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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 26 October 2017

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

General Question Time

Transport Poverty

1. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Sustrans report, "Transport Poverty in Scotland". (S5O-01365)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): Transport poverty is not acceptable in Scotland, which is why we invest more than £1 billion annually in public and sustainable transport. We will take account of the Sustrans research in our current review of the national transport strategy. In the programme for government, we announced our intention to double our annual spend on active travel to £80 million per annum.

Neil Bibby: Sustrans said in its report that more than 1 million people live in data zones where there is a high risk of transport poverty and access to public transport is not good enough.

Under this Scottish National Party Government, bus passenger numbers have plummeted and fares have gone up. The Government is now formally consulting on restrictions to the bus pass, which is currently available to everyone over the age of 60, including people who are on low incomes and in in-work poverty. The SNP Government failed to back Labour's plan to freeze all rail fares this year, and it wants to cut air passenger duty for the wealthy, frequent-flying few.

Will the cabinet secretary concede that the Government's decisions can contribute and have contributed to transport poverty in this country? What steps will he take to poverty-proof transport policy and ensure that public transport is accessible to and affordable for all?

Keith Brown: I do not accept the premise of Neil Bibby's question.

It was this Government that asked, through the Smith commission, for the ability to have a public transport bid for our rail franchises, which is something that the Labour Party failed to do—the Labour Party said that it wanted to do that, but it failed even to ask through Smith. This Government has contributed hugely to the expansion of rail services in areas that were not previously served by stations—and in the Borders

rail line we have the biggest new railway line in 100 years in the whole of the United Kingdom.

It is important that we have the concessionary travel scheme, although over the years during which I have been in this Parliament I have heard calls from Labour members to limit the scheme. I have heard that from Conservative members as well. It is perfectly proper for us to consult on the concessionary travel scheme. Of course, the first place in Scotland to introduce a full concessionary travel scheme was my local authority, Clackmannanshire Council. The SNP has a proud record on concessionary travel. We have extended the categories of people who can access the scheme and it is quite right that we hold a consultation on its future development.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary advise on progress in considering reopening a rail link from Dyce to Ellon and perhaps beyond, to the towns of Banff and Buchan, to give my constituents and those of Stewart Stevenson the public transport options that people in many other areas of Scotland enjoy?

Keith Brown: We remain fully committed to funding high-quality, reliable rail services, as I said, and to securing the necessary funding for sustainable investment in the railway to support communities and meet projections of future demand. There is a huge increase in demand for rail travel.

The offer that we have received from the UK Government leaves a shortfall of £600 million on what the industry tells us that it needs. I assure Gillian Martin that our immediate priority is to press the Treasury to secure a fair deal for Scotland—indeed, my officials are meeting their Treasury counterparts today. In the meantime, we will continue to work with the rail industry to plan for the next rail investment period, from 2019, including options for investment such as the one that the member mentioned.

Transport Scotland is reviewing work that the north east of Scotland transport partnership undertook to consider options for transport improvements north of Aberdeen, as part of its Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen strategic transport study. I understand that Nestrans has invited local MSPs, MPs and councillors to a briefing on 3 November to outline its emerging findings.

Early work has commenced on a strategic transport appraisal, as part of the Aberdeen city region deal, in which I was involved. The appraisal will take a 20-year strategic view of the north-east's transport connections across all modes, including road and rail. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of the study in due course.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): The Sustrans researchers applied their calculations to the whole of Scotland and found that 20 per cent of neighbourhoods that were studied had a high risk of transport poverty. What is the Scottish Government's response to the finding that high-risk areas are largely outside urban areas, which demonstrates the SNP's lack of care for and lack of focus on rural communities?

Keith Brown: Imagine hearing about lack of support for bus services from the Conservatives when it is the Conservatives who are responsible for the budget cuts. Despite those cuts, we have funded bus services hugely through bus service operators grants and concessionary travel. Over the years, I have heard a number of calls from the Conservatives for us to cut back on the concessionary travel scheme.

Transport Scotland has welcomed the Sustrans report. The report has some limitations in its analysis, which Sustrans itself has pointed out, but we welcome it and will take it into account as we seek to take forward the national transport strategy and future funding and support for bus services, which is at record levels under this Government.

Sport and Physical Activity (Deprived Communities)

2. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it takes to encourage people from deprived communities to get involved in sport and physical activity. (S5O-01366)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government is committed to increasing rates of physical activity. The active Scotland outcomes framework sets out our ambitions for a more active Scotland and is underpinned by a commitment to equality. We are committed to ensuring that community sport hubs provide opportunities for all to participate in sport and benefit the communities they serve. Current work is focusing on hubs located in communities in the lowest 5 per cent of Scottish index of multiple deprivation areas. In addition, our active schools programme offers opportunities for children and young people who might experience barriers to participation.

Mark Griffin: The recently published Barclay report recommends that certain public buildings, such as leisure centres and possibly some of the hubs that the minister talked about, which are operated at arm's length by local authorities, should pay business rates. In North Lanarkshire, the estimated cost of that would be £4.5 million to £5 million a year, and it would have a massive impact on the council's ability to encourage people who live in deprived communities to get involved in

sport and physical activity. Does the minister agree with me about the impact of the proposal and will she lobby the finance secretary to reject that recommendation?

Aileen Campbell: Derek Mackay made a statement to Parliament to set out his approach to recommendations from the Barclay review, and the further consideration that he wants to give to the impact on arm's-length external organisations. I understand that he will be making a statement to update Parliament this year.

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will the women and girls in sport advisory board examine the challenges to female participation in deprived areas?

Aileen Campbell: The women and girls in sport advisory board will look at how to increase participation and raise awareness of sport and physical activity for girls and women and will explore all the barriers that they face to accessibility, including deprivation.

We should take heart at what is happening across the country to provide girls with opportunities. That was recently illustrated through a women and girls in sport week. Sports are reporting an increase in girls' participation, including in karate, rugby, dodgeball and cross-country. Good work is happening, but more must be done, and I will continue to keep the member, who has a clear interest in the subject, updated with that work as it progresses.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Given that we know that, if we get young people to be active, they are more likely to remain active into adulthood, and that the active schools programme highlights an 11 per cent greater uptake in deprived areas, should increasing extra-curricular activity not be a main drive of the Government in making sure that there is access to sport for all?

Aileen Campbell: The active schools programme has been a success and has indicated that there are higher participation rates in areas of deprivation, showing that, when there is a broad range of opportunities for young people, they will take them up. That is why we will continue to work with sportscotland to support that good work and ensure that young people, and older people, get the opportunities that they need to become more active because of the health benefits that that brings.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): The minister knows that, if we are to address this issue, we need sports facilities in our communities. Will she therefore welcome the exciting proposal for a Moray sport centre and urge her officials and sportscotland to offer appropriate financial support and any possible advice?

Aileen Campbell: I am well aware of the proposals that the member outlines and of his enthusiasm for promoting them. I understand that discussions are on-going between the developers and sportscotland on the plans and proposals, and I strongly encourage all parties to continue that dialogue. We will certainly do what we can to support with advice as the project progresses. I look forward to being kept updated on the project and to continuing to engage with the member on the work.

Transport Scotland (Meetings)

3. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Transport Scotland and what issues were discussed. (S5O-01367)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): As Transport Scotland is part of the Scottish Government, meetings with ministers occur regularly in the normal course of business.

Claire Baker: During the recent debate on the Levenmouth rail link, the Minister for Transport and the Islands said that he was

“minded to instruct officials from Transport Scotland to take on responsibility for”—[*Official Report*, 27 September 2017; c 89.]

the governance for railway investment projects 4—GRIP 4—process. However, since then, in a response to a written question, the minister has said that

“it is not possible to define timescales for any GRIP4 work” until completion of

“the STAG and a GRIP Stage 3 assessment”.—[*Written Answers*, 16 October 2017; S5W-11613.]

Will the cabinet secretary confirm what stage of the process we are at, and what work, if any, Transport Scotland is currently carrying out in relation to the Levenmouth rail project?

Keith Brown: During the members’ business debate last month, I think that my colleague Humza Yousaf said that, as Claire Baker mentioned, he was going to task Transport Scotland with taking forward the feasibility work around the Levenmouth rail campaign, but that that was to be done with the agreement of Fife Council. I understand that those discussions are on-going.

Claire Baker has spoken on the issue a number of times in the chamber, as have a number of other members from Fife. The intention is there to do that work and it is in the process of being discussed by Transport Scotland and Fife Council. If Claire Baker is keen, I can make sure that

Humza Yousaf passes on a full account of how the discussions are going.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): We know that spending on ferries in Scotland has doubled in the past 10 years and that subsidies to operators have also doubled over the same period. Audit Scotland has recently warned that there is no Scotland-wide long-term strategy, that the state of half our harbours is unknown and that Transport Scotland will find it increasingly difficult to provide services within its budget. If that is the case, why is the Scottish Government so intent on awarding direct, in-house contracts, which will surely only add to the cost of the network?

Keith Brown: The position of awarding future contracts is under review for reasons that Jamie Greene will be well aware of. I am not sure whether he is attacking the Scottish Government for the introduction of the road equivalent tariff, which has seen a major boost to our islands, or for keeping prices affordable for our island communities.

