industry.

The lack of a social licence—as the minister put it—for fracking is an important point. Communities have rightly campaigned against being made to act as guinea pigs on which to test the potential health risks, the air, water and ground pollution risks, the potential drop in house prices, the increased traffic, and the disruption to local environments and biodiversity. Historically, those communities have no reason to trust the fossil fuel extraction industry. They are still tackling the scarred landscape and other employment and environmental problems that have been left by the opencast mining industry. Labour has been an unrelenting voice against fracking for well over a year. We have spoken in defence of our environment and communities, and the pressure of my proposed bill has in many ways helped to deliver action from the Scottish Government.

My concern is that the Scottish Government's position is not robust enough—given that it could be reversed with ease by a future minister or Government. Labour's amendment offers a layer of protection and a level of parliamentary scrutiny with which I am comfortable. Not only will there be a public consultation in the next review of the national planning framework, but the framework will be the subject of a parliamentary vote. That is fundamental, because it will prevent the changing on a ministerial whim of the ministerial direction for an indefinite moratorium. If the Labour amendment is supported, the added layer of protection will mean that I will not progress my bill to ban fracking.

We will also support the Green amendment, which will add clarity to the licensing arrangements.

The second part of our amendment focuses on positive alternatives to fracking. It is vital that renewable energy be robustly supported, and that there be more support for inclusive patterns of ownership in the energy sector. In our 2016 manifesto, Scottish Labour stressed:

"We believe in a 'civic energy' future—a future that grows local schemes to produce green energy, and heat for local use."

In my region, I am supporting the hilltop communities of Wanlockhead and Leadhills in their quest for a sustainable future. The Wanlockhead Community Trust stresses that it wants a future that is not dependent on community benefit handouts from large corporations and estates.

There are also many municipal models of ownership. In Nottingham, Robin Hood Energy enables a city-wide vision to be brought to life.

Public ownership of renewable energy is supported by Scottish Labour, as it is by the Scottish Government. It would be helpful if the minister would give more detail on that in his closing remarks.

Such models, coupled with an inclusive Scottish Investment Bank, will drive a renewable energy future that belongs to everyone. The Lib Dems' amendment is positive in that respect, so we will support it.

To give certainty to our communities and support to our renewables industry, Scottish Labour will, I hope, join the SNP, Greens and Lib Dems in order to ensure a resounding parliamentary majority vote against fracking, which will then never happen in Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-08341.1, to insert at end:

“; agrees that the finalised energy policy on this should be reflected within the next iteration of the National Planning Framework, which is subject to consideration by Parliament prior to its adoption; supports the robust further development of renewables, and commits to actively exploring and supporting public, municipal co-operative and community models of ownership in this sector”.

15:31

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It gives me great pleasure to speak in Parliament today in support of the Scottish Government's motion and to move an amendment that will make the ban on fracking legally watertight.

Greens have opposed fracking from the start, so we welcome the consensus that has grown between progressive parties in Parliament over the years. Today is an historic moment: it is a turning point in our story. Since the industrial revolution, we have fuelled our progress on fossils that were laid down millions of years ago, before humans even existed, but today we mark the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel age and welcome the next chapter in our story, in which humankind will thrive within the ecological limits of our planet.

If we are to shield ourselves from runaway climate change, we must leave four fifths of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground. Of course, fracking goes beyond even the known reserves by exploiting fossil fuels that are not yet on the carbon balance sheet. Therefore, to frack would not merely put the brake on climate progress—it would stick us in reverse. Fracking is the toxic fag-end of the fossil fuel age.

The main course of coal was devoured decades ago, and the frackers want to return to blighted communities and to lick the plate over and over again. Unlike the United States, we have shut

down our coal electricity generation, so investing in fracked gas has the potential to displace not coal, but renewables. We certainly do not need to import energy policies from Donald Trump—policies that are blown in on the hot air of Murdo Fraser and Jim Sillars.

The UK Climate Change Committee judged that widespread fracking would be incompatible with our climate targets. It is for that reason that, in our amendment, we underline the need for the blank section on fracking in the energy strategy to be filled with a fracking ban.

Such forms of extreme energy are a distraction from the vision and investment that are needed if we are to transform our energy system into one that is infinitely renewable, decentralised, democratised and smart. Our biggest economic opportunities in energy lie in building on the offshore oil and gas expertise of the past in order to commercialise the offshore renewable technologies of today and tomorrow.

The risks that fracking technologies pose to the climate and to communities far outweigh the economic benefits that such technologies could ever deliver. They are just not worth it. Professor John Underhill, Heriot-Watt University's chief scientist, described the opportunity for extracting shale gas as “overhyped”, due to the physical reality of the complexities of our geology.

The communities on the front line in areas that have already been licensed for unconventional gas know what the impacts would be. In 2012, a coal-bed methane planning application was submitted for a couple of dozen wells between Stirling and Falkirk and for processing infrastructure to exploit vast licensed areas. However, in public meetings, the developer came clean on the potential for over 600 wells locally, which would sterilise areas that were needed for new housing and would bring noise, air and water pollution risks and landscape impacts. It was clear back then that the planning system was failing, with strategic unconventional gas developments being assessed against old planning policies for gravel pits.

It was right that the Scottish Government brought in a temporary moratorium on decisions, through a letter to planning authorities. However, what has now turned into an indefinite moratorium would require only the stroke of a future minister's pen to undo it, so it is time to put in place a watertight ban that has a firm basis in planning law. Putting the ban in the national planning framework would ensure that, if there is a change of Government, the democratic will of Parliament would remain as an effective backstop. It would put the ban on the same footing as the ban on new nuclear power stations, provide direction on a national strategic issue and extend the ban

beyond the life of the current Parliament, while giving guidance to local authorities for the next 15 to 20 years. For that reason, I welcome that the Scottish Government has accepted our argument to embed the fracking ban in the national planning framework when it comes up for review next year.

On licensing, the Scottish Parliament needs to have powers over onshore oil and gas licensing to be devolved to it, as agreed under the Scotland Act 2016. Leaving arguments over Brexit and the return of powers on wider European oil and gas frameworks aside, the agreed powers that were promised to this Parliament are overdue: that commencement order needs to be signed immediately by UK ministers and we must unite as a Parliament to demand it. We expect, and demand, that when those powers arrive they are used in a way that is consistent with both the energy strategy and the national planning framework. There simply is no place in policy or on the ground for fracking in Scotland.

I pay tribute to all those who have written letters and scientific papers, who have run street stalls and public meetings, who have petitioned neighbours and grown networks of concerned communities across Scotland, Britain and the wider world. Those activists and communities have demanded the truth and have got it. I also pay tribute to politicians who have listened and acted, from councillors to MSPs including Alison Johnstone, Claudia Beamish and the minister. They have all shown leadership within their parties and movements, and across the country. This is our moment to ban fracking.

I move amendment S5M-08341.4, to insert at end:

“; agrees that the Scottish Government’s position should be included in the Energy Strategy, in addition to its incorporation in the next National Planning Framework, and further agrees that licensing powers for onshore oil and gas should be transferred immediately to the Scottish Parliament from the UK Government and utilised in a way that is compatible with the Parliament’s view on unconventional oil and gas development”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Liam McArthur to speak to and move amendment S5M-08341.2. You have up to six minutes, please, Mr McArthur.

15:37

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The Scottish Liberal Democrats welcome both the debate and the thrust of the Government’s approach to unconventional oil and gas extraction. As I said following the minister’s statement a fortnight or so ago, I believe that the approach represents the best way of implementing an effective and immediate ban on fracking in Scotland. That said, I hope that Parliament will

also support the amendments that have been lodged by me, by Claudia Beamish and by Mark Ruskell, because I believe that they will all provide increased confidence about the longer-term robustness of the ban, and will set it in the wider context of the energy strategy that we need if we are to meet our climate and other objectives.

I take the opportunity to pay tribute to Claudia Beamish for her efforts on the issue. Mark Ruskell was right to draw attention to the wider consensus that has built up over time, but I am in no doubt that Claudia Beamish’s member’s bill, which I have supported from the outset, has played a key role in keeping the minister’s feet to the fire.

As for the Tory amendment, I simply do not accept Tory accusations that a ban on fracking is either anti-science or anti-jobs: it is neither. The scientific evidence throws down significant challenges were we to go down the route of fracking. They are challenges that we would struggle to overcome and which would come at a cost—as the minister said, not least in jobs in other areas.

I appreciate that SNP ministers have done themselves no favours in the past in taking decisions that appear to have no scientific underpinning—indeed, I have been critical of them for doing so. However, the same simply cannot be said in this instance. The steps that have been taken to weigh up the evidence, in relation to environmental, health, social and other potential impacts of fracking have been extensive, and Mr Wheelhouse even stands accused of having taken the scenic route in reaching his decision. Nevertheless, the decision has been arrived at following a process that few can argue has not demonstrably engaged experts, stakeholders and the wider public, with 99 per cent of the responses to the consultation supporting some form of ban on fracking in Scotland—which is an overwhelming figure.

I am, however, a little uncertain about what the consequences might be of the minister’s repeated references in his statement to fracking having no social licence. He may need to spell out exactly what is meant by that concept. As Murdo Fraser pointed out, the opponents of wind farms and, perhaps, other energy developments will be rubbing their hands at the prospect of what a social licence might mean. If the minister is to avoid making a rod for his own back and making delivery of the wider energy strategy more difficult as a consequence, explicit parameters for what a social licence is will be needed.

However, that should not detract from the case for banning fracking. On environmental grounds, we know that shale gas is a high-carbon energy source that emits large quantities of carbon dioxide and methane. The science of global

warning, the maths of our emissions and our pledge to limit temperature increases to below 2 per cent must lead us to conclude that opening up a new carbon front is unwise, unwanted and unnecessary.

The UK Committee on Climate Change has argued:

“Should an onshore petroleum industry be established in the UK and grow quickly, this would have the potential for significant impact on UK emissions.”

It also found that

“accommodating additional emissions from shale gas production”

within our carbon targets

“would require significant and potentially difficult offsetting effort elsewhere.”

Even the UK’s own former chief scientist, Professor David MacKay, stated:

“If a country brings any additional fossil fuel reserve into production, then in the absence of strong climate policies ... it is likely that this production would increase cumulative emissions in the long run. This increase would work against global efforts on climate change.”

In addition, as my amendment makes clear, a commitment to fracking would almost inevitably distract attention and divert investment from development of the range of renewable energy and storage technologies that we will need in order to deliver a decarbonised, sustainable and secure energy system in the future. Along with energy efficiency and demand-reduction strategies, those are the areas in which we must seek to focus our efforts, harness our competitive advantage and secure the jobs and wealth creation that come with all that.

The Office for National Statistics has shown that last year low-carbon industries in Scotland generated £10.7 billion in turnover, supported 43,500 jobs directly and in the supply chain, and delivered more than £10 million of community benefit. Although the renewable electricity sector has made tremendous progress in recent years, much work still needs to be done to decarbonise our overall energy supply—in particular, in heating and transport. Given that fact, fracking is a distraction that we can ill afford.

Concerns have been raised about just how robust the proposed ban on fracking actually is. The current proposals use planning powers to ensure that applications for unconventional oil and gas exploration will be called in by ministers and rejected. As others do, Scottish Liberal Democrats want future licensing powers to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament and used to reinforce the clear policy intention.

In the meantime, there is a strong argument for building the key planks of the energy strategy,

including the ban on fracking, into the national planning framework, as is proposed in the Labour and Green amendments. Although no Government or Parliament can bind the hands of their successors, any future Government intent to move away from the current ban should face significant obstacles, including the need to secure support from Parliament. Inclusion of the policy in the planning framework would provide additional reassurance to those who have been expressing concern, and it would help to reinforce the effectiveness of the ban.

As an aside, I note that ministers may wish, while are reviewing the planning framework, to address a point that RSPB Scotland raises in its briefing. Given all that has been said today about meeting our climate change and environmental impact targets, it is passing strange that the Government’s planning policy still recognises

“the national benefit of indigenous coal ... production in maintaining a diverse energy mix”.

I understand the frustration that is felt by many about the time that it has taken to reach this point. For the communities that have been facing the prospect of fracking, the wait has been an anxious one. I hope that that uncertainty is coming to an end, and I look forward to Parliament reiterating its firm stance on fracking at decision time this evening.

I move amendment S5M-08341.2, to insert at end:

“; considers that the focus for the future must be on renewables, establishing sustainable energy supplies and creating green jobs, and believes that opening up a whole new front of carbon-based fuels would be a distraction and divert investment and research away from green technologies”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I ask for speeches of up to five minutes, please.

15:44

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I am pleased to contribute to the debate, not least because fracking has been a contentious issue in my Falkirk East constituency since about 2012, when fracking in the Falkirk district first appeared on the radar. Coal-bed methane extraction had already started in the area—it came in under the radar, as planning permission was granted by Falkirk Council officers under delegated powers before the subject ever appeared on a council planning committee agenda.

However, I do not want to dwell on the specifics of the planning system in the Falkirk district—that could take a while—as my speaking time is short. For that reason, I will not take any interventions, either.

In his statement in the chamber just a few weeks ago, the Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy said:

“fracking cannot and will not take place in Scotland.”—
[*Official Report*, 3 October 2017; c 14.]

Many thousands of my constituents and campaigners across Scotland had hoped to hear that announcement for some time, and it came as a great relief to people in communities where the threat of fracking had been on their doorsteps or under their houses for some time. I am pleased that the measures have been put in place. I have always been sceptical of such practices and have long taken the view that, if there is any risk whatever of fracking causing environmental damage, it should not be allowed in Scotland.

It is understandable that frustration and emotions have run high throughout the debate on unconventional oil and gas, but the consultation process, the various ministerial statements along the way and today's debate prove that the Government has taken the right and necessary steps to bring about the strict and effective ban that is needed to protect our environment. That said, as we can see from the amendments, there are still people who are pressing for more to be done.

There is very little in the Green, Labour and Lib Dem amendments that I can disagree with. Mark Ruskell and Claudia Beamish have called for the Government's position to be incorporated in the next iteration of the national planning framework. That is imperative, and I am keen to hear in his summing-up whether the minister will ensure its inclusion in NPF4.

There are calls from environmental NGOs to go even further. Perhaps they should be careful what they wish for. A bill to ban fracking is not necessary, expedient or likely to provide any practical benefits over the approach that the Scottish Government has adopted. In addition, any legislation is open to legal challenge and can be overturned by future Parliaments. Taking the current approach of an indefinite moratorium is effective in halting fracking and underground coal gasification and avoiding any unnecessary and costly legal challenges.