This Government has a proud record of supporting the communities that are dependent on ferries. That support includes the building of new ferries, such as the fantastic MV Loch Seaforth. Many areas of Scotland have benefited from investment in our harbours and ports, and we are very proud of the huge investment by this Government in our ferries. If Jamie Greene and the Conservatives want to propose cuts to those services, they will get the chance to do that in the budget, but this Government will continue to support our remote and island communities by investing in our ferries and our ports.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary clarify the position regarding concerns that I have read about recently over United Kingdom Government cuts to the Scottish budget for railway investment and how that might jeopardise vital improvements around the country? As rail improvements to East Kilbride are long overdue, will he confirm that the upgrade of the East Kilbride to Glasgow railway line will remain a priority?

Keith Brown: The Scottish Government is very concerned about the UK Government’s recent decision. The projection that has been made leaves a shortfall of about £600 million. That estimate has not been made by the Scottish Government; it is an estimate by the industry of what it needs. I can assure the member that our immediate priority is to press the Treasury to secure a fair deal for Scotland and, as I mentioned earlier, officials are meeting their Treasury counterparts today.

In the meantime, we will continue to work with the rail industry to plan for the next rail investment

period from 2019, which includes options for investment in the East Kilbride line. Further details on our approach to investment across the network in Scotland will be contained in the investment strategy, which is due for publication later this year and will provide more information for the member on the question that she asked.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The cabinet secretary might be aware that the Kilcreggan to Gourrock ferry service that is run by Clydelink Ltd for Strathclyde partnership for transport is off more than it is on, which is having a hugely negative impact on people in my constituency. Will he fulfil the promise that the Scottish Government made to take over the running of the Kilcreggan to Gourrock ferry before the contract is renewed next year?

Keith Brown: That ferry service is not run by the Scottish Government; it is the responsibility of SPT. It requires work and the active support of SPT for any decision to be taken with regard to the service coming into the remit of the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland. I am happy to get my colleague Humza Yousaf to respond to Jackie Baillie about exactly where we are at with that. Around the country, in other places that do not have services that are directly run by the Scottish Government, we have made the offer that we are willing to enter into negotiations to take those services on. The same applies to the Kilcreggan ferry, but that will require SPT's support.

Fire Prevention (Sprinklers)

4. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the importance of sprinklers in preventing deaths from fire. (S5O-01368)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): Following the tragic fire at Grenfell tower, the ministerial working group on building and fire safety is considering all relevant measures to ensure the safety of residents in high-rise domestic buildings, including a review of evidence on automatic fire suppression systems, which include sprinklers.

As the member is aware, since 2005, building regulations have required an automatic fire suppression system to be installed in a variety of new buildings, including high-rise domestic buildings, residential care buildings, sheltered housing complexes, schools and enclosed shopping centres.

The provision of sprinklers within existing high-rise domestic buildings is not compulsory, and sprinklers are only one of a range of risk-reduction measures. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service raises awareness of fire risk in the home and

encourages people to take steps to make their homes safe.

David Stewart: The minister will be well aware that in Scotland there have never been multiple fire deaths where a working sprinkler system has been in operation. In Wales, and in the Fife Council and Angus Council areas, there is already a policy of having sprinklers in new-build social housing.

Will the minister work with me on my member's bill to ensure wider coverage of sprinkler systems to prevent death, injury and damage caused by fire in future?

Kevin Stewart: The Scottish Government recognises the importance of fire suppression systems. We have put in place a working group to look at all aspects of the issue and a separate working group to look at building standards.

I know that the member has taken a great interest in the matter and that he met the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities on 12 September. We will continue to update him on the work that we are doing, and I am sure that he will continue to engage with us in that vital work.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The Fire Brigades Union has been calling for sprinklers to be fitted in all tower blocks, not just those built since 2005, for the past eight years. When will that happen?

Kevin Stewart: As I said in my earlier answer, fire suppression systems are one of many ways of ensuring safety. The expert group that we have put together, which includes international experts, will look at all safety aspects. Beyond that, Mr Simpson will be aware that the ministerial working group has called for an inventory of all high-rise buildings in Scotland to make sure that the decisions that we take are the right ones for those buildings.

Income Tax

5. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will confirm its position on income tax ahead of its budget. (S5O-01369)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Joe FitzPatrick): Mr Mackay is on official business in London today, so I am answering this question on his behalf.

We will shortly publish a discussion paper on income tax, and I encourage everyone in the chamber, and throughout the country, to participate. The draft budget will be put before Parliament on 14 December and we will announce our formal policy intention then.

Maurice Corry: Although I thank the minister for his reply, a recently released response to a freedom of information request revealed that the First Minister was warned in March that plans to implement the citizens basic income proposal would cost at least £12.3 billion a year. Can the minister tell us whether it is fair for every Scottish taxpayer to face a tax rate of 50 per cent to pay for this Government's basic income policy, as evidenced by the Government's own briefings?

Joe FitzPatrick: I thank the member for his question. The Scottish Government is very clear about the principles that will guide our tax policy. We believe that tax should be progressive and that those on the lowest incomes should not shoulder the burden of the United Kingdom Government's budget cuts. The upcoming discussion paper will cover the importance of progressivity and we will publish our policy intentions on 14 December.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Given the substantial challenges in the Scottish budget around addressing the issues of child poverty, properly funding local councils and ensuring fair pay for public sector workers, does the minister agree that substantial changes around taxation are required in order to fund those?

Joe FitzPatrick: The Scottish Government has been clear in the process that we are going through that stakeholder engagement is very important. We have written to all party leaders to ask for their views on income tax so that we can have an honest, informed discussion. Unfortunately, I do not think that the Labour Party has as yet responded to that request.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Before we start First Minister's questions, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery His Excellency Steve Katjiuanjo, High Commissioner of the Republic of Namibia. *[Applause.]*

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

National Health Service

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): This morning's Audit Scotland report says that reform of the national health service is progressing, but that major challenges still lie ahead. Nobody underestimates the work that is needed to see services improve year on year within our health service, but the bottom line is that seven out of eight key performance standards have been missed this year. Will the First Minister confirm how many of the performance standards have seen any improvement over the past five years?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Of course in England, under the Conservatives, the figure is eight out of eight. *[Interruption.]*

Let me address directly the Audit Scotland report. For completeness, I will point out some of the findings that I suspect we will not hear about from the Opposition today.

First, NHS staff are maintaining and improving the quality of care. Secondly, there is

"a strong culture of continuous improvement in the NHS"

and

"there is a continued focus on safety and improvement."

Levels of patient satisfaction are at an "all-time high", and there are signs that reforms are having a "positive impact". The report also points out that, since 2008, there has been an 8.2 per cent above-inflation increase in spending in the national health service, and that health today accounts for a higher proportion of the Scottish Government budget than it did in 2008.

As we know, and as is the case in every health service across the developed world, changing population patterns mean that there are rising demands on our health service. However, in meeting those challenges—they are big challenges—we are seeing the NHS in Scotland perform better against many measures than the NHS in any other part of the United Kingdom performs. That is because of the actions that we are taking: increased investment in the NHS, reform including integration of health and social care, the focus on realistic medicine, and the work that we have done on accident and emergency services and are now doing in elective care more generally.

This is tough stuff—nobody denies that—but we will continue to focus on delivering the investment

and reform that the NHS needs and that patients across the country deserve.

Ruth Davidson: The answer to my question is—according to Audit Scotland—one: in only one of the eight key performance indicators has there been any improvement at all in the past five years. Audit Scotland says that the reason for that is that the Scottish Government is still struggling to do the basics.

One of the big issues is staffing. Audit Scotland warned two years ago that we needed a new national approach to workforce planning. The Scottish Government promised to deliver one by early 2017. That one then grew to three—two of which we are still waiting for. According to Audit Scotland, the only one that has been published is not a plan at all. What is more, the Auditor General makes it clear that there is no likelihood that the Government will be able to produce a proper plan because it still does not have the data with which to do so.

Audit Scotland has been warning about this for years, so why is there no proper plan in place and why is there not the data that would allow one to be written?

The First Minister: The Audit Scotland report points to the improving data that we now have—not just in the acute service, but across primary care—which allows us not just to monitor trends in the NHS, but to drive improvement. That is one of the specific things that the Audit Scotland report points to as being a sign of positive improvement.

I will make this point seriously. I accept the challenges in the health service and I absolutely accept the responsibility of the Government, which I lead, to face up to and address those challenges. However, Ruth Davidson seems to be saying that the challenges in Scotland's NHS are unique to Scotland and that they are, somehow, uniquely down to this Government. If she is saying that, she has to explain why, under the Conservatives in England, no NHS targets are being met. That is a serious question for the Conservatives.

On staffing, a plan has, as Ruth Davidson is aware, been published that looks specifically at NHS staff. One of the pieces of legislation that we will take forward in this session of Parliament is a bill to enshrine safe staffing levels in law—something that no other part of the UK is doing.

However, it is increasingly the case—anybody who knows anything about how health services are delivered these days knows this—that we cannot look at the NHS in isolation. Therefore, the second and third parts of the workforce plan for the NHS and health services more generally will also look at social care and local authority staffing, so that we can bring together an integrated plan that will map out NHS staffing needs not just for

now, but for the years to come. That is the right way to do this and it is what we will continue to do.

My final point on staffing is a point that I have made before and will continue to make. One of the biggest risks that we face in Scotland generally, and in the NHS in particular, is the growing inability to recruit people into our public services. Why is that? It is because the Conservatives want to stop or restrict our ability to recruit the best and brightest people from other countries. It is one of the biggest risks that we face in recruitment, and Ruth Davidson should be ashamed of herself for supporting it.

Ruth Davidson: I will just quote a little bit of what the Auditor General says specifically on the issue that the First Minister has tried to sweep under the carpet. It

“is not a detailed plan to address immediate and future issues ... The Scottish Government is likely to find it challenging to provide any more detail in the next two plans. This is due to a lack of national data on the primary care and social care workforces”.

The data is not there and the plan is not there.

Let us talk about one area where that lack of workforce planning is having a real and immediate effect: primary care. Audit Scotland makes it clear that general practitioners are “central” to the changes that we all agree are needed to improve healthcare. However, that has been hindered by the continuing difficulties in recruiting and retaining family doctors.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has today made the situation clear: it has written that the Scottish National Party Government has over the past decade consistently cut the percentage share of health spending that goes directly to GPs, and it asks how hospital targets can possibly be met when people feel that they have to attend A and E because they cannot secure an appointment closer to home.

Does the First Minister have an answer for the Royal College of General Practitioners?

The First Minister: First, on staffing, it is precisely because we need to make sure that there is an integrated plan, not just across the acute health service, but in primary care and social care too, that we are developing the workforce plan as we are. We are doing it in the way that I think Audit Scotland would advise us to do it. That is why we will continue with that work.

Scotland is not the only country that is experiencing challenges in recruiting GPs. That is why we are taking a range of different actions, from increasing the number of medical training places in our universities to establishing a new graduate entry programme that will focus

specifically on general practice and, of course, on rural and remote areas working.

This year, we have seen an increase on last year in the fill rate of year 1 trainees. For the same point in the year, last year the rate was 65 per cent: it is up to 74 per cent this year. We have, of course, made a commitment to increase the proportion of the total health budget that goes to primary care by £500 million over the current session of Parliament, which will take it to 11 per cent of the total NHS budget. I think that that, again, is a greater commitment than has been made by any Government anywhere else across these islands.

They are big challenges, and anybody can stand here—as Ruth Davidson has done—and point to them. I accept those challenges; this Government is putting in place the actions to address them, and that is what we will continue to do.

Ruth Davidson: I am standing here calling on the First Minister to honour the promise that she made to GPs a year ago. I am standing up for GPs, who are saying that she has gone back on her word and that that promise is not being kept.

Today, we have a report from the nation's auditor saying that health in Scotland is not improving, that huge inequalities remain and that there has in the past year alone been a 99 per cent rise in the number of outpatients waiting more than 12 weeks. The SNP set its own targets to make things better, but it has improved in only one, in the past five years. We know that there is no long-term plan, even although one was promised for the start of the year, that GPs are being underfunded and that we spent £171 million pounds hiring agency staff to plug the gaps.

Yesterday, I met a group of fantastic trainees at the University of Edinburgh medical school. What reassurances can the First Minister give them, that after 10 years of Audit Scotland reporting the same failings on health by her Government, she has taken some action to turn that around?

The First Minister: There were a number of points to take on in that question.

First, agency spend is down in the past year, which is recognised in the Audit Scotland report. We are taking a range of actions to ensure that we have the right people coming into medical training and that we can get them into the NHS to deliver the excellent care that the NHS delivers for patients across the country. Again, I remind Ruth Davidson that the Audit Scotland report points to the fact that NHS staff are not just maintaining, but are improving the quality of care across our NHS.

I do not know whether Ruth Davidson understands the detail of the commitment that we

have made to primary care; she said that we have not kept to the commitment that we made last year. Let me tell her what that commitment is. Over the current session of Parliament, we will increase spending on primary care by £500 million, of which £250 million will be spent specifically on general practice. The reason why not all that money will be spent on general practice is that in order to take pressure off our GPs, we need to build wider primary care teams. That is the commitment, and it will take the proportion of NHS spend on primary care to 11 per cent. It is a commitment that we will deliver over this session of Parliament. As I have said, that commitment has not been repeated by any other Government across these islands.

We come to the central point that we so often come back to when we discuss public services in the Scottish Parliament. Since we came into office, the Government that I lead has increased the health service budget by £3 billion—that is recognised in the Audit Scotland report.

Week after week, Ruth Davidson stands up and calls for action on health and education, and across the range of our public services—the same Ruth Davidson who would reduce the amount of money that we have available for public services by giving tax cuts to the richest people in our society. It does not add up: Ruth Davidson cannot offer tax cuts to the richest while calling for more investment in our public services. The Tory policies and the Tory approach have no credibility at all. We will continue to deliver investment and reform.

The most important finding in today's Audit Scotland report is the one that says that the reforms that the SNP Government is introducing are starting to show the positive effects that they were designed to deliver. We will continue with that focus on delivering for people across the country.

National Health Service

2. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): It is worth remembering that a few weeks ago, Professor Jim Gallagher published a report that showed that spending per head of population in Scotland compared to England has fallen as a direct result of decisions made by the Scottish Government.

Anyone reading the report from the Auditor General on our national health service in Scotland cannot be anything but concerned. They will be concerned about the budgets and the financial management of health and social care, about the shortages of staff at every level and about the impact of all that on patients. The report clearly states that the patient experience will get poorer unless the pace and scale of necessary change

are actioned now. When will we see that level of change?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As any reading of the Audit Scotland report will tell us, we are seeing that change happen in the NHS. That is one of the key findings of the Audit Scotland report. One of the key points in the report, looking specifically at integration authorities, is that the reforms that we have introduced are now starting to deliver the change that we need to see.

Spending on the health service in Scotland per head of population is 6.5 per cent higher than that for the United Kingdom as a whole: £143 higher for every person in Scotland, compared with the rest of the UK. I frequently make this point, but all parties have to be accountable—certainly my party as the Government party has to be—for what they put forward. Labour went into the most recent Scottish election promising less money for the health service than any other party—even the Tories, for goodness' sake—represented in the Parliament.

The fact of the matter is that record funding is going into our health service and record numbers of people are working in it. However, as Audit Scotland expressly says in its report, it is no longer enough just to put extra money into the health service because of the rising demand: we need to deliver reforms. Those are the reforms that we are delivering and which, according to Audit Scotland, are now starting to show real benefits to patients across the country.

Alex Rowley: However, if we stick to the facts, health boards across Scotland are not able to make the cuts to balance their budgets. Those same boards are then borrowing money from the Government to balance the books, storing up debt for the future. Prescribing costs are increasing at a level that is not sustainable. Indeed, we now have council tax funding being used to pay for prescriptions through the integration joint boards. The lack of workforce planning is driving up costs and we are having to use more and more agency staff and locums. The whole thing is spiralling out of control. The Royal College of Nursing is today calling for clarity on how more care will be delivered in the community, and it wants to know how staff and the public will be engaged in the development of community services. Can the First Minister answer that question?

The First Minister: I am not quite sure which one of those questions Alex Rowley wants me to answer first. He said that prescribing costs are rising, but they are rising in every health service across the developed world and probably across the entire world: it is a feature of the ageing population. That is exactly the challenge that health services here and elsewhere are dealing

with. That is why we have to reform how care is delivered.

Alex Rowley asked about how we deliver more care in the community. As I am sure he knows, for the past two budgets—again, this is narrated in the Audit Scotland report—we have taken the very difficult step of transferring money from the NHS into integration authorities so that we bring together health and social care not just in theory but in practice. Again, the Audit Scotland report talks about the reduction in delayed discharges that the integration approach is now delivering. If we do that to build up social care, we take the pressure off the acute services.

I say to all the parties in the Parliament that this is not easy stuff; it is not easy in Scotland and it is not easy in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or in any part of the world. However, in Scotland, we are doing some of the necessary stuff that is still being dodged in most other parts of the UK. We are doing the reforms. We are integrating health and social care, transferring the budgets and taking the steps around the workforce that will ensure that our NHS can deliver in the face of the rising demand that it faces. That is why, although everything that the Audit Scotland report says is important and has to be addressed, the key finding of the report—in my view as First Minister with responsibility for the reforms—is that the reforms are starting to show positive signs. That says to me that we stick with what we are doing, because we are on the right track and that is why we keep that focus.

Alex Rowley: I accept totally that this is not easy. I think that the Audit Scotland report says today that we are not doing enough and we are not moving fast enough. However, it is important for us to remember that behind all these statistics are real people. Today, we should remember that it is about people who are trapped in hospital because they cannot get the care packages that they need in the community. It is also about those people and communities up and down Scotland who cannot get the support from health and social care that they need, and it is about all those people who are on waiting lists. It is about the dedicated staff in our hospitals, our health centres and our community care centres who are run off their feet. That is why we need action. Labour will use our debate in the Parliament next week to discuss the Audit Scotland report further, because I believe that we need a more detailed discussion on its findings.

After 10 years in government, the First Minister has a choice. Will she continue to do more of the same or will she publish a response to the report that tells the people of Scotland how her Government intends to tackle the big issues that are facing our health and social care services?

The First Minister: First, I warmly welcome the fact that we will debate the report. In that debate, if Labour's position is that the Government is not doing enough, maybe Labour will bring forward some ideas as well, rather than simply talk about the problems.

Secondly, the whole point here—which, again, any reading of the Audit Scotland will tell us—is that we are not just doing more of the same. We are doing things differently, and it is those reforms that are starting to have the positive impact that the Audit Scotland report talks about.

Alex Rowley says that we should do it faster. Do you know what? I am absolutely open to doing this faster, but often, when we bring forward proposals for change, we find that the impediments to that change sit on the Opposition benches, because they never want to do the tough stuff. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Order.

The First Minister: It is the easiest thing in the world to get up and diagnose the problems. Our job—and this is what we are doing—is to come up with the solutions.