As we have heard, there are those on the other side of the argument who claim that the approach is a step too far and goes against the economic gain that we could perhaps benefit from. That argument could be a tad academic if the expert John Underhill, who is Heriot-Watt University's chief scientist and a professor of exploration geoscience, is correct in saying that large-scale onshore fracking would be unviable in the UK anyway and would have a negligible impact on energy prices.

Professor Underhill has based that argument on the fact that the substrata of the UK are compressed because of a squeeze millions of years ago between the Alps and the mid-Atlantic structure. The compression means that the substrata are undulating and wavy, which possibly makes effective drilling locations questionable. In addition, the UK lies not flat on the global surface but at an angle, which adds complications to the undulating structure. Professor Underhill has stated that that means that the UK's rocks are harder to drill through than those in the US, which are comparatively simple to drill through. I urge Tory members to read his research, disappointing though it may be to them. It therefore seems that Ineos and other prospective investors may be 55 million years too late, at least in Scotland—in fact, this chamber debate may well be 55 million years too late.

Members will no doubt be aware that the Grangemouth refinery and petrochemical sites are situated in Falkirk East, which is my constituency, and that my constituents have more of a direct connection with those industries than most. For decades, communities there have sat cheek by jowl with industry. I am pleased that the Government has listened to those communities' concerns as well as considering the needs of industry and has made the right decision, based on the evidence that has been presented to it.

However, it is also incumbent on the Government to support our industries and the jobs that are associated with them and to encourage further diversification into more modern, sustainable and renewable technologies. The sites in Grangemouth that are run by Ineos and Petroineos employ about 1,350 people, and that figure is expected to rise to about 1,650 people with the acquisition by Ineos of the Forties pipeline system. In addition, statistics from Scottish Enterprise and chemical sciences Scotland suggest that industry in Grangemouth supports more than 4,000 jobs in the Falkirk district directly and indirectly and many more across Scotland. I am confident that the Scottish Government will continue to support such industries in the coming years and decades.

As time is short, I will close. If the effective ban is approved by Parliament this evening, we will have certainty from today that there will be no fracking in Scotland. That is good news for my constituents, good news with regard to climate change and good news for Scotland.

15:49

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

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests with regard to a smart energy company that is based in England.

Today's debate is important for a number of reasons, including the fact that it gives us the opportunity to highlight the significant missed opportunity for the economy that the ban on fracking represents and the wider concerns that the ban on fracking gives rise to about how the Government makes policy and whether it is acting in the best interests of Scotland or in the narrow political interests of the SNP.

I will start with the economic case in support of fracking, which is clear and compelling. KPMG's economic impact assessment has shown that up to £4.6 billion in additional gross value added output could be generated by developing a fracking industry in Scotland. That could create more than 3,000 highly skilled jobs and bring £4 billion in additional tax receipts to the Scottish economy, which could be spent on vital public services.

Paul Wheelhouse: Will the member take an intervention?

Dean Lockhart: I will not. I am sorry, but I have extremely limited time.

Communities across Scotland would benefit from those new jobs as well as from the millions of pounds of new community investment.

The minister said that the economic benefit of fracking would contribute, in his words, just 0.1 per cent to GDP each year. I remind him that Scotland's economy registered negative growth in 2016 and that the latest figures show economic growth of 0.1 per cent, which is the same level of growth as fracking would contribute. Against that economic backdrop, the boost to the Scottish economy that could come from fracking should be welcomed by the SNP. Instead, however, as fracking industries are developed elsewhere in the UK and around the world, the SNP has decided to block the investment, the skilled employment, the technological development and the academic research that the industry would bring to Scotland.

The scientific and environmental analysis to support fracking is also clear. The Scottish Government's expert scientific panel concluded that

"the technology exists to allow the safe extraction of reserves, subject to robust regulation",

and public health bodies in other parts of the UK have concluded that

"the potential risks to public health associated with ... extraction ... are low if operations are properly run and regulated".

Further, the SNP cannot credibly claim that the fracking ban is based on environmental concerns, given that Scotland continues to import 40,000 barrels of shale gas from the United States every

day. As the Royal Society of Edinburgh has rightly pointed out,

"The global carbon footprint of the gas that Scotland imports is far higher than any onshore fracking in Scotland."

If the Government really wanted to test the safety of fracking in an evidence-led process, it could have run a series of pilot studies to assess the safety and environmental impact of fracking. However, rather than follow an evidence-led approach and the clear advice of scientists and experts, the SNP has decided to hide behind a deeply flawed consultation process to justify its politically expedient and populist decision to ban fracking.

That is why the SNP's ban on fracking gives rise to wider concerns about how the Government makes policy. Policy making to attract headlines, policies that lack analysis or supporting evidence and policy announcements to meet populist demands have become the Government's hallmark. The policy decision to ban genetically modified crops was made without any scientific advice. The proposed citizens income is a policy that the SNP's economic advisers have warned against, but it is being pursued for populist reasons. Similarly, the proposed nationalised energy company was announced to attract headlines at the SNP conference, but there was no analysis of how it will work.

The list of SNP policy failures is long, and the ban on fracking is just the latest example of the SNP making policy decisions on the basis of its own narrow political interests. It is time for the Government to start acting in the best interests of Scotland.

It looks as if I have finished within the time that is available, so it is left to me only to support the amendment in Murdo Fraser's name.

15:54

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): As we have heard, the technology around fracking is complicated. However, the message today is simple: virtually no one in Scotland wants fracking, especially when it could take place literally in someone's backyard—that is the issue for my constituents. The Scottish Government has led the way on the development of renewable energy, but we have a Tory Government that has worked against renewables at every turn.

Let us look at the people who have been speaking out about the issue. Every charity and lobbying organisation with an interest in the environment is today breathing a tremendous sigh of relief. Murdo Fraser will frack under someone's house and build a nuclear power station in their back garden—that is Tory environmental policy.

However, South Lanarkshire against unconventional gas, WWF, Friends of the Earth, the frack off campaign, Unison Scotland and the Transition Network are genuinely delighted about the outcome and the courage that the Scottish Government has shown in deciding to prevent developers from destroying our beautiful landscapes and polluting our water table.

To get rid of the myth, there is no convincing economic case for fracking, despite what people who promote it claim. In my constituency, the economic impact of Brexit—for South Lanarkshire Council, that could be a loss of as much as £1.3 billion to the local economy—far outweighs any economic benefit from fracking under my constituents' homes.

In Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse, there is a strong movement led by South Lanarkshire against unconventional gas. I have had many representations from my constituents. The public certainly responded to the calls for views when the second-largest consultation ever to be run by the Scottish Government took place. A nation that is built on a social contract with its people is a nation that is reflective of its people. There was a total of 60,535 valid responses, and 99 per cent—yes, 99 per cent—were opposed to fracking.

People in South Lanarkshire and across Scotland had deep concerns about the development of fracking, which is why the Scottish Government put in place a moratorium while we gathered the evidence that was needed. Regardless of whether the minister took the scenic route, I would rather that he took the correct route, which is the one that he has taken. The judgment is now clear—without absolute confidence that fracking could not undermine public health or the achievement of our climate change targets, we could not and will not pursue it. More important, my constituents have made themselves clear: they said no to fracking.

I pay tribute to my constituents in the South Lanarkshire against unconventional gas group, whom I had the great pleasure of meeting on many occasions, including once in the Parliament a few months ago when I helped them to hand their completed consultation responses to the minister. That was public action done positively and they were here to take that opportunity. I pay tribute to their active and committed work to highlight the dangerous health risks and the dilution of our climate change goals that would all arise in an effort that would only line the pockets of commercial operators that have no need to think about the longer-term damage that they would cause. We have seen the same thing over and over again and we need to change the record. The payments that some fracking companies promised might never have materialised and certainly would

not have covered the cost of damage even for a test pit because, if a test pit pollutes the water table, it is polluted and we cannot go back.

The biggest concern for my constituents was their health—especially the health of their children, who are developing. Global reports identify evidence of increased rates of cancers, respiratory conditions and cardiovascular disease, impacts on reproductive health and foetal development, impacts on the nervous system, skin problems, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, headaches, dizziness, eye and throat irritation and nosebleeds. It would give members a nosebleed just to read that. That is not what my constituents want and I back them 100 per cent.

I applaud the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament. If we as a unified group—perhaps one exception—decide to ban fracking, we should be incredibly proud of that. We will be putting our constituents, environment and community first. That is a huge win for us and for the anti-fracking movement, which has been working for at least six years on the decision. The Scottish Government has taken the correct approach. It has listened to the evidence, to the experts, to our colleagues across the chamber and, more important, to the people, who have spoken.

15:58

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I am pleased for a number of reasons that the Scottish Government has reached the decision to extend the moratorium on the fracking of unconventional oil and gas. The debate over the past few years has been interesting and I have been pleased to work alongside campaigners who have cited environmental, health and climate change concerns to argue that we should not exploit that source of energy. I was not convinced in the past by the arguments advanced by people who favour fracking any more than I am convinced by them today.

Fracking first came to my attention when I led on environment issues for the Labour Party. I came to the issue willing to engage. The campaigns were in their infancy and were led at a national level by Friends of the Earth. Today's briefing from the Royal Society of Edinburgh presents the different arguments on fracking. There are a lot of uncertainties about the practice. In the early stages, applications were going through local planning processes, where decisions are often delegated, and there was a recognised confusion and a lack of consistency about decisions being taken. At that point, the industry was at risk of developing with little scrutiny or accountability. It was interesting to look back at

the *Official Report* of debates from that time, when the then minister was often evasive, non-committal and reluctant to take action. It has taken a lot of conviction from campaigners to get us to this point.

I accept that the Government wished to be thorough, but we have had years of uncertainty for communities and the industry. We have had a long period of indecision, but I am pleased that tonight we have the opportunity to be clear in our direction of travel and to provide a focus for what needs to be done to provide for our energy needs in a modern, forward-looking country.

Initially, I met environment organisations, local communities and the industry. I was always clear about the unacceptable risks to my region if the practice was to go ahead. It is impossible to compare the experiences internationally with those that are predicted in Scotland. Many argued that the low cost of gas in America because of exploitation of unconventional gas could be replicated here, but that ignored the predicted higher cost of extraction in Scotland, where our environmental standards are higher and the export market is different.

I also have concerns over population density in the targeted areas, which are largely former coalfield areas, where concerns are also raised about ground stability and risks to water quality. The economic benefits to local areas are often exaggerated as, after the initial investment in establishing the infrastructure, there are few employment opportunities. There is also the prospect of licences being issued and exploratory work beginning, along with the accompanying disruption for communities, only for that to result in little because of question marks over what is only a potential source of energy.

The evidence about the risks to the environment and health was always inconclusive and could not carry the confidence of communities. Those factors held great uncertainty for communities that have over the years carried the legacy of coal mining. Although that industry brought benefits, it left a poor health legacy in too many cases.

I was concerned about the potential for underground coal gasification; it was proposed for the Firth of Forth, which is a busy stretch of water where there are commercial operations as well as—increasingly—environmental protections. I urged the Government to include UCG in the initial moratorium and was pleased when it responded positively, and I hope that it will go on to strengthen that.

I welcomed the minister's statement before the recess, but I thought that he could have been firmer in his reasoning, which would give greater

confidence about the decision. He spoke about the lack of a

“social licence for unconventional oil and gas to be taken forward at this time”.—[*Official Report*, 3 October 2017; c 14.]

That reflects the significant numbers of responses that were received. There are two things to highlight about that. I agree with Liam McArthur's concerns about the use of a social licence, and I also feel that the phrase “at this time” raises concerns. The minister will be aware of the continuing emails that ask for a future legislative solution.

The argument that the moratorium can be reversed is well made, and I believe that Labour's amendment can provide greater security and certainty. The argument for opposing the exploitation of unconventional oil and gas can be strongly made on the basis of scientific evidence and, although the public consultation was important and valuable, the minister could have been stronger in setting out the environmental challenges that we face if we are to meet our long-term and interim climate targets. However, I also recognise the challenges in providing for Scotland's energy needs. Reducing our overreliance on fossil fuels and investing more in renewables is crucial to our future for meeting our energy demands and our climate change targets, but that is not easy, as the demand for energy continues domestically and in our economy.

The considerable difficulties for our energy market as a result of Brexit should not be underestimated, and energy security and affordability will be key issues. I am glad that the exploitation of unconventional oil and gas will not play a part in tackling those challenges in Scotland. The challenges must still be met, but we can see opportunities to invest in our country's future if we look towards renewables in a much firmer fashion.

16:04

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): The Scottish Government's four-month public consultation resulted in 60,535 responses—the second-largest response to a public consultation. Ninety-nine per cent of those responses were opposed to fracking, and fewer than 1 per cent were in favour.

That level of response is overwhelming and it is a clear indicator of support from the vast majority of people to move forward with a ban on fracking. It is impossible to argue that the public in Scotland wants anything to do with it.

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a well stimulation technique, in which water, sand and chemicals—fracking fluid—are pumped

underground at high pressure to create fissures and remove natural gas. Although it sounds simple on paper, the fracking process runs the risk of triggering hazards such as earthquakes and contaminating surface water. Fracking also produces waste that is difficult to dispose of and needs its own disposal site, which ruins even more land. Although the necessary large areas are more readily available and easier to accommodate in the vast regions of the US, for example, Scotland does not have endless quantities of land to spare. Even if it did, wells fail, accidents happen, and nearby towns' water can easily be contaminated with poisonous toxins.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

Colin Beattie: I am sorry, but I have a limited amount of time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Please sit down, Mr Beattie. You have not done anything wrong, but I want to say that there is time in hand if members want to take interventions. I am not directing you in any way, but I remind members that there is time in hand. Please continue, Mr Beattie.

Colin Beattie: In April 2011, the people of north-west England were shaken awake. The local people read in the papers the next day that there had in fact been an earthquake. It had occurred the same week that hydraulic fracturing had begun, about a mile and a half away. Those who experienced the earthquake responded with shock: there had never been any earthquakes in the region as far as anyone knew. It did not appear to be a natural occurrence. Ultimately it was connected with the fracturing occurring kilometres below the surface.

In 2015, a paper was published in *Science* magazine. Its purpose was to study whether it was possible to reduce the hazard of induced seismicity, or man-made earthquakes, created through hydraulic fracturing. At that time, human-induced earthquakes due to fracking were plaguing large areas in the United States, and scientists were examining whether by changing the variables they could control or stop them. The scientists were trying to control the consequence of fracking's actions.

There are multitudes of cases describing the devastating effects that fracking has in communities. Is it not enough to learn from other countries' mistakes? Must we bring to Scotland fracking and the potential problems that accompany it, simply to learn the same lesson? My answer is no. Rather than subjecting our constituents to the risks of poisonous water and avoidable earthquakes, we need to ban fracking.