I will tell Alex Rowley what we will not do. We will not do the daft and wrong-headed things that we are seeing south of the border. With the action that we are taking in Scotland, delayed discharges are coming down because of sensible change. In England, we see proposals to use Airbnb to rent accommodation from local residents to get old people out of hospitals.

We will continue to do the sensible, evidence-based things that deliver the improvements in our NHS that we are determined to continue to deliver.

The Presiding Officer: We have a couple of constituency questions.

A75 and A77 (Dualling)

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The A77 was closed for 24 hours over the weekend due to severe flooding. Paul Grant, Stena Line's trade director, said:

"It's quite clear from this and other incidents that the current A77 and A75 don't reflect the requirements fitting of a major UK-Ireland travel and freight hub so I'm afraid that major disruptions and loss of trade could be a feature of life in the region until those responsible commit the necessary resources to alleviate these recurring problems."

Will the Scottish Government make this long-overdue commitment to the people of the south-west of Scotland and dual the A75 and A77?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We have a range of improvement plans for our roads in the south of Scotland, as in all parts of Scotland.

I am sure that all members will appreciate that there will be times when issues such as flooding will result in a road being closed. That is deeply regrettable, but it is sometimes unavoidable.

I will ask the Minister for Transport and the Islands to write to the member in more detail about the specific issue that he has raised, but I think that anybody who looks at the record of this Government—in fact, the Greens often criticise us for it—would say that the investment that we have made in improving our roads over the past 10 years is a good one, and we will continue to do more, including in the south-west and in particular the area that the member talks about.

Freight Ferry Fares

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The First Minister may be aware that the conclusions of the Government's review of freight ferry fares, which was due out by the end of the summer, has still not been published. Pending the outcome of that review, hauliers in the northern isles were told last month that freight fares would be frozen. A week later, they received notice that fares would rise by 2.9 per cent next year.

How does the First Minister justify that decision? How does it square with the Government objectives of bearing down on the cost of living for islanders and indeed support for Scotland's food and drink sector? Does she believe that it is right that, as Audit Scotland has highlighted, freight fares paid by hauliers on west coast routes have remained largely unchanged since 2010 but fares have increased significantly for hauliers that serve businesses and residents in Orkney and Shetland?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Of course, we have invested over £1 billion in our ferry services since 2007. We have been talking about a particular Audit Scotland report. There was an Audit Scotland report out last week that said, I think, that the investment in ferry services had doubled over the past decade. We have introduced new routes as part of that investment, we have already cut fares for CalMac customers and we will shortly be doing the same for Orkney and Shetland, which I know that the member will welcome. We have tackled long-standing underinvestment and we will continue to do so. The ferry fares review will be published as soon as possible.

Health and Safety at Work

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the recent gas explosion at a derelict building in Lanarkshire that resulted in the tragic death of worker Pawel Urbanski, who was from Coatbridge. Will the First Minister outline how she will support

the investigation and what steps she is taking to enhance health and safety at work regulations in Scotland?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I take this opportunity to express my deepest sympathies to those who have been affected by what was a very tragic incident and particularly to the family of Pawel Urbanski. Under the direction of the health and safety division of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, the investigation into the death is on-going, and the family will be kept updated on any developments. It would be inappropriate to comment further while the investigation is under way.

The regulation of workplace health and safety is reserved to the United Kingdom Government, and the Health and Safety Executive is responsible for drawing conclusions from health and safety incidents as to whether relevant regulations remain fit for purpose. I am sure that the HSE will do that once it has completed its investigation into the incident. In the meantime, I am sure that the thoughts of everyone in the chamber are with the family and friends of the individual who lost his life in the incident.

National Health Service (Pay Settlement)

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Nobody who has looked at today's report on the challenges that the national health service faces should pretend that there is a simple quick fix that would solve every problem at a stroke. However, is it not clear that challenges such as recruitment, retention and staff morale will be made worse, not better, if we fail to provide a fair pay settlement for the dedicated professionals who provide these essential services, who have seen a real-terms pay cut of 14 per cent over the past five years?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes. That is why the Government is committed to ensuring fair pay settlements for public sector workers not just in the NHS but across our public sector. Again, I say that I think that we are still the only Government in the United Kingdom that has given an unequivocal commitment to lift the 1 per cent public sector pay cap.

Patrick Harvie: The commitment has been given to lift the 1 per cent pay cap, but no commitment has yet been given to an inflation-based increase—a real-terms increase to restore the lost value of pay that people have suffered over recent years. However, the Scottish National Party's Kate Forbes, who works closely with the finance secretary as his parliamentary liaison officer, said on television this week that the pay settlement for the public sector should be

“at least inflation, if not above inflation”.

We have also heard a wider range of voices from multiple political parties accepting the basic Green proposition that fairer rates and bands of taxation can raise adequate revenue to fund our public services without resulting in cuts elsewhere and without cutting the pay of public sector workers. I do not expect the First Minister to publish her budget today, but does she agree with the basic point of principle that, through fairer taxation, we can provide an inflation-based or above-inflation increase without hitting low earners?

The First Minister: We have given the commitment to lift the public sector pay cap. We have not made that dependent on actions being taken by the UK Government in the budget, unlike the Welsh Government, which has done exactly that. We have said—and I have said personally—that we must seek pay settlements that are fair. Of course they must be affordable, but they must also reflect the real-life circumstances that public sector workers face, which include the rising cost of living.

In the normal course of events, we will confirm the detail of our public sector pay policy when we publish the budget, because we require to know the overall budget that we have available to us before we do that. That is the normal way in which we do things, and we will continue to set out policy in that way.

The other part of Patrick Harvie's question focused on tax. I have said openly that, notwithstanding the parties' different manifesto commitments, as a Parliament we require to come to a consensus position on tax in order to pass a budget. Given the continuation of austerity and given the implications of Brexit, which are becoming clearer by the day, we as a Parliament need to ask ourselves how we will use our still-limited tax powers to protect our public services and provide the infrastructure that businesses need to thrive.

Next week, we will publish a discussion paper that sets out some of the options and principles that should guide that decision. That paper will form the basis of the discussions that we will have across the Parliament in the lead-up to the budget.

I suppose that that is a long way of saying that I agree with much of the sentiment behind Patrick Harvie's question, but the fact is that we have to take proper decisions in line with the proper process of budgeting. Unlike the Opposition parties, the governing party in any Parliament has the responsibility of making sure that we can pay for the commitments that we make.

Colleges (Part-time Courses)

4. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** The Government's policy of prioritising full-time college courses has resulted in a cut of 150,000 part-time places and deprived thousands of people—particularly women and older people—of the education that they want and need. Last week, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science sent a guidance letter to colleges with an apparent change in policy that had never been announced publicly. Has the policy changed and, if so, when exactly did that happen? (S5F-01627)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I think that the most recent figures show that the majority of college courses are still part time. However, I should point out—we set out this commitment in a manifesto—that, given the rate of youth employment that we faced at the time, we made the deliberate, and right, decision to try to increase full-time places in colleges in order to increase the likelihood of people who were going through our colleges getting into work at the end of their courses. Do you know what? The proof of the pudding is in the eating, because youth unemployment in Scotland today is half the rate that it was 10 years ago, when we took office. In fact, we have one of the lowest rates of youth unemployment not just in the United Kingdom but anywhere across the European Union.

The policy that we ask our colleges to pursue depends on the needs of the economy at any given time, and that is the basis for the guidance that the minister put forward, which Willie Rennie referred to. We have taken the right decisions in our colleges, and we see the evidence of that in the economic data that I talked about.

Willie Rennie: So nothing has changed—but everything has changed. [Interruption.] That is a bizarre answer. Has the policy changed or not? If it was such a success story, why did the First Minister's minister sneak it out in paragraph 7 of a letter on a wet Wednesday afternoon? Surely if it had been a success, she would have been parading it in the Parliament. Everyone knows that the birth rate at the turn of the century is more responsible for the drop in youth unemployment than any policy of the Government.

The truth is that it has taken six years for the Government to realise the economic value of part-time learners over the age of 24. This is a crashing U-turn, and the First Minister should be big enough to admit it. Six years of narrowing the focus has left us short; we have had six years of missed economic opportunity and six years of those in the chamber who dared to question the policy being abused. Will the First Minister apologise to the generation of women and older people who have lost out because of this Government? [Interruption.]

The First Minister: Willie Rennie— [Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer: Hang on a second—order, please. [Interruption.] Order, please. I would appreciate it if members listened to the question and then the answer.

The First Minister: The fact that his pals on the Opposition benches felt the need to give Willie Rennie so much help there suggests that they know how fundamentally wrong he is. I will not apologise for the fact that youth unemployment is now at half the rate that it was when the Government took office, nor will I apologise for the fact that we fought an election on a manifesto commitment to maintaining full-time-equivalent numbers in our colleges—and that we did not just meet that commitment but exceed it. Those are solid achievements.

The flaw in Willie Rennie's question is that, despite the commitment, which was delivered, to increase the number of full-time college students in order to get more young people into work, the majority of courses in our colleges continue to be part-time courses that are open to the very people Willie Rennie is talking about.

In colleges and in every other aspect of Government policy, we will continue to take forward the policies that are right for this country's needs. That is what we have done and it is what we will continue to do.