As my constituents and colleagues well know, I believe fracking has no place in Scotland. If coal-bed methane extraction were to occur in my constituency, the beautiful landscape would be forever marred, and Midlothian North and Musselburgh would run the risk of contaminated water and ruined soil. Such effects would be detrimental to our communities and we cannot stand by and let them happen.

Meanwhile, the Tories claim that they are in favour of green and environmental initiatives, yet they are in favour of pumping chemicals into the earth. How can they argue that they want to protect the environment when they are in favour of fracking? Are they refusing to recognise the damage that fracking causes, or do they honestly believe that it will be a good long-term investment?

If they truly are confused and believe that fracking is a solid investment, I will shine some light on the matter. There is little point to fracking in general. What once might have seemed to be a promising opportunity has turned into a money pit, even for those in favour. When pro-frackers argue that it would be a waste not to tap into the energy resource beneath our feet, they are ignoring not only the negative ecological effects that fracking causes, but the fact that fracking in itself is a terrible investment. Three years after a well begins producing, almost all the resource has been collected. Fracking is not a sustainable resource. If a well does not continually expand, in three years 95 per cent of the natural gas will have been collected and the well will have been rendered useless.

According to London's *Evening Standard*,

"Independent industry observers reckon that in 2012 and 2013, well before the price collapse"—

of oil—

"companies in the US were spending around \$42 billion ... a year to maintain production. The value of gas produced was reckoned to be \$32 billion."

Such a measurement shows that companies were losing \$10 billion a year to perform hydraulic fracturing.

Contrary to belief, unconventional gas is already very expensive to produce. Companies need high energy prices to make a profit. Fracking wells drain quickly, which continually causes production prices to be high and therefore the cost of fracking to be high.

As of 20 October, the price of oil is \$51.46 a barrel. That is far below the price that is required for fracking to make a profit, which is about \$100 a barrel. With fracking, no one wins, not even those who are in favour of it.

Those statistics come with the assumption that there is natural gas to be found in general, but

ignores the fact that not all wells perform. In 2015, the US company, Chevron, terminated its operations in Romania partly due to underwhelming results. According to the news site RT:

“Globally, Chevron’s 2014 failure rate stood at 30 percent ... Sixteen of the 53 wells the company drilled were found to have had no commercially viable quantities of oil or natural gas.”

If we allow fracking in Scotland, it will spread like a virus. The wells drain quickly and continually feed into other areas. Fracking means knowingly pumping toxic fluids into the ground and destroying what is left behind. We should and need to ban fracking without exception. I support the Scottish Government’s ban.

16:10

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I did not wake up this morning as a born-again fracking champion. Like the Government, I have heard many of the public concerns that have been aired throughout the prolonged but somewhat evidence-led approach to this controversial subject over the past few years.

To some, the very word fracking conjures up imagery that is often negative. Opinions from a wide range of educated sources were sought and duly given, and it was right and proper to do so. I approach today’s debate with the view that it is also right and proper to ensure that the Government takes decisions that are based on evidence and facts, not just opinion polls and email petitions.

I fear that the Scottish Government’s spin machine has decided that fracking is no longer the place for scientific opinion and I am not alone in that analysis. Dr Chris Masters, co-chairman of the Scottish Science Advisory Council and a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, expressed concern that that decision has diminished Scotland’s reputation as a world leader in science. On 13 October, he was quoted in *The Times* as saying:

“It seems, increasingly, the Scottish government is almost ignoring scientific evidence. We’ve moved from a situation where we talked about evidence-based policy, to a situation where we’re looking for policy-based evidence. [They] determine the policy first, then find the evidence to support it.”

Paul Wheelhouse: How would Mr Greene respond to accusations that the Government in London proceeded with fracking in England without gathering the scientific evidence that we have or asking public opinion? It did neither.

Jamie Greene: I just said that I supported the Government’s approach to seeking the views of a wide range of people. The problem is that I have

not heard any substantive evidence from the minister on why or how he made his decision.

The minister said:

“I am sure that an unconventional oil and gas industry would work to the highest environmental and health and safety standards”.—[*Official Report*, 3 October 2017; c 14.]

By that logic, does he now think that unconventional gas extraction would be performed safely or not? Does he not trust that the regulatory environment in our energy markets is robust enough to regulate the industry? It is still entirely unclear what specific scientific evidence the minister has used as a basis to make his decision. I am happy to give way if he is willing to clarify that.

Paul Wheelhouse: There is not time for me to go through all of it, but I will cite one example. He is quite correct that we stressed that, in Scotland, a well-regulated industry could exist. However, even in the context of a well-regulated industry, KPMG indicated that there would be additional climate emissions that would be extremely difficult to mitigate for our annual statutory climate change targets. That is science and practical action, so we are not going forward with fracking.

Jamie Greene: The minister is using environmental targets as a way of explaining his scientific evidence. The environmental targets are one thing, but I am yet to hear specific examples of why the minister thinks that unconventional gas is safe or not. I am still waiting.

The minister said that there is no “social licence” for unconventional oil and gas. Is a social licence different from a scientific licence?

The minister completely failed to acknowledge that, in other countries, advances in technology combined with strong regulatory environments and trial-based approaches have made extraction safe and sustainable. It is puzzling that the Scottish Government holds such strong opposition to the practice when it is happy for 40,000 barrels of shale gas to be imported into Scotland every day.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I will not.

The Scottish National Party seems happy for shale gas to be extracted elsewhere in the world and shipped to Scotland to meet our energy needs, but rules out any chance of the creation of an indigenous market. If the Government deems it to be an unsafe or risky form of energy creation, why is it so happy to benefit from the product of the process but so appalled by the method of production? Therein lies the contradiction in the decision.

As a result of the ban, Scotland will lose out on not only jobs, but the inward investment that we greatly need. England is set to receive £33 billion in shale gas investment over the next two decades—subsidy free. A blanket ban risks sending critical expertise in hydrocarbon extraction to England or overseas.

This all sounds very familiar. As someone who represents a community with a nuclear power station on its doorstep, I am fully aware of what happens when a Government takes a politically negative view of an energy industry. I respect the continued and lifelong ideological opposition that some have to its very existence but, over the decades, Hunterston has provided Scotland with a high volume of energy, a high number of high-quality jobs and high standards in safety. The Government's antipathy to nuclear power and unconventional gas is ideological, nothing more.

As I have said, I am not arguing for a gung-ho, full-steam-ahead approach to unconventional gas extraction, but this decision is about more than fracking. It undermines the ability of communities to decide for themselves, which is something that I feel strongly about.

Ruth Maguire: Will the member take an intervention?

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

Jamie Greene: The decision has been poorly presented to Parliament. As a result—call me a cynic—it seems to be nothing more than a political decision.

16:16

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): Fracking is an issue that many of my constituents in Edinburgh Eastern have been adamantly opposed to for some time. Indeed, I highlighted my position against fracking during my election campaign.

Today, for those in Edinburgh Eastern, I am proud to vote in favour of the Scottish Government's ban on fracking. I thank the our Forth campaign group for its continuing hard work on the issue. Some of its fractivists from my constituency are in the gallery today.

The public consultation on fracking proved that my constituency was not alone—only 1 per cent of the 60,000 respondents voiced their support for fracking in Scotland. It is no wonder why: the consequences for the environment and public health are nothing but dire.

The decision to ban fracking shows that the SNP Government prioritises the environment and has a vision for a different Scotland that has

become a global leader on the environment and in the fight against climate change.

Scotland has already exceeded its target of producing 50 per cent of electricity from renewables by 2015. By 2030, the SNP aims for Scotland to have an entirely decarbonised electricity sector. Just earlier this month, on 2 October, Scotland's wind power produced double the amount of electricity needed for the country's total daily energy consumption.

Our proposals in this year's programme for Government have earned praise from the United Nations head of environment.

To allow fracking would be incompatible with this Government's climate leadership and, more important, it would be in direct violation of public opinion. As the minister has said,

"there is no social licence"

for it.

In direct contrast, around this time last year in England, the Tory UK Government intervened in Lancashire County Council's fracking ban, overturned its decision and rode roughshod over local residents in favour of a shale company.

We have seen what a Conservative Government has done to disabled people, to homeless people, to struggling families and, now, to local communities. It seems that Tory policy is, as ever, to know the price of everything and the value of nothing. Scotland should not be led under a narrow-minded growth-at-any-cost mentality. That way of thinking and that way of governing would see some fracking jobs created at the expense of the very air that we breathe and the water that we drink; it would see industry propped up in the short term, while damaging our environment for the long term.

Even when the threat to our planet is clear, even when the voice of the Scottish public is resolute, and even when the health hazards are spelled out in black and white, the Tories will still take the side of an industry that would inflict all that harm on the people and communities they are meant to represent.

The SNP is looking beyond the likes of fracking, which would inflict harm on Scotland's environment and its people. Instead, we are opting for investment in renewable forms of energy. That clean power will provide electricity and heating, and the further investment will create jobs while protecting the environment.

Our critics suggest that we are turning our backs on jobs and on profits, but the evidence does not support that. The KPMG report concluded that fracking would bring 1,400 direct, indirect and induced jobs to Scotland at its peak, and £2 billion

to perhaps £3 billion through to 2062. By contrast, Scotland's natural environment is valued at more than £20 billion per year and it supports 60,000 direct jobs alone. To invest in one industry that has been proven to devastate a much more valuable industry by far is not a renaissance; it is madness.

In reality, the only ones in the chamber who have turned their backs on anyone are the Tories. They have turned their backs on the environment, on local communities and on the will of the Scottish people. If that was not enough, the UK Government could be attempting to re-reserve the European Union licensing regime, which should rightfully come to the Scottish Parliament. That cannot happen. The Scottish people have spoken and the Scottish Government has acted: there will be no fracking in Scotland.

All parties, except for the Tories, are in favour of the action, proving once again that the best interests of Scotland cannot be trusted to the Conservatives. The SNP's record, today and in our past 10 years in government, proves the opposite. Today, we act in the best interests of Scots, of our climate, and of our future as a nation.

16:22

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Since the earliest days of the industrial revolution, the demand for energy has increased exponentially. Areas in my region have always been at the centre of Scotland's energy production. We had coal production in Midlothian and West Lothian, and the world's oil industry began in West Lothian at the shale oil works. For 10 years, we have had one of the country's biggest wind farms at Blacklaw, which opened the floodgates to one of the greatest missed opportunities for renewables of our times.

For well over a century, some of the communities in my region have taken a disproportionate share of the impact of energy production that has often left a legacy of ill health, environmental degradation and pollution. It is those communities—more often than not the poorest communities—that are all too often subject to unwelcome planning applications and land use decisions. There have been developments such as opencast coal sites, landfill, waste processing, and the overconcentration of wind farms, not for some grand principle of providing cheap and clean renewable energy but, more often than not, for little more than the latest opportunity for financial speculation by multinationals or venture capitalists. Those renewable projects should have been locally and publicly owned and run, with the profits recycled into the host communities. Of course, those communities would be most affected by fracking.

I have opposed fracking from the outset, precisely for that reason. The fracking companies would be just the latest in a long line of speculators who come into the community promising riches, jobs and benefits only to leave a legacy of environmental damage, degraded countryside and little if any community benefit.

It might come as a surprise to some, but Ineos is not particularly well known for its philanthropic behaviour. It is known for holding the country to ransom by threatening to close down our biggest refinery, for using its muscle to shaft the workforce, and for using its private monopoly to try and undermine a legitimate and responsible trade union for the crime of protecting its members' livelihoods.

Ineos has the most to gain by snapping up licences across the central belt and the north of England. Scottish Government ministers met the company on a dozen occasions in the run up to the original moratorium. Perhaps now we can have the details of those conversations released in the interests of transparency, but I will not hold my breath.

I have actively opposed fracking because I have looked in depth at what it has done to communities elsewhere—polluting the water table, affecting the land and the food chain and causing public health concerns. In the US, 100,000 fracking wells have been drilled since 2005, using 280 billion gallons of water, which becomes heavily polluted during the process. These are very serious concerns and there has been a significant impact on the water supply, on rivers, plant and animal life and ultimately on human health.

A whole host of further concerns have been raised about contaminated water, the illegal dumping of water, and waste water being given to livestock and entering the food chain, as well as aquifer contamination and air pollution.

I do not want to see a single community here affected by this; I also do not want to see another community in the US or anywhere else affected by it. Let us be clear—it is the political pressure that came about from both Claudia Beamish's bill and huge public opposition that has forced the Government to act. We do not, however, have a ban—just a continued moratorium.

Prior to the announcement of that moratorium, we almost had radio silence from Government back benchers, with hardly one of them speaking out demanding a ban, but lo and behold, when the continued moratorium was announced, all of a sudden, those silent, compliant and dutiful back benchers have found their voices—*[Interruption.]*—and are telling the world that they have all been opposed to fracking all along.

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

Neil Findlay: No, thank you. [*Interruption.*] If we are now all in favour of a ban—[*Interruption.*] On you go, Ms Martin—if we have time, I will take your intervention.

Gillian Martin: I am fairly sure that Neil Findlay does not watch the SNP party conference—I am right, am I not? However, if he was to look back, he would see how many times fracking has been mentioned there. A ban on fracking was overwhelmingly passed by acclamation at the SNP party conference.

Neil Findlay: How many times have we debated it in here and how many times have we had radio silence from back benchers of the member's party? Every time—silence.

If we are now all in favour of a ban, I welcome that. I absolutely welcome it. If we are now all in favour of a ban, except the Tories—and I include Fergus Ewing in that description—let us take every step that this Parliament allows to make it a real ban and let us see the Government show its commitment by ensuring that the ban is as tight as possible.

If the Government does that, it will incur the wrath of Jim Ratcliffe; it will incur the wrath of Ineos; and it will incur the wrath of the Tory party and probably of Fergus Ewing as well, but it will get my support and I believe that it will get the support of the overwhelming majority of members of this Parliament. In doing so, we will join France, Bulgaria, and several US states in legally saying no to fracking.

16:27

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): When it is time to reflect upon my tenure as an MSP, and I hope that that will be well into the future, 3 October 2017 will stand out as a genuine highlight. It was of course the day on which Paul Wheelhouse announced that, subject to the support of the Parliament, Scotland would not permit fracking on its soil. As an implacable opponent of hydraulic fracturing in Scotland, I warmly welcomed that decision.

When the moratorium was announced, I forecast in this chamber that any robust examination of the evidence available from across the globe would lead us to this point. It was therefore something of a relief that it did that and that I was spared the possibility of having to vote against the Scottish Government position, because had the debate today been about allowing fracking, I would have been not only speaking against the motion but voting against it at decision time. For me, for environmental and

climate change reasons, fracking is not something that we should go anywhere near.

However, 3 October was personally memorable for another reason. That evening, I, along with Claudia Beamish and Angus MacDonald, had the enormous privilege of being in the great hall of Edinburgh castle to see Christiana Figueres presented with the Shackleton medal to honour her enormous contribution to having the world finally recognise its responsibilities in tackling climate change. More important, we heard an utterly inspirational speech from her.

I had the further privilege of having a brief chat with Ms Figueres. I will not breach her confidence here and reveal the specific detail of what we discussed and what she had to say, although I suspect that she would not be concerned if I did. I will just say that she was well sighted on the fracking decision, and her message was simple: "Well done, Scotland; keep on doing what you are doing."

I recognise that other voices are raised in opposition to the decision but I stand with the architect of the Paris climate agreement on this. Of course, Christiana Figueres is not the only globally respected figure to have endorsed the decision. Former would-be US presidential contender, Senator Bernie Sanders, who has seen first-hand the impact of fracking across the pond, praised Scotland and challenged his own country to follow our lead.

We have all followed tales of the impacts of fracking in the USA, where it has been practised for a decade or so. Let us look at the changes in emission figures in that time. One study highlighted a 30 per cent increase in atmospheric methane concentrations between 2002 and 2014 in the US. Although the paper does not attempt to identify the source of the methane, that period coincides with the development of unconventional oil and gas. A further study has estimated that 40 per cent of recent growth in atmospheric methane between 2007 and 2014 can be attributed to oil and gas activities. I argue that that offers a pretty sound reason for supporting the ban.

We are told by United Kingdom Onshore Oil and Gas that, in choosing to ban domestic onshore exploration, the Scottish Government is turning its back on a potential 3,000 jobs and £6.5 billion of economic benefit. However, the independent economic impact research that was conducted by KPMG concludes that direct and indirect economic benefit combined through to 2062 would amount to a cumulative maximum of only £3.4 billion, and that the number of related jobs—both direct and indirect—would peak at 1,400. Those figures are not insignificant, but they are nowhere near those speculated by UKOOG, which, with due respect, has a vested interest.

The fact is that Scotland is already committed to an energy future that brings with it financial and jobs benefits. Indeed, we are already well down that road. The renewables sector is currently reckoned to have a turnover of £5 billion and supports 26,000 jobs. Why would we jeopardise the natural environment, which, whatever other value we place on it, is worth £20 billion a year to our economy and directly supports 60,000 jobs, as Ash Denham noted? Having committed ourselves to a low-carbon future, surely the focus must remain on transitioning away from fossil fuel use and towards increasing our renewable generation.

As Parliament rose for recess, it was revealed that, on the first Monday of October, wind turbines in Scotland generated more than double the electricity that the country used on that day. Just last week, the First Minister opened the world's first floating wind farm, which will generate enough power for around 20,000 homes. If we can remove the blockages to offshore generation in the firths of Forth and Tay, we can really hit our renewable energy generation targets—and in a cost-effective way. UK Government research has shown that renewables have the potential to become more cost-effective generation sources than conventional gas-fired power stations by the mid-2020s. The lifetime cost of onshore wind is estimated to fall to £63 per megawatt hour generated, which is below the comparable cost from gas over the same timeframe. Offshore wind costs are also estimated to reduce, to become competitive with gas by 2030.

We do not need to frack. For the good of the environment, we should not frack. In a few minutes' time, let us make it clear that Scotland will not frack.

16:32

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): There is a legitimate debate to be had here, but it has proved to be nigh on impossible to cut through the rhetoric, hostility and, quite frankly, nonsense that seem to characterise any discussion of fracking. I hope to be able to bring some light to a debate that, so far, has contained rather more heat.

First of all, we should be clear about what hydraulic fracturing is. Put simply, it is the process of injecting liquid at high pressure into rock deep underground, forcing open existing fissures within the rock, and allowing oil and gas trapped within it to be forced to the surface.

Although the process is often described as “unconventional oil and gas extraction”, that is something of a misnomer. Fracking is neither a new nor a particularly unconventional method. The first oil well in the UK to use hydraulic fracturing did so in 1965. By the late 1970s, it was common

throughout the North Sea and the world. Frankly, the technology behind the Hywind floating wind farm project that the First Minister opened last week—really interesting though it is—is decidedly more unconventional than fracking. One of the most commonly expressed fears about fracking—it has been expressed today—is that it uses chemical additives in the fluid that is used to fracture the rocks. However, these days, more than 99 per cent of the fluid volume tends to be water and sand, so chemical additives equate to less than 1 per cent. Such additives tend to be polyacrylamides, which are deemed to be non-harmful.

There have been, unquestionably, instances where lax regulation and poor environmental protections have led to the use of inappropriate chemicals in the fracking process, but that is a failure of regulation and monitoring, not of science. Even among the scientists and experts commissioned by the Scottish Government there is a strong body of opinion that believes that it is possible to have a successful onshore fracking programme in Scotland with a strong regulatory and monitoring framework.

It is right that, in taking such decisions, we take the utmost care. We must always balance risk against reward and consider what can be done to mitigate that risk, but on issues such as this one, the debate is reduced to such a simplistic level that it is all but useless.

Wind power is frequently held up as the epitome of clean, environmentally friendly electricity but, in common with every form of energy production, it has its negatives. I am supporting constituents who live close to wind farms who experience issues with water boreholes failing or becoming contaminated as a result of turbine installations. You do not have to be Archimedes to recognise that pouring hundreds of thousands of tonnes of concrete creates significant potential for disruption to the water table and local watercourses, not to mention water contamination.

No form of energy production is risk free, and the Scottish Government has demonstrated that it is perfectly happy to accept a degree of risk, but only when it fits with its narrow view of progress. On nuclear power, as has been mentioned, although it will allow no new nuclear power stations, it will let the old ones keep running, because while Scotland needs the base-load in the grid to offset the instability of wind power, it does not want the hassle that the anti-nuclear lobby will generate at any suggestion that we might build new, safer, more efficient and cleaner nuclear reactors.

The Scottish Government will allow no research on genetically modified crops because, although we are rightly proud of our globally recognised

talent in the biological sciences sector, it would prefer not to incur the wrath of the anti-GM campaigners, for whom no regulatory system could be stringent enough to prevent what they see as the upcoming apocalypse.

We are seeing the same thing with fracking. Rather than exploring the opportunity to secure a source of energy and jobs while adopting a cautious approach to rolling out the technology, the Scottish Government has chosen to slam the door shut and seek praise for the quality of its lock. If only self-righteousness was an energy source, we could all huddle round Paul Wheelhouse and his cohorts and keep warm.

It is no wonder that SNP members are so happy to put up wind farms everywhere. It reminds them of themselves and the way that they turn in whatever direction the wind happens to be blowing at the time. Renewables are undoubtedly where most if not all of our power will come from in—hopefully—the not-too-distant future, but we cannot meet those grand ambitions in a single leap. We are on a journey and we need to be pragmatic about the steps that we take to reach our final goal.

I would like more research to be done into hydrogen fuel cell technology, because it is arguably a more sustainable power system for electric vehicles than batteries and mains charging, but on all such issues, there is nothing but silence from the Scottish Government.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

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

Brian Whittle: Richard Feynman, the Nobel prize-winning physicist, said:

“Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts.”

That is not a comment about scientists being ignorant or a dismissal of experts; his point was that science is about people embracing doubt and being open to the possibility that they might be wrong. That is why science has trials and why tests and experiments are conducted. A process might be wrong, but it is still important to try and to carry out research and development in order to improve, but time and again the Scottish Government shies away from that approach. Time and again, it chooses to drive a policy that is based on upsetting the smallest number of people for the shortest amount of time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please conclude.

Brian Whittle: Whatever our position is on the merits of fracking, we should be wary of taking

decisions with long-term implications that are based on the fear of short-term repercussions.

16:38

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): Along with most members, I welcome the Scottish Government's proposition for a strict and effective ban on fracking that will use planning powers to ensure that applications for unconventional oil and gas extraction are considered in line with the Government's very strong position that fracking cannot and will not take place in Scotland.

The decision is a victory for campaigners and communities, including the many campaigners in Edinburgh Northern and Leith. I, too, pay tribute to the our Forth campaigners. The decision is also a victory for the long-term public health, environmental and economic interests of Scotland. It is a victory that is based on evidence: a geological survey, a climate change impact assessment, a health impact assessment and, crucially, an economic impact assessment. Those who argue in favour of fracking on economic grounds forget the crucial point in political philosophy that policy should always be about more than just gross domestic product; it should be about the common good of Scotland and the society and the economy that we are trying to build.

The Tory opposition to the ban on fracking is just another demonstration of the Tories' economic incompetence. The old story of a quick buck that runs through Tory political philosophy has been clear for all to see in the debate. Research from KPMG has shown that fracking would contribute very little to the economy in the short term. It would contribute on average only 0.1 per cent of GDP, or only £1.2 billion over the coming decades. We should compare that to the tourism industry, which could be impacted by fracking and which provides the Scottish economy with an annual revenue of £11 billion and makes up 4.2 per cent of GDP. We should compare that Tory position with the London School of Economics research that shows that a no-deal position from the Tories on Brexit would result in Scotland losing £30 billion in GVA.

Changes to subsidy arrangements for renewables have put one in six renewables jobs at risk and continue to negatively impact our growing and strong renewables industry. That is why I will strongly support the Liberal Democrat amendment. As WWF has said, if Scotland were to allow fracking, that would “fly in the face” of the much-welcomed ambition, which the Tories apparently support, of securing half of all Scotland's energy needs from renewables by 2030. We need to support our renewables sector.

It has the capacity to generate much more onshore wind resource, although that is part of the renewables sector that the Tories have been damaging through their bad decisions on the contract for difference subsidy arrangements at Westminster. We have 25 per cent of Europe's tidal energy resource, 10 per cent of Europe's wave energy resource and 25 per cent of its offshore wind resource. We do not need fracking, as we have huge renewable potential in Scotland still to utilise.

I support the Labour and Green amendments, which will strengthen the position and build on the legally robust and evidence-based approach that the Scottish Government has taken. The decision that I hope Parliament will make tonight will be a move in favour of the next generation and the benefit of the status quo. It will be a move towards low-carbon technology, investing in which is the most important thing that we can do for our economic and technological energy progress. It will be a move to protect the environment and to help tackle climate change.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

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

Ben Macpherson: The decision will also represent the democratic will of the Scottish people, who voted primarily for political parties that were sceptical about fracking. It will reflect the democratic will as expressed in the 60,000 consultation responses. Given that only 1 per cent of those responses were in favour of fracking and that the Tories are in favour of it, does that demonstrate once and for all that the Tories only stand up for the 1 per cent in our society?

Let us send a clear message that the Parliament opposes fracking, now and in the future, not just for our benefit today but for the benefit of our environment, the wider economy and the development of our economy, public health and the common good. I ask members to support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We come to the closing speeches. I call Liam McArthur to close for the Liberal Democrats.

16:43

Liam McArthur: It has been a strange debate. Angus MacDonald wanted to take us back to the eocene epoch, complaining that the debate had not been scheduled 50 million years ago, a point that he might wish to take up with the Parliamentary Bureau in due course. Further, in a political realignment not seen since the eocene

epoch, Murdo Fraser acted as the self-appointed spokesperson for the GMB and Jim Sillars.

Claudia Beamish helpfully set out the background to the debate. She reflected on her proposed member's bill and the vote in the Parliament on an amendment that secured support from us, Labour and the Greens. A number of members, including Mark Ruskell, have pointed to the development of the consensus outwith the Parliament and the work of a number of NGOs and genuine community and grass-roots organisations. I said in my opening speech that I understand and sympathise with the frustration that those groups have felt about the length of time that it has taken to get to this point, and I am sure that many of them will continue campaigning on the issue. It is worth putting on record their contribution to getting us to where we are now.

All the speeches reflected the four broad categories of concern about the health, social, environmental and economic impacts of fracking.

I think that the minister was right, when he opened the debate, to remind us of the position that Healthcare Improvement Scotland has taken in light of the epidemiological impact being so uncertain. The precautionary principle was the only appropriate approach.

On the social impact, we heard testimony and insights from front-line communities. Angus MacDonald, Neil Findlay, Ben Macpherson and other members pointed to the emotions in communities about the impact that fracking might have, not least on housing. Claudia Beamish was quite right to draw a parallel with the experience of the many communities that are still enduring the impact of the opencast mining industry.

It was perhaps inevitable that the focus of much of the debate was on the other two areas: the environmental and economic impacts. A series of speakers from the Tory benches drew attention to what they see as a lack of scientific evidence for the position that the Government has adopted and which other parties in this Parliament have backed. I think that the minister was right to point out that the Tories appeared to support fracking even before they saw the evidence that was gathered, let alone the public views on the issue.

It is fair to say that there will always be an element of doubt around the scientific evidence on the issue. Public policy needs to be guided by science; it should also reflect the fact that scientific evidence comes in many forms. The UK Committee on Climate Change has consistently warned about the likely rise in emissions and the risk to our climate change targets, as it has warned about the effects of offsetting, given the need to reduce emissions elsewhere. Mark Ruskell was right to say that there would be more

displacement of renewables than there would be of coal. In an energy future that is secure, sustainable and affordable, renewables, storage, energy efficiency and demand reduction have to be our direction of travel.

Renewables are important for jobs and wealth creation, too. The economic impacts in that regard are far more profound and important than the impact of fracking. Many members cited the KPMG report, which shines a light on the extent to which the economic benefits of fracking have been overstated.

It appears that Murdo Fraser and some of his colleagues are happy to ban onshore wind and to let rip with fracking. They do not want a wind farm in their back gardens or fields, but they are quite happy for fracking to take place underneath people's communities and villages. The Tories need to be clear about the sectors that would bear the impact of offsetting emissions, because offsetting would have a tangible effect on the economic impact of fracking, were fracking to take place.

As someone who was refereed by John Underhill when he was a referee for the East of Scotland Football League, I can say with certainty that I have not always agreed with his decisions. However, I bow to his understanding of matters geological and I think that he is quite right to suggest that the economic benefits of fracking have been overstated, for a number of sensible geological reasons.

For environmental, economic, health and social reasons, we should not open up a new carbon front. If fracking is the fag-end of the carbon economy, it is time to quit. I look forward to the Parliament backing the ban this evening when it backs the Government motion and the Lib Dem, Labour and Green amendments.

16:48

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): It is often said that politicians are behind the curve when it comes to public opinion, but it seems that we are 55 million years behind the geological reality, according to Heriot-Watt University's chief scientist, Professor Underhill, as Angus MacDonald said.

It is more than two years since I moved a motion in this Parliament that highlighted the

"significant public opposition to new methods of fossil fuel extraction such as fracking",

and called on the Parliament to implement a ban on unconventional fossil fuel extraction in Scotland, to protect our communities—whom I cannot thank enough for their involvement in

opposing fracking—and our environment and to respect our international climate commitments.