Universal Credit

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Today's *Daily Record* has figures showing that a quarter of Scottish councils are already spending almost £9 million mitigating the impact of universal credit. Does the First Minister agree that the impact on people who are left in dire financial straits because of universal credit is morally unacceptable, and does she agree that the idea that local authorities or the Scottish Government should have to pay the price for failed Westminster austerity is a disgrace?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The fact that the United Kingdom Government is refusing to pause the implementation of universal credit, even though it knows that it is pushing already-vulnerable people into debt and rent arrears and is making it difficult for parents to put food on the table to feed their children is not only morally unacceptable, it is morally repugnant, and I think that every Conservative should be deeply ashamed of that.

The fact of the matter is that universal credit is not working. That is being demonstrated in the pilot areas. I have spoken before about the visit that I made to Inverness, where I talked directly to people who found themselves in these

unacceptable situations. There needs to be a pause to universal credit now, before any other person has to suffer the indignities and anxieties that many have already suffered.

Again, we come back to the issue of mitigation. As people across the chamber know, we should mitigate where we can, but we should not have to spend money that should be getting spent on education, health or colleges mitigating welfare cuts that are implemented and imposed by a Conservative Government in Westminster. The sooner that we get all of the welfare powers into the hands of this Parliament, the better.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Does the First Minister believe that cutting yet more firefighter posts and closing fire stations will a) make our communities safer or b) put more lives at risk? If she does not know the answer, she can have a guess.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Sometimes you only have to listen to Neil Findlay's tone to understand why Labour is in the dire straits that it is in. It is shockingly bad.

First, I want to take this opportunity to thank our firemen and firewomen across the country for the essential and vital work that they do. It is in recognition of the importance of that work that the Scottish Government has this year increased the operational budget of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Since reform, there have been no compulsory redundancies and no fire stations have closed. In fact, over the past year, 100 new firefighters have been recruited.

However, like any other service in the public sector, the fire service cannot stand still when circumstances change. There are changing risks, changing patterns of demand and changing technology, and it is right that the fire service looks closely at how it deals with those changes. However, as it does so, its priority and the priority of this Government is not only to protect the front line, but to enable our firefighters to deliver an even better service for the people of Scotland in the future.

Superfast Broadband

5. Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what progress is being made with the reaching 100 per cent programme to connect premises that have not received support from the previous programmes for access to superfast broadband. (S5F-01630)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The digital Scotland superfast broadband programme has been a huge success so far. It has already enabled fibre broadband to be delivered to more

than 800,000 premises in Scotland, and we are on track to meet our target of 95 per cent of premises having broadband access by the end of this year. However, we recognise that many areas still do not have access. That is why the reaching 100 per cent programme will focus on extending superfast broadband access to those premises that will not be reached in the current programme. We have completed an open-market review and public consultation to formally agree an intervention area and will undertake an extensive supplier engagement in order to maximise competition. We will set out our delivery approach in greater detail shortly, ahead of the launch of a procurement exercise later in the year.

Richard Lochhead: I congratulate the Scottish Government on its success in rolling out superfast broadband and accelerating the policy, given the slowness of previous UK Governments. Tens of thousands of my constituents have certainly benefited from the programme, but I wonder whether the First Minister recognises that the one side effect of that success is that the gap between the haves and the have nots has got bigger. Many rural communities have not benefited or received any form of public support.

While we await the next programme and the roll-out of R100, can ministers consider any further short-term measures, perhaps working with the private sector, to connect such communities, which, in this day and age, see connection as a utility, not a luxury?

Can the Scottish ministers press UK ministers to introduce appropriate regulation, perhaps introducing universal obligations and dealing with the likes of BT, which is charging customers similar amounts every month for widely varying levels of service?

The First Minister: I am acutely aware that some premises, particularly in rural parts of the country, do not yet have fibre broadband access. That is why the reaching 100 programme will seek to prioritise those communities through the initial procurement exercise.

In the meantime, the better broadband scheme already offers the residents of premises with broadband speeds of less than 2 megabits per second a voucher code that subsidises the costs associated with alternative broadband solutions. I am sure that all members will wish to make their constituents aware of that.

As Richard Lochhead knows, telecoms is a wholly reserved function. There are a range of issues that I think need to be addressed, and we are working closely with Ofcom to ensure that Scotland's particular challenges are considered. Indeed, we are calling for a more regional approach.

Issues such as the universal service obligation are important, although the problem with a USO being pursued by the UK Government is that it is not delivering broadband at superfast speeds. However, we will continue to deliver on our own programme, and we will continue to press the UK Government to take the action that it needs to take to deliver the same.

National Health Service Boards (Waiting Time Targets)

6. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to hold to account national health service boards that do not meet their waiting time targets. (S5F-01631)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We work with and support NHS boards to improve the delivery of waiting time targets. For example, in May, we announced that £50 million had been made available to improve waiting times between now and the end of March next year. In August, we announced the setting up of an expert group to improve how elective care services are managed across all boards. Derek Bell of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland, who will lead that work, did similar work that led to the improvement of accident and emergency waiting times.

We are investing £200 million in a network of five new elective and diagnostic centres over the period of this parliamentary session.

Edward Mountain: I thank the First Minister for that answer. I would like to set out a few things to help the First Minister so that she does not have to address them in her next answer.

We accept that hard-pressed staff in NHS Scotland are committed, dedicated and hard working, and we appreciate what they do.

Saying that failing to reach seven out of 10 targets is okay because other places in the United Kingdom are worse does not help people who are waiting for treatment.

Making targets easier is not acceptable.

Just increasing spending on the NHS will not solve the problem.

I turn to Audit Scotland's report, which says:

"Previous approaches such as providing more funding to increase activity or focusing on specific parts of the system are no longer sufficient."

There is no doubt that the situation is getting worse, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport was unable to say this morning on Radio Scotland when it would get better. We need transformational—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Mountain, please ask a question.

Edward Mountain: We need transformational and inspirational leadership. What is the First Minister going to do to ensure that our NHS has the leadership that it desperately needs but clearly lacks?

The First Minister: We certainly will not do what other Governments are doing, which is to privatise the NHS—something that the member will know lots about. There was so much in there—I was going to say "in that question", but it was not really a question—that is just wrong. Making targets easier? One of the things that we have done over the past 10 years is to make many of the NHS targets tougher. That is part of the challenge that we face. For many of the targets—and I have never said it is okay that we are not meeting them—we are performing better against tougher targets than used to be the case against targets that were weaker. We are toughening up many of the targets. In other words, we are stretching our expectations of what the NHS delivers at the same time as demand on the NHS is increasing.

We will continue to take the action that I have already set out several times today. That is: investing record sums in our NHS, making sure that record numbers of people work in our NHS and taking forward the difficult but necessary reforms that will equip our NHS to deal with rising demand now and in the years to come.

Public Sector Pay

7. James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's position is on whether public sector workers should be given a real-terms pay increase in 2018-19. (S5F-01636)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I have already made clear today, the 1 per cent public sector pay cap will end in 2018-19. I fully understand the impact that increasing living costs and social security cuts are having on working households. We will set out our plans fully in the draft budget on 14 December. We will develop a pay policy that is affordable and recognises real-life circumstances, such as the cost of living, while continuing to support those on the lowest incomes.

Public sector workers in Scotland and across the United Kingdom deserve a fair deal. The UK Government should follow our lead in lifting the pay cap, ensuring that there will be proper investment in our vital public services.

James Kelly: In recent years, the public sector pay policy followed by the Scottish Government has resulted in 156,000 health service and police staff being worse off in real terms. That is

unacceptable, and the budget is the opportunity to address the situation.

When Patrick Harvie raised this topic earlier, we got two minutes of waffle from the First Minister. I will give the First Minister another chance to answer the question. Does she accept Kate Forbes's position on "Scotland Tonight" that the pay rise should be set at least at the rate of inflation? Will the Government bring forward the consequential tax changes that are required to give public sector workers the pay rise that they deserve?

The First Minister: We will bring forward the detail of our spending and tax plans in the budget that will be published on 14 December.

Labour's hypocrisy on the issue is, quite frankly, staggering. We have said that the pay cap will be lifted. We have not made that dependent on actions taken elsewhere. That is completely different from the position taken by Labour in the Welsh—[*Interruption.*] I have got a letter here. [*Interruption.*] They will not want to hear this.

I have got a letter written by the Labour health secretary in Wales to Jeremy Hunt, the UK health secretary. It says that, without a commitment from the UK Government to give the Welsh Government more money, the public sector pay cap will remain. That is what Labour in Wales has said.

Here is what we have got: Labour calls for the cap to be lifted in Scotland and it calls for the cap to be lifted in Westminster, but in Wales—the only part of the UK where Labour has the power not just to call for things to be done, but to do those things—Labour refuses to give a commitment to lift the public sector pay cap. What does that tell us about Labour? It tells us that Labour is all mouth and no action.

Scottish Disability Sport

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-07684, in the name of Jeremy Balfour, on Scottish Disability Sport. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament acknowledges that Scottish Disability Sport, in conjunction with other home country disability organisations, has developed a UK Disability Inclusion Training (UKDIT) course, which is aimed at those interested in becoming involved in sport for disabled people; understands that the workshop includes a mix of theory and practical delivery to enable participants to positively include disabled people in physical activity and sport; further understands that the workshop tackles issues such as perceptions, knowing the participant, communication, terminology, models of inclusion and practical opportunities to include disabled participants in a variety of settings; believes that the training has led to 94% of participants using the theory of inclusion principles, 84% reporting that the training had impacted on their teaching and 75% sharing their learning from the course with workplace colleagues, and notes that the workshop has been tailored to upskill and increase the confidence of teachers, students and staff in the education sector in the Lothian region and across Scotland who require support and guidance on how to effectively include disabled pupils in the delivery of sport and physical activity, in a way that is aligned to the curriculum for excellence and ensures a smooth transition into community-based sport.

12:50

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead the debate this afternoon. I am very supportive of positive action that can be taken to encourage and support disabled people to participate in sport. As someone who is sport mad and was born with a disability, I can see that there are now far greater opportunities for people who have a disability than when I was born, just a few years ago.

I welcome Meggan Dawson-Farrell and Stefan Hoggan, who are watching the debate from the gallery. Meggan is a T54 wheelchair racer who competed in the 2014 Commonwealth games for team Scotland and was gold medallist at the junior world championships. She puts us all to shame: she holds the Scottish T54 record for 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1,500m, 5,000m, 10,000m and marathon. Perhaps Brian Whittle could learn a lesson.

Stefan Hoggan is a single-arm amputee who was one of Scotland's top young swimmers. He enjoyed an illustrious career as a paraswimmer and won multiple medals before transferring to the sport of paratriathlon, in which he has represented Scotland at the national championships, and Great Britain on five occasions.

In addition to their tremendous sporting achievements, both individuals have used their extensive experience in disability sport to become disability inclusion training tutors, helping to roll out an inclusive teacher training programme to give more disabled children a positive and inclusive experience of physical education, and encouraging the next generation of young disabled people to have full and active lifestyles through sport.

Research that was commissioned by sportscotland and the Equality and Human Rights Commission identified that disabled people in Scotland are less active, have poorer experiences of PE in school and are more likely to face difficulties in pursuing their dreams. The research identified that training and education on physical activity and disability equality are essential. If they are delivered properly, they have the potential to raise awareness of access, attitudes and assumptions. PE in school is often people's first experience of sport, so the research recommended that teachers receive training on disability in sport in order to help to improve pathways to sport.

Similar issues were identified at an education-focused national conference that was run by Scottish Disability Sport in 2009. The conference's key recommendation was for design, development and delivery of a nationally recognised training programme for early years practitioners, primary teachers, and primary and secondary PE teachers across Scotland to help children to participate in and enjoy sport in school.

Scottish Disability Sport subsequently worked with its sister organisation in the UK to develop a disability inclusion training workshop. In Scotland, training has been tailored to meet the needs of curriculum for excellence, and has been placed on the Scottish credit and qualifications framework.

Scottish Disability Sport initially received funding from Education Scotland and sportscotland to allow the national roll-out of workshops. That process continues, and funding is available up to March 2018. Over the past five years, 396 workshops have been successfully delivered across all 32 local authorities and nine education establishments in Scotland, and have involved nearly 6,000 participants. An external evaluation of the workshops revealed that 88 per cent of participants were involved in education, and some 79 per cent were teachers or training assistants. Three-quarters of respondents worked with young people with disabilities, which suggests that the targeting of the training was effective. People came away from the training feeling far more confident about their ability to teach sport in schools to people who have a disability, and to share training with workplace colleagues.

Most important is that the course has had positive outcomes in the classroom. A primary 1 teacher described how she could not explain the challenging behaviour of a boy in her class, until after she had attended a course and had struggled to play a ball game because she wore glasses that give her limited vision. Back in the classroom, she discovered that the boy had no vision in one eye, so her experience of wearing limited-vision glasses gave her some insight into how he must feel. Now that the issue has been identified, the boy is doing much better. Teachers also talked about the impact of the training on their teaching styles, and have said that they are now more inclusive: they include the whole class, rather than picking out certain individuals.

The training continues to evolve. Following further consultation of teachers and practitioners, and in conjunction with the National Autistic Society, new training has been developed on working with people who face other challenges.

Scottish Disability Sport is working with 23 Scottish governing bodies on how to meet the needs of coaches and disabled participants in their sports. With the drive of the charity Trust Rugby International, and with the help of the Scottish Rugby Union, branches of the Clan have been launched here in Edinburgh and in Ayrshire, and it is hoped that branches will start up in other parts of the country. The Clan has pioneered unified rugby in Scotland and gathers individuals from different backgrounds and communities, including people with additional support needs, to play.

The success of disability inclusion training is multifaceted. It is about wide and comprehensive partnership working between Education Scotland, sportscotland and local authorities, to ensure that the training works for everyone. I ask the Scottish Government to commit to continuing such training by finding the appropriate way to fund it beyond March next year, so that it can be rolled out across the whole of Scotland.

12:57

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I apologise to members because I will need to leave before the conclusion of the debate. I apologised to the Presiding Officer in advance of the debate.

I declare an interest: I am proud to be the honorary president of Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club. I thank Jeremy Balfour for securing this important debate, because it allows me to talk about the club.

Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club was founded by parents, principally due to the lack of opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in physical activities. Those parents have been helped along the way by sports

professionals and an army of volunteers—far too many for me to name this afternoon. The club is now an essential and thriving community resource and is a truly valuable asset for my local area, because it provides young people of all ages and all abilities, from every town, with valuable opportunities.

I pay tribute to the club's chairperson, Allan Clark. He and his many helpers have driven the club forward. Club members have had exposure to all sorts of sporting opportunities, whether we are talking about swimming, athletics or football. I commend some of the football players to whomever the next Scotland manager will be, because they are very good indeed. The club has achieved its goal of raising awareness and the profile of disability sport, which is crucial. It has increased volunteering opportunities—because everyone wants to go along and help out—and it has increased the sense of belonging to the community. It has also, in a practical way, provided parents and carers with much-needed respite.

The transformation in the children and young people is the most important thing for me. The achievement, the laughter, the joy on their faces and the improved confidence are truly tremendous and are a joy to see. They are really good at the sports, too; I fully expect to see some of them at future Paralympic games and special Olympic games. There should be no limit to their ambition. International events such as those show the world that athletes are athletes, regardless of whether they have disability, and that anyone is capable of sporting greatness.

Opportunities to participate at local level are the foundation for encouraging our children and young people to develop their potential. I will highlight one local example—a young man called Gordon Reid. He holds far too many tennis singles and doubles titles to name. He is a Wimbledon champion and he has inspired a generation of people, with or without a disability, to get involved in tennis. I confess that I need to try harder, but he is an inspiration. He comes from Helensburgh and we are incredibly proud of his achievements. He was diagnosed with transverse myelitis at the age of 13. With access to local opportunities, good coaching and mentoring, he has risen to the very top of his sport. We need to make sure that we fund and support local disability sports because they will enable the Gordon Reids of future generations to come forward. I am grateful to BBC Children in Need for supporting Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club.

We also welcome the initiative by Scottish Disability Sport. By providing training to those who are interested in becoming involved in sport for disabled people, we encourage that greater

opportunity and participation in our schools and communities. More power to their elbows.

I conclude by again commending Jeremy Balfour for bringing the debate to the chamber. I also particularly thank the coaches, sports professionals, volunteers and parents who make sporting opportunities available to our young people who have disabilities.

13:02

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I pay tribute to Jeremy Balfour for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I know that he has always been passionate about the issue and he brings that into many of his speeches. For the issue to be brought to Parliament in the week in which a statement was made about our British Sign Language national plan is also important. It is an issue of equality. It is as simple as that. It is a great motion because it is about equality.

As Jeremy Balfour said, it is not the disability itself that prevents people from taking part in sports but the barriers that are created by the stigma of having a disability. Scottish Disability Sport has worked to overcome that stigma. It works to co-ordinate athletes and players of all ages and abilities who have physical, sensory or learning disabilities in the widest possible areas of sports. It also encourages opportunities for that to happen. I therefore pay tribute to SDS for the work that it does.

Like Jackie Baillie, I have some local examples. Yesterday, I met representatives of Leonard Cheshire Disability, which is an organisation that works with folk who are facing similar barriers, mainly in the areas of work and school. During our discussion, it emerged that the organisation is also looking at helping individuals to get involved in sport. If anyone from that charity is listening to the debate, as I am sure SDS will be, there might be some scope for a bit of joined-up working there.

Recently, I was at Chryston high school for the international women and girls in sports week. As well as talking about the fantastic work that is being done on female participation in sports, I heard about a lot of the work that is being done to make all sports accessible to everyone in the school. Along with other schools in my constituency—I would not want to leave out any school, but I was physically at Chryston—Chryston high is doing fantastic work to make sports accessible. I got a briefing on how that is being done, which was heartening to see.

I also want to mention Katie Slavin from shining stars, which is an organisation in Coatbridge that does a fantastic job giving opportunities to young people with disabilities. It does that through the

forums of music and theatre, which are different from sport but the principles are the same. Every time that I meet her, Katie tells me that, through the organisation's work, the confidence levels of the young people grow. Groups from shining stars have been at various locations including the Westminster Parliament where they recently sang for MPs and other folk, which is absolutely fabulous.

I was recently at the Scottish Football Association grass-roots awards and a lot of the folk who got awards talked about the setting up of disability teams, which it was good to hear about. Some of the people who got up on the stage to receive their award talked about what setting up a disability football team had meant to parents, and I do not mind saying to members that it brought a tear to the eye. People who do that on a voluntary basis should be commended at every chance that we get.

I see that I am coming to the end of my four minutes. I have quite a lot of other things to say, but I will conclude by thanking Jeremy Balfour again. I know that he has joined my cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the future of football in Scotland and I am sure that the two of us will continue to push the issue forward with the support of Scottish Disability Sport.

13:06

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest in that I am a senior track and field coach, a former chair of the Scottish Athletics Coaches Association and a member of the European Coaches Association.