At that time, not one other party in this Parliament supported my call. That day, Shale Gas International gleefully declared:

"The Green Party failed to ban fracking in Scotland yesterday."

Shale Gas International went on to say:

"Alison Johnstone ... argued that 'a ban on unconventional gas in Scotland would focus attention on truly renewable sources rather than scraping the bottom of the fossil fuels barrel.' She also rejected the claims that exploration of shale gas deposits will lower household energy bills, saying that consumers are being offered 'false hope'"—

just as I do today.

The article went on to say that John Swinney, the then finance secretary, Labour's Iain Gray and Tory MSP Murdo Fraser had rejected my call for a ban. I warmly welcome the fact that four out of five parties in the chamber firmly oppose this technology today. I politely point out to Mr Findlay that on 7 May 2014 he voted against my motion calling for a ban on fracking.

The Greens have always recognised the uncertainties and risks that fracking and other new fossil fuel technologies pose. The Government's research during the moratorium has strengthened that case, pointing to the lack of evidence needed to assure us that the public health risk is negligible; and the economic case was also found to be weaker than expected. While that evidence gathering was under way, the Greens and others were on the front line, standing shoulder to shoulder with the central Scotland communities that would be most impacted by fracking. Like many others, I have spent time in packed community halls where the public raised their concerns with developers, along with the our Forth and concerned communities for Falkirk campaigns.

I have lodged motions, which gained meagre support, and asked numerous parliamentary questions highlighting the risks of the fracking industry. The Greens came close to securing a 2km buffer zone between communities and fracking developments when the previous national planning framework was up for discussion. I almost won that vote in committee, but the convener's vote swung it. I therefore commend Murdo Fraser on being consistent on the issue, although he is consistently wrong.

I welcome the Government's announcement that it will ban fracking but, as Mark Ruskell highlighted, we need to ensure that the ban extends beyond the lifetime of this Government and is subject to robust parliamentary scrutiny. Placing in the upcoming national planning

framework a clear statement opposing fracking will ensure that the ban cannot be simply overturned by a future minister's signature on a letter to planning authorities but must undergo cross-party scrutiny in the Parliament. For that reason, we will support the Labour amendment, which notes, as does our amendment, the importance of using the national planning framework to ensure a long-term ban. Liam McArthur rightly noted that our future lies in investing in our renewable energy industries, and the Greens will also support the Liberal Democrat amendment.

However, the Green amendment goes further because it calls for the Scottish Government to use its powers over oil and gas licensing when they are transferred from the UK Government. We must use the full range of powers that are available to us to ensure that the ban against fracking remains in place for generations ahead. Arguing that gas might be lower carbon than coal is fair enough, but it is a stretch too far to place gas within the low-carbon economy; that would be like saying "D'you know what? I'd like to lose weight, so I'll forgo a fresh cream cake and I'll just have a wee plate of chocolate biscuits instead," and pretending that that is health food. Gas is a stop-gap that would divert much-needed skills and investment from our abundant renewables.

Fossil fuels are estimated by the International Energy Agency to receive subsidies of £380 billion a year. If only similar incentives were offered to develop renewables. It astonishes me that the so-called party of big business does not get the economics—no wonder its tree is no longer green. Renewables can sustain livelihoods and communities and provide for our energy needs for the long term. As the minister noted, Lord Browne, chair of the fracking company Cuadrilla and a key UK Government adviser, and Professor John Underhill have agreed that the economic opportunities of fracking are overhyped.

I will wrap it up there. I will support the Green amendment.

16:53

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): There is no doubt that we are heavily reliant for our energy needs on gas, which accounts for some 55 per cent of our energy consumption and is likely to be just as important in the future for energy, for heating and for the petrochemical industry. We therefore need to look ahead to forecast future needs and challenges.

Demand is forecast to remain roughly the same for the next 20 years, according to the Department of Energy and Climate Change. We know that about 50 per cent of our gas is currently imported from places such as Norway and Belgium, but also

from places such as Qatar. Security of supply is an issue that should concern us in the medium and long term so that we guard against our supply being vulnerable to instability in some of the countries from which we import gas. Overreliance on imports does not give us security of supply. All that said, however, I do not think that onshore fracking is the answer.

There are a number of different approaches that we need to take, but my starting point is that everything that we do has to be seen in the context of the climate change strategy and the statutory targets that we, as a Parliament, all agreed. The reduction of demand and consumption has a part to play, as does the pursuit of new opportunities offshore, where we have been fracking for some time. We should not let up on our focus on renewables, either, because although they will not provide for all our energy needs, they are an increasing and welcome part of our energy mix. In that overall context, it seems to me to be a little bit perverse that we should want to use another fossil fuel, which would run contrary to everything that we have said in the Parliament.

The Scottish Government—rightly, in my view—commissioned six expert reports that cover everything from health impacts to an economic impact assessment. Others have touched on health and the environment and I do not want to repeat what they said. I want to talk exclusively about the economic impact. Contrary to what others might think, many of us in the Parliament are actually quite pragmatic. If the jobs and economic growth had been significant, we would have needed to weigh that up very carefully. At a time when the economy is flatlining, we should of course consider the potential advantages, but ultimately it is about striking a balance between environmental and economic interests in the long term.

Many claims were made—many of them stellar—for the economic benefits of fracking for jobs and our economy. Many claims were made about what it would deliver in the form of cheap fuel that would help us to tackle fuel poverty. Do not get me wrong—those are both attractive propositions, but unfortunately the claims tended to be far greater than the reality. Investing in onshore fracking would not grow the economy by a significant margin.

Let us consider the numbers in the KPMG report. If we went for fracking, the estimated spend in Scotland over the next 45 years would be £2.2 billion. That is £48 million a year. The lowest estimate of total Scottish spend is £0.5 billion, which is £11 million a year. That is not a huge amount of money. If we then consider the tax take—something that should now interest all of us in this Parliament—the tax yield would be £1.4

billion across the UK to spend over 45 years. In Scotland, we would get a Barnett share of about £140 million over 45 years. I ask members to pause and work that out. It is about £3 million a year. That would not make a significant difference.

The peak employment would be about 1,400 jobs, and the lowest estimate is 470 jobs. Not all of those jobs would be for the entirety of the 45 years, as the duration would depend on production and the scale of development. Although that is undoubtedly better than having no jobs, those figures plus the tax take and the spend in the economy need to be set against the potential environmental impacts and the key question of whether it is worth the risks—and there are risks, some of which were outlined by Neil Findlay and others in their speeches in the debate.

I am not convinced that the numbers in the KPMG report represent such a significant economic impact that we should proceed with fracking. Others say that fracking would provide us with a cheap form of fuel and we should be able to tackle fuel poverty. Nobody would wish that more than me, but I note the observation in the Royal Society of Edinburgh's briefing, which was particularly helpful, that it would not actually be any cheaper as we are part of the open market.

Much mention has been made of respecting the science. I agree whole-heartedly with the proposition that this should be an evidence-based Parliament, but it is not the only consideration for this Parliament. It is for parliamentarians to weigh up all the evidence—the science, the economic impact and the view of the public. Their voice should also be heard in this debate, because they would be the ones who would live with this in their communities.

Labour has whole-heartedly supported my colleague Claudia Beamish's proposed member's bill, which has undoubtedly been very helpful in encouraging the Scottish Government to do more. I am pleased that the Scottish Government will accept our amendment, which will place fracking within the national planning framework so that the approach cannot be changed at a whim by ministers but will require a vote of the Parliament to overturn it. That is a step short of a legislative ban, but it is nevertheless very welcome, and we are pleased to support it.

17:00

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): The SNP's position on fracking has been nothing short of impractical and badly principled and, sadly, nothing in this debate has shown it to be otherwise. For years now, the SNP has dithered on fracking, and swathes of the central belt will now miss out on what should have been

the gold rush of this century. As has been pointed out, community benefit of over £600 million could have been ploughed into those areas. New schools could have been built, new playing fields could have been created, and community centres could have been upgraded. Instead, the SNP has turned its back on Scotland and put its own political agenda ahead of scientific evidence.

It is not only the central belt that the SNP is letting down; thousands of skilled workers from the oil and gas industry, particularly in the north-east, will have another door of opportunity slammed in their faces. Perhaps Labour might reflect on that the next time that it speaks of energy sector job losses.

As Dean Lockhart correctly pointed out, reversing the decision would have attracted £6.5 billion of investment, created more than 3,000 jobs and generated nearly £4 billion in tax revenues. Shame on the Scottish Government for turning down a fantastic chance for many Scots. High-quality, highly skilled jobs would have taken in Scottish talent and boosted our young people's chances and aspirations. Those skills will now develop in England.

Labour's position is again all over the shop, but it does not reflect the shop floor. Claudia Beamish and her colleagues now choose to side with the Greens, and it appears that they listen to their unions only when they want to stop rather than create work.

This debate is not just about communities and the economy missing out; it is also about our environment. Even on that subject, the position of Mark Ruskell and the Greens smacks of hypocrisy. We know that a shift to natural gas from coal has cut more than 2 billion tonnes of CO₂ in the past decade. That is over 70 per cent more successful than reducing emissions through renewable energy. Even the former leader of Greenpeace has said that the movement needs to have an "urgent rethink" over energy sources.

However, the demands for gas are not just about energy. There is a huge lack of understanding about the industry that produces the products that we use in our everyday lives. It is nearly impossible to get through a day without using multiple products that are derived from gas and without the chemicals that are produced at Grangemouth. Products from shampoo, clothing and contact lenses to washing powder all contain gas derivatives. I am not sure about the rest of the members in the chamber, but I, for one, am keen to maintain a basic level of hygiene.

Denying Scotland the security of its own supply whether for energy or products is also denying savings to our consumers. From fuel poverty to rising household expenses, the consequences of

that decision will be costly. However, the SNP knows that and continues to import 40,000 barrels of fracked shale gas every day. As one of my colleagues noted, the Royal Society of Edinburgh has pointed out that

“The global carbon footprint of the gas that Scotland imports will be far higher than for any onshore production in Scotland.”

There is utter hypocrisy, but the SNP does not care for facts and is happy for it to happen somewhere else, as long as it is not in its back yard. As Murdo Fraser pointed out, the minister and his colleagues have ignored that point in their offerings today.

Senior members of the SNP and members of its own scientific panel have real concerns about the decision and have called for proper engagement with the industry. So why will the SNP hold a poll comprising two lobbying groups over the balanced evidence that my colleague Jamie Greene calls for? We need to carefully consider what sort of message the ill-thought-out ban sends to the world. Academics, scientists and engineers now know that the SNP Government is not for knowledge and expertise and puts political posturing first. Forget about talking Scotland down, this is letting Scotland down.

This is a massive missed opportunity. At the SNP party conference, there was talk of progress. However, is it progress to deny these communities a chance? Is it progress to stop thousands of jobs being created? Is it progress to ignore the scientists and academics? Is it progress to ban something only to import it from elsewhere? No, it is simply sheer hypocrisy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Paul Wheelhouse to wind up. You have some spare time, minister, so you can speak until 5.15.

17:05

Paul Wheelhouse: We are reaching the culmination of nearly four years of carefully considered investigation into unconventional oil and gas extraction—as opposed to the characterisation of the process by Conservative members. I wish to thank members who have spoken today for what has been a lively and—for the most part—informed debate.

Throughout the process, the Government has been fully committed to engaging in a balanced and informed debate with the public, stakeholders and Parliament. My breath was taken away by Alexander Burnett’s suggestion that we are acting on the basis of an opinion poll. We specifically said that it was not an opinion poll: it was a consultation that was open to all the people of Scotland and to international stakeholders—

Murdo Fraser: International?

Paul Wheelhouse: International stakeholders took part in the consultation, in which some 60,500 people took part. As, I am sure, members will understand, we have specifically focused on the responses of people from Scotland.

Brian Whittle: Will the minister take an intervention?

Paul Wheelhouse: I have heard enough from Conservative members today. I will respond to points that Conservative members made in the debate, so they will not be forgotten.

As I said, throughout the process we have been fully committed to having a balanced and informed debate. We have clearly and transparently sought out and made publicly available impartial and independent research evidence—including science—on the potential impacts of unconventional oil and gas extraction, and we have encouraged and empowered everyone with an interest to express their views on that evidence. We recognised that it is a complex and highly technical issue, and we took a number of innovative steps to encourage participation in our public consultation.

As other members have done, I want to thank some specific groups. I want to thank everyone who took part in the exercise that we commissioned, whether they were for or against fracking, and everyone who provided us with expert evidence. We scrutinised the evidence, we carefully considered the response to our consultation and, on 3 October, we set out our position and put in place a robust effective ban on unconventional oil and gas extraction.

The decision on unconventional oil and gas does not exist in isolation; it must be viewed in the context of our longer-term ambitions for energy. A number of members made that point, and I fully acknowledge it. It must also be viewed in the context of manufacturing and the Scottish economy more generally and, of course, our climate change responsibilities. Jackie Baillie made an important point about offshore oil and gas. She is absolutely right that it is an important industry to support because it supplies three quarters of our primary energy needs. Offshore production of oil and gas in the North Sea has developed over the past half century as a highly regulated industry that uses some of the most advanced and comparatively least-polluting production methods in the world. That is why an industry that supports more than 100,000 jobs exists in Scotland.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the minister take an intervention?

Paul Wheelhouse: I will, in a moment.

Jackie Baillie was also right to say that a strong and vibrant domestic offshore oil and gas industry can play a positive role in the future. We certainly want that role to be played in terms of a transition to low-carbon energy. I believe that the skill sets will migrate across to low-carbon activities, in due course.

The demands on our energy infrastructure will change dramatically in the decades ahead. As those changes unfold, we have a moral responsibility to tackle climate change, an economic responsibility to prepare Scotland for new low-carbon opportunities, and a social responsibility to help those who are in most need to access affordable energy.

In our final energy strategy, we will outline the role that gas infrastructure could play in Scotland's future energy system, including the opportunities for heat networks and low-carbon or zero-carbon gases such as biogas and hydrogen. In that context, I note with interest the UK Government's "The Clean Growth Strategy—Leading the way to a low carbon future", and its renewed—if rather belated—interest in carbon capture, usage and storage. Under the right conditions, that technology has the potential to support a new industry in Scotland that would not only exploit Scotland's geological and industrial resources, but would do so while contributing to our mission to tackle climate change. We will work to ensure that UK funding for industrial decarbonisation initiatives reflect the scale of ambition for important Scottish industrial clusters, for example at Grangemouth, as well as our ambition for new low-carbon sectors in the economy.