I congratulate my colleague Jeremy Balfour on securing the debate and I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute. As members know, I have a very keen interest in the subject. However, I suggest that the title of the debate is a bit of a misnomer. The debate is not about disability; it is more about celebrating the abilities of sportsmen and women, and calling for coaching and teaching practical and theory training to be expanded to allow teachers and coaches to encourage access for and participation of another sector of society.

A few years ago, I took on the coaching responsibilities for a Paralympian with cerebral palsy. He was already an international class athlete with the drive and single-mindedness that is required to reach that level. His expectation of me was rather high. I remember the head coach of disability athletics for Great Britain coming to an early training session to discuss how I was going to adapt my training programmes to suit someone with that kind of disability. With not a little confusion, I said that I would do that in the same way that I did with all the athletes who I worked

with, and that I would continue to assess and adapt his training programme according to his response to the training.

All athletes are different and respond in different ways to physical and psychological inputs. That young man was a 400m runner so, no matter what physical adaptations are required in training, if we got it wrong, he would come into the home straight carrying a bear on a sofa with his family. That is commonly known in athletics parlance as "your backside falling out your shorts", which I have cleaned up a tad for you, Deputy Presiding Officer.

In other words, it does not matter who someone is, as there is a physiological and emotional requirement for a sporting event. I threw that athlete in at the deep end with all my so-called able-bodied athletes and he thrived. He wanted and needed to be treated with the same brutality as everyone else and to be part of the squad. I laughed at him in the same way as at any of the rest of the squad when they hit the ground after a rather difficult session. Did we have to adapt his training? Absolutely, but I have to do that with every other athlete who I coach.

In helping to develop a UK disability inclusion training model, Scottish Disability Sport is breaking down perceptions and the fear of working with that community in a sporting environment, as there is a perception or misconception that coaching that section of society requires a different skill set. It might require an understanding of the specifics of the individual and their limitations, but how does that approach differ from coaching any other sportsman or woman?

I still coach and, in my squad, there is a young man who won the 100m, was second in the 200m and third in the long jump at the special Olympics earlier this year. He is in the T20 category and has a learning difficulty. All that means to me is that my verbal inputs and instructions are adapted and are perhaps not given in batches, but coaches adapt their inputs with all their athletes. He is part of my squad and has been integrated and accepted as any other athlete would be.

Also at those special Olympics was a young man I have worked with who won a gold medal for cycling. He is quite heavily autistic and that posed a different challenge for me. He has to be watched constantly because, when all the drinks bottles were lined up, he did exactly what you are supposed to do with drinks—he drank all of them, one after the other. The squad and I have to have his back all the time.

Inclusion and physical activity are great treatments for poor mental health, as has been said by the Scottish Association for Mental Health. Poor mental health is a significant challenge for the disability community. Inclusion has to start in

school, where the same opportunities must be afforded to all, irrespective of background or personal circumstances. Let us ensure that teacher training and coaching include upskilling in this area.

I will conclude by mentioning the fantastic Kayleigh Haggo from Kilmarnock, whom I met at a disability sports training camp at the sports arena in Kilmarnock. She is a paraswimmer, race runner and world record holder. She is training towards the Paralympics in Tokyo. I also mention the run bike club in Ayr. When I met club members, I had taken my kit along to train with them but, when I saw the speed at which they went round the track, I left my kit in the car.

Finally how can I not mention the MSP team of myself, Dean Lockhart, Colin Smyth and Alexander Stewart—aka Davros—who took on the Scottish Power chair football team during the recent Scottish championships and got trounced 6-0 in 10 minutes? It was not pretty.

Opportunities for people to participate no matter their background are out there. Let us celebrate them and do everything we can to make sure that all can access them.

13:11

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I had not intended to speak in today's debate but I am happy to make a few comments. I was particularly struck by Jeremy Balfour's speech, and also by Jackie Baillie's, which I have to confess is unusual for me.

I agree with the points that Jackie Baillie made about confidence. I know the difference that it made to me as a boy when I found a sport that I could actually do. We were forced to play rugby at our school; I was hopeless at rugby and hated it. Then we got the chance to do some other sports including cross-country running, which I found that I could do at a reasonable level. If that made a difference to me and my confidence, and to my whole standing within the school—I went from somebody who was mocked as not at all sporty to somebody who was seen as able to do something—that must apply also to many disabled young people.

I strongly believe that every person has something to offer and something that they are good at that other people cannot do. Whether that is in the academic field or the sport field or culture or whatever, everyone has something to offer. Unless we give young people the chance to try out different things, they and we will never find out what they are good at and what we as a society can gain.

The National Deaf Children's Society visited my constituency on 23 September, going to Tollcross swimming pool. As members know, that is the best swimming pool in Scotland and was where the Commonwealth games took place. I was very impressed with what the society did. It has a vehicle with an exhibition on the different aids and adaptations that can help young people who are deaf. They explained things that I had not realised. A young person in a pool cannot wear any of the equipment that they need for hearing and therefore depends on a trainer teaching them what to do. If the trainer is standing at the edge of the pool and the young person is in the pool, it becomes incredibly difficult. One mother told me that, when the trainer got into the pool and was able to be close to her daughter so that she could lip read or perhaps hear to some extent, it made a huge difference. Her swimming took off after that.

Clearly, we have to think of finances in this area. For families, encouraging young people, disabled or not, to take their sport seriously can involve a lot of costs. I do not think that there is an easy answer, but I wanted to mention it.

13:15

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Jeremy Balfour for bringing to the chamber this excellent debate on such an important issue for everyone who has spoken so far.

Jeremy Balfour highlighted the importance of the opportunity and the facilities for disabled people to participate in sports. The more we do to encourage that, the better.

Jackie Baillie referred to the success of the excellent Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club in my area, which I commend. We have areas of deprivation and there are disabled people in that community who have been denied the opportunity to access the facilities that more able kids and adults have been able to access.

I am delighted that Jackie Baillie mentioned Gordon Reid, who is a member of Helensburgh Lawn Tennis Club. I declare an interest, as I was a member of that club. I am proud of Gordon's great success on the international stage in wheelchair tennis. He is an excellent example of what can be done if the facilities are made available to people such as him. I must declare another small interest, in that my parents started Gordon on his tennis travels when they brought short tennis—it is now called mini tennis—from Wimbledon to Helensburgh 25 years ago. I am very proud of the connection, as Gordon was one of the first young players whom they put through the system.

I turn momentarily to disabled servicemen and women. We have seen the wonderful example that Prince Harry has set with the Invictus games. I

encourage the minister to consider whether we could bring an element of the games to Scotland at some point, because that would be excellent. The games were held recently in Toronto in Canada, which is a member of the Commonwealth. Scotland would stand high if we could look to bring the games here.

The Invictus games demonstrate the abilities and skills of many ex-servicemen and women who have been sadly disabled as a result of their service in operations. Bringing the games here would be a great and dignified way of celebrating their wonderful achievements. In the Paralympics, in the Invictus games and in other events, we see how well they are doing and how well they have adapted.

I thank Jeremy Balfour again for bringing this most apt subject to the chamber. I commend the points that I have made to the minister and I hope that the Scottish Government will address them.

13:17

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): I, too, thank Jeremy Balfour for bringing the debate to Parliament; I also thank all the members who have contributed to it. I welcome the elite athletes to the gallery and congratulate them on their wonderful achievements.

I acknowledge the great work that is being done by Gavin Macleod and his team at Scottish Disability Sport to highlight the benefits of getting people to participate in sport.

Fulton MacGregor mentioned breaking down barriers. The Scottish Government firmly believes that there should be no barriers at all to participation in sport. Everyone should be able to enjoy sport, whoever they are, wherever they are and whatever their background.

We all know about the benefits of sporting activity to all, including those with disabilities and those with poor mental health. Brian Whittle mentioned how important it is for people to be active when they have poor mental health and the benefits that activity can bring.

I am proud that the Scottish Government is determined to create a modern, inclusive Scotland that protects and respects human rights, of which a key element is the promotion of equal participation in and access to sport. The excellent UK disability inclusion training course that is run by Scottish Disability Sport will help achieve that by providing participants with the tools to help teach sport for people with a disability.

The workshops are individually tailored to meet the needs of five key groups: coaches and volunteers; teachers and staff in education settings; Scottish sports governing bodies; sports

development officers; and leisure service providers. By the end of the workshops, participants should be able to recognise the influence of perceptions and experience on interactions and our expectations of others; recognise different communication styles, which John Mason mentioned; identify appropriate disability-specific terminology and be aware of appropriate etiquette; articulate the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and identify the key aspects of legislation that relate to their role in sport; recognise specific barriers to participation and consider ways in which any challenges can be addressed and potentially overcome; identify the participation opportunities within disability sport; know where to go for further information; and—finally—recognise how to influence and even change practices and facilitate inclusion. The workshops will help to improve opportunities for all to participate in sport and physical activity.

I was pleased that members have taken the opportunity to highlight the work that is being done in their local areas to encourage those with disabilities into sports. I know how much is being done in my own area, not least at the wonderful new Aberdeen sports village. I thank Brian Whittle for bringing to the debate his particular knowledge and experience in this area.

I emphasise that, for our part, the Scottish Government is committed to supporting equalities in Scottish sport and to ensuring that people of all ages and from all communities across Scotland have the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity.

In April this year, the Minister for Public Health and Sport announced an additional £2 million of investment in sports governing bodies. The extra funds are being distributed by sportscotland to help meet the Scottish Government's priorities on reducing inequalities in sports participation.