Achieving our vision for energy will also be crucial to our efforts to tackle fuel poverty. As the First Minister has announced, the Scottish Government is developing plans for an energy supply company that will support our efforts to tackle fuel poverty and help to achieve our ambitious climate change targets.

A number of members mentioned Lord John Browne: I have mentioned him and Alison Johnstone has also mentioned him recently. I will give the quotation from Lord Browne that has been used. Members should bear in mind the fact that he is the former chairman of Cuadrilla. He said:

"We are part of a well-connected European gas market and, unless it is a gigantic amount of gas, it is not going to have material impact on price"

and KPMG has said that

"It is worth noting that given limited recoverable volumes, UK UOG outputs would only represent a fraction of the supply to the global market ... furthermore, the scale of development in Scotland will be much lower than that in the US and hence Scottish UOG is unlikely to have an impact on global energy prices."

That finding suggests that there would be no noticeable effect on energy costs for households. I notice that the Conservatives have not made the point about energy costs to any extent: they know that the game is up on that. They had been making the point loudly since 3 October, so I hope that they have finally been convinced.

Patrick Harvie: I have a question relating to an earlier point that the minister made about offshore oil and gas. When, in a previous role, the minister had responsibility for climate change, he was one of the few people in the SNP who accepted the basic principle that the majority of existing fossil fuel reserves would have to be left in the ground, as we are now going to do with onshore shale reserves. Has he come to a view about what proportion of existing fossil fuel reserves needs to stay in the ground unburned in order for us to achieve our climate change objectives?

Paul Wheelhouse: I am happy to discuss that point with Mr Harvie in due course, but I want to focus on the debate that we are having now, which is about not creating a new source of high-carbon energy through unconventional oil and gas.

Looking beyond the energy strategy, Scotland's manufacturing and chemicals industries continues to play a crucial role in the economy and we will continue to give them strong support.

In my final few minutes, I will turn to points that members have made. To start with, I will highlight a few that the Conservatives have made. I said in response to Murdo Fraser that he had failed to acknowledge that 63 per cent of the gas that is produced in the UK is produced in Scotland, where there is 8.5 per cent of the population: Scotland is a net exporter of gas. Although we import ethane to help Ineos at Grangemouth, we are a significant exporter of gas. Members were probably shocked—those who were not in the chamber should know this—that when I mentioned that the biggest threat to the Scottish economy is Brexit, Mr Fraser laughed. He failed to acknowledge that 80,000 jobs may be put at risk by a hard Brexit, and he ignored the evidence in today's *The Herald* that suggests that there will be an impact of up to £30 billion on the Scottish economy. The Conservatives totally ignored that in their responses. If they believe that economic impact is important, they should acknowledge it and act now to prevent a hard Brexit.

I pay tribute to Claudia Beamish—although we were in a different position in that she set out initially to have a ban. I endorse the Labour amendment and the Green and Liberal Democrat amendments. Subject to the strategic environmental assessment, we will take steps to enshrine the position in the national planning framework. I thank Claudia Beamish for her courtesy, her engagement with me on the issue

and her hard work to deliver her consultation. Time permitting, I will happily discuss with her co-operative models in renewables. We share an interest in that and I am keen to work with her on it.

Mark Ruskell summed up the situation: the debate is an opportunity for the progressive parties in Parliament to unite in giving a strong message about the future of unconventional oil and gas, and to send a message to the Conservatives that people's views matter. We have listened to the science and we have considered the economic evidence, which the Conservatives have almost completely ignored. They have cherry-picked distorted figures from the evidence that KPMG produced. It is not working. Mark Ruskell summed up the situation well: it is just not worth it. He is absolutely right in that respect. As I set out in my opening remarks, I confirm to him that we will use the licensing powers in line with the Scottish Government's position.

Liam McArthur made two excellent speeches, and I thank him for the positivity of his remarks. He was right to identify the significant challenges that the evidence has thrown up. We have, perhaps, taken the scenic route, although not over 55 million years. I cannot take credit for the first 54 million-plus years of the process to which Angus MacDonald referred, but I can certainly do so for the past year and a half. Angus MacDonald and other members cited the strong views of their constituents. I hope that they will be satisfied with the outcome, if Parliament votes to endorse our position.

I am aware that time is running out, but I want to mention something that Christina McKelvie put well when she said that we are putting communities first, because that is important. We are listening to the science, but we have also listened to the views of communities.

Claire Baker was right to identify the higher cost of extraction in Scotland, which is cited in the evidence. It should not be assumed that the industry would be as cost efficient here as it has been elsewhere in the world.

Colin Beattie also mentioned high energy prices. I cannot see whether Maurice Golden is in the chamber just now, but I was watching "Scotland Tonight" last night and I think that he will be reflecting on his remark that fracking would provide a solution to the finances of Scotland in the coming year. No: it will not. He will have to come up with another plan.

Business Motion

17:15

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-08377, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 26 October 2017—

after

2.30 pm

Ministerial Statement: STEM Strategy for Education and Training

insert

followed by

Ministerial Statement: Developing a New Diet and Obesity Strategy for Scotland—
[Joe FitzPatrick].

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:16

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser is agreed to, all the other amendments will fall. The first question is, that amendment S5M-08341.3, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S5M-08341, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on unconventional oil and gas, be 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)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (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)
 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 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)
 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)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)

(SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 28, Against 90, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-08341.1, in the name of Claudia Beamish, which seeks to amend motion S5M-08341, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on unconventional oil and gas, 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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 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)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (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)
 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)

Abstentions

Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 28, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-08341.4, in the name of Mark Ruskell, which seeks to amend motion S5M-08341, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on unconventional oil and gas, 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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 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)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)

Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (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)
 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)

Abstentions

Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 27, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-08341.2, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S5M-08341, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on unconventional oil and gas, 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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 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)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (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)
 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)

Abstentions

Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 28, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-08341, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on unconventional oil and gas, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (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)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(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)

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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 91, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees with the Scottish Government's position of not supporting the development of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland; endorses the government's decision to introduce an immediate and effective ban on onshore unconventional oil and gas developments using its devolved powers in line with the Scottish Ministers' statutory responsibilities; notes that this position will be subject to a strategic environmental assessment before being finalised; agrees that the finalised energy policy on this should be reflected within the next iteration of the National Planning Framework, which is subject to consideration by Parliament prior to its adoption; supports the robust further development of renewables; commits to actively exploring and supporting public, municipal co-operative and community models of ownership in this sector; agrees that the Scottish Government's position should be included in the Energy Strategy, in addition to its incorporation in the next National Planning Framework; further agrees that licensing powers for onshore oil and gas should be transferred immediately to the Scottish Parliament from the UK Government and utilised in a way that is compatible with the Parliament's view on unconventional oil and gas development; considers that the focus for the future must be on renewables, establishing sustainable energy supplies and creating green jobs, and believes that opening up a whole new front of carbon-based fuels would be a distraction and divert investment and research away from green technologies.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Given that Alexander Burnett did not declare an interest in North Banchory Company Ltd before summing up for the Tory party, is it possible to get clarification on whether he was speaking on behalf of his constituents or his shareholders?

The Presiding Officer: As Ruth Maguire will know, it is up to all members individually to make a judgment on whether to make a declaration of interests.

Helicopter Safety (North Sea)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I ask those who are leaving the chamber to do so quietly, please. The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-07724, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, on workforce concerns regarding helicopter safety in the North Sea. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament understands that the Civil Aviation Authority has lifted the ban on the use of Superpuma H225LP and AS332L2 helicopters in the UK despite continuing concerns over the safety of these helicopters among offshore workers; further understands that Airbus, the manufacturer of Superpuma helicopters, has carried out a survey of North Sea workers and aircrew in order to establish their attitudes towards helicopter safety; notes the finding that 62% of respondents would be unlikely to fly in a Superpuma helicopter, given a choice; further notes that 44% of respondents were unaware of work done to improve safety since the Superpuma crash in April 2016, including increased monitoring and inspection measures and more regular replacement of gearbox components; recognises that Unite the Union has launched a petition opposing the reintroduction of the Superpuma helicopters, signed by thousands of offshore workers in the North East Scotland parliamentary region and across the country, who remain concerned about their safety and reputation, and notes calls for flights in these Superpuma helicopters to not resume.

17:24

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am delighted to welcome to the public gallery members of Unite the union, representatives of Airbus and others who have stayed for the debate, and I thank colleagues across parties for their support.

Tonight's debate gives us an opportunity to put on the record the views of offshore workers on an issue that is of the utmost importance to them and their families. Offshore oil and gas workers earn their living in a hazardous industry that operates in a hazardous environment. Drilling rigs and production platforms are tough places to work the world over, and nowhere more so than in the waters that are off our coasts.

However, offshore safety is not just about the place of work, which is a chemical processing plant that is many miles from dry land and a long way from the nearest hospital. It is also about the journey to work, which carries risks of its own. Most people travel to work each day by train, bus, bike or car. Oil workers make a journey, too. They travel every month to the heliport in Aberdeen, then make a journey by helicopter to a place where they work long shifts on successive days for, often, three weeks at a time. Sometimes, they fly first from Aberdeen to Shetland, then to an

offshore installation, and they do the same journey in reverse when coming home. That is a lot of hours in mid-air.

I have travelled offshore a number of times in the past 30 years and it is not the same as taking the bus. A passenger on a bus does not need to be trained in advance on how to get out if things go wrong. He or she does not need a survival suit or the other gear that is required to stay afloat and to keep breathing in the event of an accident, and they do not have to go through the process of kitting up twice in the same journey when the trip involves changing from one vehicle to another halfway there.

It is important to understand what the journey is like and what that implies for workforce safety. Formal certification of safety on its own is not enough. Taking a chopper to work in the North Sea is not the same as joyriding at an air show on a summer's afternoon. The journey is also about the gear, the safety procedures, the unpredictable flying conditions and the hazardous environment. When workers have to deal with all that before they get to work, they need the certification, but they also need to feel that the aircraft that they are travelling on is fit for purpose.

That is what is at issue this evening, because Super Puma helicopters do not feel safe to many of those who might be asked to step on board. Unite the union has collected thousands of signatures that confirm that that is the view of its offshore members, some of whom are here.

Airbus, which makes Super Pumas, has done its own survey. It found that 62 per cent of helicopter crew and passengers in the North Sea would not fly in Super Pumas, given the choice. It also found that 44 per cent were unaware of the efforts that Airbus had made to address the issues that caused Super Pumas to be grounded in the first place.

Those efforts are significant. Airbus has a good deal of professional engineering expertise, and it has applied all its technology and expertise to addressing the critical issues. It has briefed MSPs accordingly.

The facts of the matter are not in dispute—they have been established by national and international civil aviation regulators. The Super Puma 225 that crashed in Norway last year did so because a crack that developed in the gearbox led to catastrophic failure, and the helicopter dropped out of the sky. Thirteen passengers and crew died as a result.

Airbus has made public what it believes caused the crack to develop where it did, and it has put mitigation measures in place. For example, two different companies previously supplied versions of the part that Airbus believes was at the heart of

the gearbox failure. In the future, Airbus will use only one version from one supplier. Mechanisms for detecting faults or failures have been improved, and maintenance rules and procedures have been tightened up.

All those steps are welcome, but they do not guarantee that such faults or failures will never happen again, which is why so many people remain unconvinced. It is important to know how and why a crack develops, but it is also important to know how long it takes before that becomes critical and how much time there is to take action to deal with it. It is right to remove the less safe of two alternative components from the supply chain, but we also need to know whether there are other parts of the aircraft where safety-critical components are supplied by different companies and what is being done about them.

It is interesting to know that Airbus could reduce the number of seats and improve the internal cabin space in the 225, but there is no certainty that that will happen if helicopter operating companies cannot make a profit when flying with fewer passengers.

There are wider questions, which are not just for Airbus. In 2014, my friend and former colleague as the Aberdeen North MP, Frank Doran, won the support of the Transport Committee at Westminster for a public inquiry into helicopter safety in the North Sea, but that call was rejected by the Tory transport secretary of the day.

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Mark McDonald): Lewis Macdonald will appreciate that, given my ministerial office, I cannot make a speech in the debate. However, as the issue affects a number of my constituents, I ask him whether he agrees that, as well as communication with the workforce, which is essential, wider communication is required with the families of the workforce and with the communities—particularly those in Dyce and Bridge of Don—where there are regular helicopter flights over built-up areas, whose members often have concerns about what the impact of helicopter safety might be on their communities.

Lewis Macdonald: Mark McDonald makes a good point. A lot of this is to do with communication—in a sense, it is the central point. It is not only about finding technical solutions to technical problems but about the communication with the workforce, their families and the wider community—hence the call that was made three years ago for a public inquiry into helicopter safety that would look not only at the technical standards but at the related communications.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and other unions in the offshore co-ordinating group have this week

repeated the call for a public inquiry. When the minister responds to the debate, I will be interested to hear the Scottish Government's view on that, although I recognise that the responsibility lies elsewhere.

Offshore trade unions have argued that helicopter transport needs to be on the agenda of the oil industry's regulators—the Oil and Gas Authority and the Health and Safety Executive—as well as the agenda of the Civil Aviation Authority. That makes the same point that this is not just about technical standards but about workforce engagement and confidence, and the issue is for the whole industry.

The partnership of the workforce, unions and regulators must be strengthened, not weakened, if the North Sea is to have a safe and successful future, and that is why the views of the workforce must be heeded by all concerned. Only by putting the workforce at the centre can we have the oil and gas industry that we need and which operates to the standards that those who work in it deserve.

17:31

Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I thank Lewis Macdonald for securing this members' business debate. I completely concur with his last sentiment—that the workforce must be at the centre.

Sadly, one of my earliest duties in the chamber after being elected was to put a question—I think that it was the very first question that I put—to the First Minister about the safety of the Super Puma H225 fleet in Scotland. That came after the tragedy in April 2016 that took the lives of 13 people, including one of my constituents, Mr Iain Stuart, who was a father of two from Laurencekirk.

At that point, the fleet was grounded—and rightly so—to allow an investigation to be carried out to ascertain why that model of helicopter, which at that point was responsible for about 140,000 flights a year across the United Kingdom, appeared to have recurring gearbox problems.

Between 2009 and 2016, four flights came down in the North Sea with mechanical failure, and two of those incidents led to fatalities, with the loss of 29 lives. Because of that, it is not difficult to understand the concerns and the reluctance of offshore workers, and their families at home, to travel offshore when they depend on the helicopter fleet for transport to and from platforms in the challenging and often hostile environment that Lewis Macdonald described.

Lewis Macdonald points out in his motion that Airbus, which is the company that makes the Super Puma helicopters, carried out a survey of pilots and passengers that found that 62 per cent

would prefer not to fly in Super Pumas and that 44 per cent were unaware of the work that has been carried out to improve safety since the tragedy in 2016.

I raised that issue with Airbus last week when I met the company to discuss the Civil Aviation Authority's recent decision and to ask what had been done to improve the safety of the workforce in the oil industry. Airbus went through in detail each of the incidents that have happened over the past few years, in particular that of April 2016, and the methods that were used by the hundreds of engineers and scientists who investigated not only the design of the part that caused the problem but the history of the individual gearbox that failed so catastrophically—from its construction, individual parts, transportation and installation to its final operation.

The outcome of Airbus's investigation found that a combination of factors led to the gearbox failure in 2016. That has resulted in a number of changes being made, some of which Lewis Macdonald outlined.

The gearbox parts that were identified as contributing to the accident have been replaced with alternatives that are already safely in use in other helicopter models. Airbus has reduced the service life for various gearbox parts from 4,000 flight hours to 1,000 flight hours. The particle detection system and related inspection criteria have also been improved, and a new transit packaging system has been introduced that monitors gearboxes for the unexpected forces that Airbus believes contributed to the failure of parts in the incident last year. In addition, aircraft operators are no longer permitted to separate the modules of the main gearbox and must send them to Airbus's own maintenance venues. I hasten to add that that was only a brief and non-technical overview of some of the changes that have been made.

When I asked Airbus about the results of the survey, I was told that the company still had to engage with the industry as a whole, including the workforce, trade unions and the operators. That is the key issue. It is all very well that, as members of the Scottish Parliament and politicians, we can be briefed, but we are not the ones who need to be convinced about the fleet's safety. I very much appreciated the chance to meet Airbus last week, but I am conscious that those who work in the industry are yet to get the information, the briefing and the opportunity to ask questions that I received. Mark McDonald made the point that the wider community also needs to be informed about the changes that have been made.

Airbus is just at the start of the process and it still has a lot of work to do. There is also the fact that, although we have a preliminary report on the incident in 2016 from the Accident Investigation

Board in Norway, the final investigation report is still to come.

I stress that I am fully behind and support offshore workers. It is our absolute duty to ensure as far as possible that those in our workforce fly only in aircraft in which they not only feel safe but are safe. My husband has to go offshore; I have family and friends who work in the industry who have to do the same. No one can live in the north-east of Scotland and not know anybody who works offshore.

I would never expect anyone to do anything that I would not be willing or happy to do if I was in their position. That is why I will support the return of this helicopter to service only if the workforce feels happy and secure enough to travel on it. Those in the workforce are the ones who are taking the risks and it is only right that we support them.

17:37

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I thank Lewis Macdonald for bringing this important topic to members' business today.

It is, without a doubt, the consensus that the loss of life due to the failure of Super Puma helicopters was unacceptable and a tragedy that we do not want to see again. Aberdeen and the wider oil and gas industry across the UK can take pride in its health and safety record. It continues to be a world leader in that regard.

There is no doubt that Super Puma helicopters have brought concerns for oil companies and workers alike. As Oil & Gas UK stated earlier this year,

"The safety of the offshore workforce is of paramount importance to the industry".

More recently, it said that the decision to use the Super Puma rests with the operator, its workforce and their helicopter operator.

I am grateful that the manufacturers of the Super Puma helicopters, Airbus, has taken the concerns seriously. Airbus is now in the process of meeting workers from oil companies who use these helicopters to inform them of the changes that it has made to make the aircraft safe. It will be interesting to see what feedback is received, and how Airbus acts on any further concerns.

After investing millions in improving the safety of its aircraft, Airbus has carried out thousands of tests on all parts of its helicopters. Following the investigation, it improved practices by increasing the frequency of inspections; imposing stricter criteria; overhauling detection methods for failures; increasing monitoring of individual parts; and reducing maximum operation times for parts by a factor of four. It has gone as far as prohibiting

parts within its aircraft completely. Those are the kind of rigorous health and safety checks that we now expect from our oil and gas industry. That Airbus has done its utmost to live up to that rigour is no less than we would expect.

The problem that Airbus faces is about regaining the confidence of workers. That was evident from the recent survey results. However, with checks having been completed only earlier this year, it is too early to call for an all-out ban. It is also too early to expect workers to be aware of the work that has gone into improving the safety of the aircraft.

I completely understand workers' reasons for being cautious, but Airbus has produced a thorough investigation and performed thousands of tests, and it should now be allowed time to get around all companies who use the helicopters so that it has adequate time to speak to workers and reassure them of their safety.

The health and safety checks have been completed. Revisions have been considered. Changes have been made. Airbus now needs to communicate that to those who use the Super Puma and restore confidence.

17:40

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I draw attention to my entry in the register of members' interests—in particular, my membership of the Unite and GMB trade unions. I welcome those trade union members who are in the public gallery tonight; members are the lifeblood of the trade union movement.

I remind Parliament that it was the Aberdonian trade union leader Jimmy Milne who, when he became the General Secretary of the Scottish TUC, led on from the call of his predecessor, Jimmy Jack, who—in 1972—demanded the establishment of a Scottish Parliament as a workers' Parliament. I am not quite sure that Jimmy Milne and Jimmy Jack would say that we have achieved that yet but I welcome Lewis Macdonald's initiative in securing this timely debate in Parliament on a matter of the highest importance to workers in this most strategically important industry in Scotland.

It is a primary industry where the extraction of a natural and national asset comes up all too often against conflicting interests, between multinational private industrial ownership whose first duty is to shareholder returns and a workforce for whom our first duty—our first duty in this Parliament—must be to secure their health and safety at work, including their safety in travelling to and from work.

If we had anything resembling industrial democracy, we would not need to have this debate at all, but it is precisely because we do not have industrial democracy—precisely because we have an industrial balance of power that is tilted in favour of the owners and the operators—that this is such a highly charged debate.

It is a bit disappointing but not surprising to hear the Conservative Party, as I understand it, refusing point blank to back the trade union campaign. We heard it again just a few moments ago—the decision to use the Super Puma rests, it says, with the operator, its workforce and its helicopter operator.

In my view, that is a negation of the Cullen edict that in the North Sea the frequency of accidents may be low, but the potential consequences are very serious. As others have pointed out, even Airbus's own figures reveal that as many as 62 per cent of all those who have been surveyed by Airbus are

“very uncomfortable and unlikely to fly in a Super Puma again”.

We must all understand that when we add to that the 15 per cent who are

“uncomfortable and would need more safety information before flying again”,

it becomes abundantly clear why the Unite campaign has moved from being a back home safe campaign to a no comeback for the Puma—make the North Sea Puma free campaign. I hope that the minister in his closing remarks will pledge his full support for this important trade union safety campaign.

There is added poignancy to this debate because the Super Puma crash just off the coast at Bergen in Norway that concerns us tonight, in which 13 souls lost their lives, took place on Friday 29 April 2016, the day after international workers memorial day—the day when we, let us not forget, “Remember the dead, fight for the living.” If that is to be more than a slogan, we need to act upon it.

As the RMT union reminds us in its briefing for this debate, next year is the 30th anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster—the pain from that is still being felt by widows, orphans and survivors right across the country. We owe it to them to find a new determination in this Parliament to say to those offshore workers who are with us tonight, and to all those beyond, that we in this Parliament are on their side and it is the duty of Parliament to make sure that such tragedies never happen again—that we not only hear them, but listen as well.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I say to visitors in the gallery that it is not appropriate either to clap or to cat call. If visitors want to show their

appreciation, there will be an opportunity to do so at the end of the debate.

17:45

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I thank Lewis Macdonald for securing this important debate. I was going to say “for our area”, because, as north-easterners, we often forget how many other people in Scotland, and particularly in the north of England, work offshore.

I come to the debate from the perspective of those who work offshore and their families. More than 20,000 flights are made every year to installations hundreds of miles off land, where men and women go to work for weeks before returning home to their family and friends. We know that the journey to and from the installation is potentially the most hazardous aspect of working offshore as it stands, by its very nature. We must make sure that the helicopters in use are the safest available.

For nearly 20 years, when I ran my own company, I periodically flew to platforms in the North Sea, west of Shetland and beyond. Considerable procedures, precautions, mitigation measures and training are in place, but if something goes wrong over the North Sea, every one of us on that flight knows that the chances of survival from a ditching helicopter are not high. I can understand why those who have to make such journeys with far more frequency than I ever did may now need more reassurance about the helicopters that they are asked to board.

In representing its members, the union Unite, which has been mentioned a lot today, has, just in the past couple of days, reinforced its message that strike action will be threatened if Super Pumas are put back into use. We also know that, at this point, certain companies have decided that they will not put their personnel on them, despite Airbus reassurances on their safety, and the fact that the UK and Norwegian civil aviation authorities have, as of July this year, deemed the Super Pumas safe. In a workforce survey carried out by Airbus, which many members have mentioned, 62 per cent of respondents said that they would not want to use the Super Puma again. A further 15 per cent said that they would not be comfortable boarding a Super Puma until more guarantees about safety changes had been explained. In other words, three out of four North Sea workers are unhappy at this point about boarding a Super Puma again.

We know that while the fleet of Super Pumas is not being used in the UK, they continue to be used all over the world. Airbus has said that it has a full understanding of the cause of the crash in Norway and has put forward a number of measures that make it confident that such a tragedy would not be

repeated. Others have mentioned what those measures are, and we have had briefings as members of the Scottish Parliament. I will not repeat what my colleagues have said about them.

The deaths of 13 people last year, off the coast of Norway, were a real turning point for many offshore workers who do not feel they can make their journeys to work on those helicopters any longer. Of course, they already had significant lingering confidence issues over the integrity of the Super Puma after the tragic accident off the coast of Peterhead in 2009 in which 16 people died, including Stuart Wood from my own home village of Newmachar. As the MSP of his mother, Audrey, and his sister, Kerry, I cannot stand here today and advocate anything other than extreme caution over helicopters that have repeatedly had issues before and since that devastating day. I guess that, at this point, "extreme caution" translates into not using them again, given the recurring faults.

Can Airbus and the helicopter operators do more to communicate and to convince North Sea workers and operators that they can feel confident travelling in Super Pumas? Yes—perhaps. It has been pointed out that they really are at the start of the communication process. We have all made suggestions today about how that might be improved. However, right now, I am not so sure that confidence can ever come back. Until it does, I do not think that any of us should ask people who already face significant risk in doing the jobs that they do offshore to board them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As there are a few more members who wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

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

Motion agreed to.

17:49

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I want to make a few brief remarks. For the record, I declare that I am a member of Unite the union and the GMB. I congratulate Lewis Macdonald on securing the debate and associate myself with his remarks. As Richard Leonard did, I commend Unite the union, the people in the gallery and all those who have been involved in the back home safe campaign, as well as the on-going work of the offshore co-ordinating group, which consists of representatives from Unite and the other trade unions that organise offshore workers.

As we have heard, those who represent the workforce have made their position clear. Despite

the decision by the Civil Aviation Authority to lift the ban on the Eurocopter EC225 and mark 2 Super Pumas, there are still serious and fundamental questions to be asked about the safety record of those aircraft. Since 2009, 33 workers have tragically died and 65 passengers and crew have had to be rescued as a result of accidents involving the Super Puma in the North Sea.

Oil companies have ruled out reinstating grounded Super Pumas, at least until the root cause of last year's fatal accident off the coast of Norway is known. Statoil says that it has

"no plans to use this helicopter ever again",

even if it is cleared to do so by the Norwegian authorities. Unite has warned that if the Super Pumas are reintroduced, it is perfectly prepared to recommend that industrial action be taken to protect its members.

As Lewis Macdonald and Richard Leonard said, the workforce needs certainty, and it needs to have confidence in safety arrangements in the North Sea. That is why, regardless of the future of the Super Puma, engagement with the trade unions must be a priority for Government and for the regulators. The UK Government must also reconsider the case for a full public inquiry into helicopter safety in the offshore sector.

The RMT believes that unique operating conditions are a contributing factor to the number of fatal and non-fatal Super Puma accidents in the North Sea. Those conditions include high crosswinds, low temperatures and other adverse conditions. Super Pumas operate worldwide without having the poor safety record that has been observed over recent years in the North Sea. We need to get to the bottom of why the safety of the aircraft is such an issue in the UK and Norway. In that regard, it would be helpful if the Scottish Government could clarify its position on the need for an independent inquiry.

I again congratulate Lewis Macdonald on securing the debate, and I urge the Government and the regulators to take the action that is needed to restore workers' confidence and trust in helicopter safety in the North Sea.

17:52

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): As other members have done, I congratulate Lewis Macdonald on securing a debate on this important issue. I was happy to support his motion, because I believe that the worries of the offshore workforce and the fact that some leading oil companies will not utilise the aircraft that are at the centre of the discussion are issues that ought to be aired in Parliament.

As far as I and other members are concerned, at the very root of the current situation is the simple fact that no one should have to travel to their work harbouring concerns about whether they will get there or return, which is what the Airbus survey of North Sea workers tells us the situation is at the moment: 62 per cent of respondents indicated that, given the choice, they would be unlikely to fly in a Super Puma helicopter.

Those fears might well be misplaced. As MSPs, each of us has been sent a briefing and a video from the manufacturers of the relevant aircraft, who have been in Parliament today to make the case that the measures that they have implemented following the incidents that have been referred to have rendered the models in question safe.

Back at the beginning of the month, the chief executive officer of Airbus Helicopters, Guillaume Faury, flew into a helicopter exhibition in London in an Airbus Helicopters H225 to demonstrate that the aircraft is safe for passenger use. It was a move that some people might consider was reminiscent of the actions of John Selwyn Gummer, the then agriculture minister, during the BSE crisis, when he tried to feed his daughter a burger and ate a bit himself to show that beef was safe to consume. However, to be fair to Mr Faury, he has acknowledged that it takes time to restore trust after accidents. The truth is that we are a very long way from reaching that destination.

As Lewis Macdonald said, the people who are expressing concerns are men and women who earn their livings in an extremely harsh and hazardous environment. They are hardy individuals, so if they are spooked—the figures suggest that they are—that is a significant matter.

We are, of course, looking at the issue following two tragic accidents that we now know have similarities—one in 2009 off the coast of Peterhead, in which 16 people lost their lives, and one in 2016 in Norway, in which 13 people sadly passed away. In 2013, there was another incident involving a Super Puma off Shetland, in which four people perished. The Unite petition opposing reintroduction of the helicopters references the fact that, overall, over eight years, Super Pumas have been involved in six incidents, which have led to 65 people being rescued from the North Sea and 33 families losing loved ones. In addition to that, we are told that Shell will not use the 225 and that BP will not use the Super Pumas until completion of the formal investigation, and the root cause of the Norwegian incident is identified. As we have heard, Statoil has stated that it will not use the models ever again.

Balancing that, Airbus has made modifications to the two models and to the maintenance

programme. For example, there are now lower thresholds for rejecting deteriorating components, and there are more frequent inspections. I am not an expert, but I suspect that the aircraft may, on balance, be safer to fly in than was previously the case. However, the regular users, not members of Parliament, need to be convinced of that. I find it surprising that the European Aviation Safety Agency and the UK and Norwegian civil aviation authorities have lifted their bans when no final report on the crash in Norway has been delivered and no definitive cause has been identified. Earlier this year, the Accident Investigation Board Norway published an interim report on the 2016 accident, but owing to the scope and complexity of the investigation, which I acknowledge, it was unable to estimate a completion date for its investigation. As the AIBN's website states, only the final investigation will represent the complete report.

Against that backdrop, and given the concerns of our North Sea workers, Gillian Martin is right that we need to proceed extremely cautiously.

17:57

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank Lewis Macdonald for bringing the issue to public attention. I remain a City of Aberdeen councillor and a number of constituents in my ward go offshore, not least of whom is my son, who regularly travels by helicopter.

Our foremost concern in the debate is the safety of workers who rely on helicopter transportation as part of their day-to-day lives. We should reflect on the tragic accidents involving the helicopters, but we should also reflect on the work to improve them and make them safe for continued use. The point that I want to make is that the best judges of helicopter safety are not politicians or trade union officials, but the experts who specialise in aeronautical engineering.

The improvements that have been made to the H225LP and the AS332L2 have met the standards of the Civil Aviation Authority and the European Aviation Safety Agency. Airbus has conducted extensive investigations into both helicopters and has co-operated with international efforts. The CAA stated that the decision has

“only been made after receiving extensive information from the Norwegian accident investigators and being satisfied with the subsequent changes introduced by Airbus Helicopters through detailed assessment and analysis.”

If we were to call for banning the helicopters in spite of such conclusions, what would that say about the faith that we have in our regulators? At what point do we abandon our trust in their ability to work in a diligent and competent manner? Why not ban all helicopters, in that case? If we are to have the debate, it should concern the standards

that a manufacturer needs to meet. It should not be about placing extra restrictions on aircraft that experts have already deemed to be safe.

That said, it is not enough to meet the standards and to carry on as if nothing has happened—the lessons of the past must be learned. Regulatory bodies and manufacturers must focus on early preventive action whenever even the most remote possibility of a problem arises. I would expect that of all the manufacturers and operators in whom offshore workers place their trust daily.

I remember flying offshore in the 1970s, in the early days of the oil industry, and I am encouraged by the progress that has been made since then. Back then, my having one hand would not have been regarded as presenting a risk to fellow passengers. I am pleased that today's standards are such that my travelling would not be permitted: I would not be allowed offshore. I have not had the training, I do not have the equipment, and I do not know how to handle the equipment—with one hand it is impossible to do so. I would not want to jeopardise my fellow passengers.

Operators should review their procedures in order to ensure that training is regularly improved, that flights are not overcrowded or unnecessarily weighted, and that there is no flying in excessively adverse conditions.

In respect of the survey that Airbus conducted earlier this year, it is not surprising that a majority of workers are uncomfortable with flying in the aircraft, given that 56 per cent are unaware that new safety measures have been applied to them. That was an early survey; more information is necessary to get people to understand what is taking place. Widespread public engagement would help to reassure oil and gas workers. I hope that Airbus considers that.

We should accept nothing less than the highest possible standards for helicopters. At the same time, we should trust the expertise of the CAA and the European Aviation Safety Agency. Offshore industry personnel have every right to safe working conditions. We must hold the manufacturers to that and ensure that in the future there is improved and continuous safety evaluation across the aviation industry.

18:01

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I declare an interest: I am a member of Unite the union. Also, as my son is a mechanical engineering student and is currently applying to companies in the oil and gas sector, I might have a very personal interest in this issue shortly.

I welcome members of Unite the union to the gallery and I thank my colleague Lewis Macdonald

for bringing this important debate to the Parliament. I am the convener of the RMT Scottish parliamentary group, so it is important that I put across the views of RMT members as well as those of Unite members.

It is clear to offshore workers, trade unions and the public—as Mark McDonald pointed out in his intervention during Lewis Macdonald's speech—that the Super Puma has an unacceptable safety record in flying workers to and from platforms in the North Sea, although that might not be quite as clear to the Conservative members who are in the chamber. As Neil Bibby said, there is no doubt that the unique conditions of the North Sea—the low temperatures and exceptionally high crosswinds—contribute to that inferior safety record.

The facts speak for themselves. The Super Puma has been responsible for the deaths of 33 people in North Sea crashes since 2009, and 65 other workers and crew members have been rescued during that period. As a result, as the motion says and as we have heard from members, offshore workers' confidence in Super Pumas is extremely low, to say the least.

The RMT's general secretary, Mick Cash, said:

"If this were a public transport service, such a terrible pattern of failure would have been tackled long ago. When workers consistently point to helicopter transport as their number one safety concern, Government and regulators at all levels must take action, or we face further deterioration in the perception of safety at work offshore".

The RMT is therefore calling for a fully independent inquiry into offshore helicopter operations, which would cover regulatory standards and commercial pressures, to restore trust and confidence in helicopter transport operations in the North Sea. Like other members, I look forward to hearing how the Scottish Government can assist in securing an independent inquiry, if it is minded to do so.

Pat Rafferty, the Unite Scotland secretary, has said that thousands of offshore workers will be ready to strike if the Super Puma returns. That is a serious situation, but the aircraft clearly presents a danger to people who work hard for our economy. Many workers in the sector have taken to referring to it as a "flying coffin", which gives us a clear impression of how they view that particular helicopter. The opinions of those who know the job better than anyone should be taken very seriously, particularly given that operators are not unbiased parties in this debate. There needs to be meaningful workforce engagement, as a priority.

There is no doubt that improving the safety of helicopter transport for offshore workers is a major issue that is crucial to the future employment of Scottish workers in the oil and gas industry. If there is no such improvement, more jobs and skills

will flow away from our domestic industry and there will be an increase in the use of cheap labour. That is already happening in the decommissioning sector. For example, Canadian Natural Resources paid non-European Economic Area workers \$45 per day to decommission the Murchison platform, and as we speak BP's Miller platform is being decommissioned by a workforce from the Philippines, who are living on a barge connected to the platform.

The Super Pumas have been grounded since May 2016 and it seems beyond belief that they could be reintroduced without a proper independent inquiry and while there are on-going investigations into the cause of gearbox fatigue and alarm system failures. Further, last month the European Aviation Safety Agency issued an emergency directive saying that a main rotor component in the 225 is "susceptible to crack development". Is it any wonder that workers do not want to travel in those helicopters? Surely they must have the right not to do so.

I think that this has already been mentioned, but I understand from some workers that companies such as Statoil and Shell have already indicated that they will not be using Super Pumas. I hope that other companies follow suit. The safety of offshore workers must be our number 1 priority, so the Super Pumas must stay grounded.

18:05

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): First, I offer my respects to those who have been most affected personally by this issue, especially those who have lost a friend, a colleague or a loved one. I also pay tribute to the trade unions that have been active on the issue, and I congratulate Lewis Macdonald on bringing the debate to the chamber.

I have occasionally encountered a preconception that Greens would place a low priority on any issue connected to the oil and gas industry. Notwithstanding the fact that, of course, helicopter travel will be relevant for the future even with the transition to offshore renewable energy sources, I put it on record that workforce safety in relation to the existing fossil fuel industry should be a non-negotiable issue, regardless of our different views about the vested interests of that industry. I oppose nuclear energy but support nuclear safety as an extremely important priority, and the same thing applies in this context. With the recent downturn in the oil and gas industry, one of our most important areas of concern relates to the potential, to which Elaine Smith alluded, to weaken the terms and conditions of the workforce, or, indeed, the safety conditions that they work with. That is a shared concern right across the political spectrum.

Lewis Macdonald opened the debate with a comparison with other modes of transport. I suspect that many of us who travel to work on a bus or a train will understand the point that he made and acknowledge the significant differences in relation to not just the environmental conditions but the level of safety measures that are needed. However, as well as recognising those clear differences, I think that most who travel to work on a bus or a train would recognise the importance of trust, which in this case is trust in their safety, which the workforce who have to travel to offshore installations by helicopter have a right to expect.

When rail crashes take place, we see an immediate response in the trust that people have in the rail operators. When there are stories about safety concerns relating to road vehicles, we see that same reaction. How could we not empathise with those who travel to work in a harsher environment and who have a much greater expectation that safety measures are taken to look after them in relation to the form of transport that is used? Even if we do not have the personal experience that Lewis Macdonald has had of going on helicopter journeys to offshore facilities, the question of trust is something that we can all relate to.

Even if measures have been taken by the manufacturer to address the concerns as it perceives them, if that trust has not been rebuilt, that in itself is an unacceptable aspect of people's working conditions. They should not have to go to work using a form of transport that causes that level of lack of trust, anxiety and fear, even if work has been done. How can that trust be rebuilt if there is not full transparency by the industry and the manufacturer about the issues that they have sought to address and how they have addressed them? That lack of complete transparency is the principal reason why I join those who have expressed support for the proposal for a full independent inquiry into the issues. Greens will continue to support that call, alongside those who represent the workforce.

In the meantime, the decision should absolutely lie with the workforce, and not just with the industry or the regulators. The workforce should be respected, and if those people wish to express clearly the view that the Super Puma should not be brought back into service, their decision should absolutely be one that we all respect.

18:10

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): I, too, offer my condolences and the continued sympathy of the Scottish Government to those who have lost family members and friends, and to communities that have lost community members, in the tragic

accidents that have taken place involving Super Puma helicopters.

I congratulate Lewis Macdonald on securing the debate and welcome his bringing the subject to the chamber. The quality of the contributions from members throughout the chamber has been high, and the debate has been nuanced. Some key, central themes have been covered in almost every speech, and I will try to pick up on them as well as answering one or two questions that members have posed.

Lewis Macdonald started his speech by setting the context, which is important. Other members, including Patrick Harvie just a moment ago, picked up on that. There are few professions in which travel to the place of work is so hazardous. There are not many industries where, to travel to work, people must wear a full survival kit, a life jacket and a rebreather just as part of their travelling attire. I have the utmost respect, as I know all members do, for every man and woman who works in the industry.

The tragic accident on 29 April last year in Norway, in which 13 people sadly died, clearly underlines the risk and the challenges of working in the North Sea. That accident followed tragedies in our own waters near Sumburgh and Peterhead. The most recent accident in Norway has been the subject of extensive investigation, and the investigation by the Norwegian regulator continues. While the exact cause is still to be determined, the UK CAA and the Norwegian CAA announced in July their intention to lift the restrictions that were placed on the H225 and the AS332L2 Super Puma helicopters following the accident in April 2016.

It is not uncommon to put in place airworthiness measures before accident investigations report. I am aware that the UK CAA has not taken the decision lightly. It made the decision after receiving extensive information from its Norwegian counterpart—from the Norwegian accident investigators—and after being satisfied with the subsequent changes that Airbus Helicopters has introduced.

I would like to be clear that any decision to lift the restrictions is made by the regulator—in this case, the UK CAA and the Norwegian CAA—and that the Scottish Government has no input into such decisions; the regulators must maintain their independence from external input. However, I would say that the UK CAA must continue to work with helicopter operators, the offshore industry and international regulators, and it is also important to work with the unions, the workforce and pilot representatives, because that is the key and the crux that just about every member who spoke in the debate touched on.

Regardless of what is and is not lifted, what restrictions have been put in place, what measures have been taken and what mitigation activity has been done, if the workforce does not have confidence—its lack of confidence is clear from the many surveys that have been quoted—we do not want to force anybody to travel to work in a mode of transport that they are deeply uncomfortable with.

A couple of members posed questions about inquiries and a public inquiry. I have been looking at my notes and I am aware, as other members will be, that prior to the accident in 2016 that I mentioned, the CAA in conjunction with the European Aviation Safety Agency, the Norwegian CAA and an independent peer review group undertook a review of offshore helicopter flying. A number of recommendations were made on the back of that, and they are being taken forward by the offshore helicopter safety action group—OHSAG. The Scottish Government very much supported the review, and Transport Scotland has observer status on the governance body.

We are generally satisfied that progress is being made in the right direction. I would be more than happy to meet Unite the union, the RMT, which Elaine Smith rightly mentioned, and any members who wish to join us in that meeting to hear whether those unions and the workforce feel that the recommendations are not being taken forward at the pace that they would like and, if so, to hear from them why an independent inquiry might well be the right route to go down. I have not settled on that. As I said, the Scottish Government has observer status on the governance body OHSAG, so we would very much look to that body to continue the work that it is doing to give confidence to the workforce where it can.

As I have said, the lifting of the restrictions on the Super Puma has raised concerns in the industry, and the unions have clearly put across the concerns of the workforce that they represent. Recent surveys by Airbus and petitions by Unite have shown that there is a clear lack of confidence in the Super Puma helicopters. Airbus has a lot of work to do to rebuild confidence and trust in the aircraft not only among the workforce and the unions but among operators. A number of members have mentioned oil and gas operators that have been clear publicly that they have no plans for the return of Super Pumas to their North Sea operations. The passengers and flight crews and their families must have confidence that everything possible is being done by regulators, the aircraft operators, the manufacturer and the oil and gas industry to minimise the risks when flying over the North Sea.

I believe that Airbus has worked hard to learn from the accidents. A number of members have

said that they have met Airbus in recent days or before that. The Airbus team has not taken the accidents lightly at all; it has put some of its best minds to finding solutions that it hopes will give confidence. Nonetheless, it is now absolutely critical for Airbus to work with the workforce, the unions, the industry and the regulator to attempt to reinstall confidence and trust in the aircraft's safety.

The CAA announcement does not mean an immediate return to service for the Super Puma. A plan of checks, modifications and inspections would need to be undertaken before any flights could take place and any reintroduction would need to be on the basis of a robust safety case being submitted by the operator to ensure that the necessary measures were in place.

Now that the regulators have decided to lift the restrictions, it is ultimately for the helicopter operators to make a decision, but I strongly encourage the operators and their customers to consider the views of the workforce. The men and women of the workforce have to travel on the Super Pumas on a daily and weekly basis, and the workforce must play a key part in any decision to reintroduce the Super Puma into North Sea operations. No decision to reinstate the Super Puma should be made unilaterally without workforce engagement at its heart.

The safety of workers in the North Sea has been and will always be the Government's highest priority. I am reassured to see a desire in the industry, including the unions, helicopter operators, the helicopter manufacturer, oil and gas companies and regulatory bodies, to do everything possible to ensure that workers in the North Sea have a safe journey to their place of work.

Meeting closed at 18:18.

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

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