Earlier this year, the First Minister opened the national sports training centre in Inverclyde. It is the first sports training centre of its kind in the UK. The state-of-the-art residential facility is designed with inclusivity in mind for disability sport users—both performance and community users. It will ensure that Scotland is even better placed to support our disabled athletes in their preparations and will help to ensure that sport and physical activity are accessible.

The Scottish Government works closely with sportscotland on equality matters. Last year, sportscotland and the Equality and Human Rights Commission published the "Equality and Sport Research" report into equality in Scottish sport, which Jeremy Balfour mentioned. The report looks at who currently participates in sport and the barriers to participation, and suggests potential solutions.

One of the three priorities for improvement set out in sportscotland's corporate plan for 2015 to 2019 is the area of equalities and inclusion. As a sector, sport must recognise and understand the protected characteristics as well as the associated complexities if we are to effectively address issues that may be preventing or constraining people from getting involved and progressing in any aspect of sport.

The "Equality at sportscotland" report outlines progress towards ensuring that equality is integrated into sportscotland's day-to-day work and provides an overview of how the organisation has delivered against equality outcomes. The report also sets out three new equality outcomes for 2017 to 2021, one being that

"sports organisations and people working in sport will have an improved understanding and awareness of the needs of people with protected characteristics".

That outcome underpins the commitment to show greater leadership and to influence and drive the changes that are needed to address inequalities and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to get involved in sport.

I put on record my thanks to Scottish Disability Sport and sportscotland, which have been working together to ensure that every child, young person or adult with a disability can participate in sport and physical activity. I know that the Minister for Public Health and Sport is looking forward to working closely with Scottish Disability Sport following the launch of its new strategic plan this year, "Inspiring through Inclusion 2017-2021". Personally, I am interested in seeing the evaluation of the UK disability inclusion training course.

I will take forward Maurice Corry's idea of bidding for the Invictus games to come to Scotland. We have a great record of delivering high-profile sporting events in Scotland. The Commonwealth games in Scotland were one of the first events to have huge inclusivity for those with disabilities. It is a great idea and I am sure that we can take it forward together.

13:25

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Strategy

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Our first item of business this afternoon is a statement by Shirley-Anne Somerville on the science, technology, engineering and mathematics strategy for education and training. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I am delighted to lay before Parliament today a STEM education and training strategy for Scotland that focuses on excellence, equity, connection and inspiration. Indeed, only this morning, I was privileged—as I have been, on a wide range of visits in recent months to science centres, festivals, early years centres, schools, colleges and universities—to see inspiration in action. I visited the Jimmy Dunnachie family learning centre in Glasgow, which has established a strong STEM pre-school curriculum, with hands-on activities and exciting topics. I saw for myself how those activities are capturing the imaginations of the centre's young learners. It was also great to hear about the partnerships that the centre has forged with the University of Strathclyde and with young STEM ambassadors from local schools, one of whom I had the chance to meet on my visit.

Enthusiasm and engaging children from the earliest years in science, technology, engineering and mathematics are at the heart of the centre's activity. It was an absolute pleasure to see children exploring STEM in all its forms. That work is key to setting children of all ages—boys and girls—from a range of backgrounds on a journey of wonder on which they can learn to question, to experiment, to problem solve and to always ask "Why?" and "What next?" With some estimates suggesting that 65 per cent of pre-school children will work in careers and jobs that do not yet exist, their future is truly one of opportunity. We must give them, and the children I met in Glasgow today, the tools that they need to seize it.

This STEM strategy has a clear focus and a strong purpose: quite simply, to be a nation with ambition, Scotland must become a STEM nation. If we are to realise the ambition that is set out in our programme for government to build a modern, dynamic and open economy that benefits everyone in Scotland, we must support everyone in Scotland to develop their STEM capability and skills. All the sectors that feature in our vision for a

high-technology, low-carbon economy have one golden thread: they all require workforces with STEM-related skills to develop and grow.

The strategy has been shaped by extensive discussion and dialogue. It began with a debate in Parliament marking the start of the formal consultation exercise. That consultation was available online and included a series of events covering specific interests groups such as education leaders and people involved in gender equality and business engagement. I also established a short-life expert reference group to provide support and challenge in finalising the strategy. The group was co-chaired by Professor Sheila Rowan, the chief scientific adviser for Scotland, who is here in Parliament today, and Professor Iain Hunter from the University of Strathclyde. I am grateful to them and to all members of the reference group for giving so generously of their time and expertise.

The strategy seeks to address four key challenges: the need to ensure that people are encouraged to develop an interest in STEM that is reinforced throughout their lives; the need to ensure that our education system has the right number of practitioners with the right skills to deliver excellent learning and teaching; the need to build a system that equips people with the skills that employers need and has the flexibility to respond effectively to change; and the need to tackle the gender imbalances and other inequities that exist across STEM education and training. It does so by focusing on four key themes and aims.

First, we must build the capacity of the education and training system to deliver excellent STEM learning. Earlier this month, the Deputy First Minister announced a new scheme to provide bursaries for anyone changing career to train as a STEM teacher. From August 2018, 100 bursaries of £20,000 will be available to people who are giving up an existing career to undertake teacher training in the STEM subjects. The initial focus will be on subjects in which we currently have a shortage of students in teacher training: physics, mathematics, technical education and computing science. Applicants will be expected to have a relevant degree at 2.1 or above, with suitable subject content. Minimum entry requirements for teacher education courses will also apply.

However, we must also provide appropriate support and professional learning opportunities for teachers and other practitioners. We will create a new network of STEM specialist advisers to work with early years providers and schools to ensure that the sharing of best practice and emerging evidence is at the heart of excellence in STEM learning and teaching. The new network will be operational by December 2018, and advisers will work with the new regional improvement

collaboratives that are being established in partnership with local government as part of our education reforms.

To support STEM learning in schools, we will continue to fund the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre and our partnership with the Wood Foundation on the raising aspirations in science education programme, as well as investing in new resources for practitioners. Crucially, that will include support for STEM learning and inspiration in the early years, as we expand the early years workforce in Scotland.

It is vital that we give everyone the opportunity to fulfil their STEM potential and to contribute to Scotland's economic prosperity. Our second aim therefore focuses on closing equity gaps in participation and attainment in STEM. We will take action to improve the participation of underrepresented groups in STEM learning and to tackle unconscious bias and gender stereotyping that creates barriers to participation, access and attainment. That must start from the earliest years and should be sustained right through the education system at all levels. It will include action to tackle gender segregation and promote equality of opportunity in the early years, in apprenticeships and on college and university courses. We will work closely with equalities experts in the third sector to create a dedicated team to embed practice from the successful Institute of Physics gender balance project across all schools by 2022.

Thirdly, I have already spoken of the importance of inspiring children, young people and adults to study STEM and to continue their studies to obtain more specialist skills. The current UK STEM ambassador programme provides a strong network of support for education. We can do more, however. We will establish a new young STEM leaders programme to stimulate the development of peer mentoring in STEM. That will start in 2018 and will be fully operational by 2022. It will focus on children and young people who are currently in education, so as to complement existing STEM ambassadors.

Earlier today I announced funding of £2.65 million to support the work and activity of Scotland's four science centres, and I am proud that we are the only Government in the UK to provide such financial support to science centres. They have a key role to play, not only in inspiring STEM in children, young people and adults, but in helping to tackle inequity. We will therefore target our funding to enable the centres and science festivals to further encourage girls, in particular, and, more generally, people from deprived, rural and remote communities to engage in informal STEM learning and experiences.

The fourth aim seeks to connect the STEM education and training offer with labour-market need, both now and in the future. To increase collaboration and connection, we will create a new STEM hub network to strengthen regional-level collaboration among partners, including universities, science centres and employers. The network will focus on building partnerships between secondary schools and colleges in 2018, and will broaden out to include primary and early learning settings during 2019.

Of course, colleges and universities in Scotland are already taking action to prioritise STEM teaching and courses. Our universities are world leading and are at the cutting edge of research and innovation across the spectrum of STEM disciplines. Our colleges are increasingly playing a central role in co-ordinating the approach to STEM across their regions and with partners, including businesses and employers, to deliver our aim of increasing the number of modern apprenticeship starts to 30,000.

We will build on this solid foundation in three ways. We will increase the number of college and university student placements with employers in STEM curriculum areas; we will increase the number of graduate and post-qualification internships offered with STEM employers; and, to complement the approach being taken through the developing the young workforce programme to improve careers guidance from three to 18, we will ensure that college and university students have access to the best advice and guidance about STEM careers.

We must challenge our institutions to go further, faster. We invest in our colleges and universities with confidence but, in the ever more competitive global economy, we must look to them to work with us and with partners in industry to ensure that their curricular offer to students and support for researchers remain world leading and are always current.

This STEM education and training strategy for Scotland is deliberately bold and ambitious. It has a five-year lifetime, from 2017 until 2022, and delivery starts now. That focus on delivery must be relentless, so we will measure progress and success through key performance indicators. Work on developing those has begun, and they will be published by the end of the year. I will also chair an implementation group involving expert external advice to drive forward delivery. That group will produce annual reports on progress and provide these to Parliament.

I am confident that, through the actions in the strategy, we can unlock the opportunities that the future holds for all Scotland to flourish, thrive and become a STEM nation.

This is not the Scottish Government's strategy, nor even that of the Scottish Parliament, although I hope that all members and parliamentary groups will support it. It is Scotland's STEM education and training strategy, and everyone in our education system, across the public, private and third sectors and in key businesses and industries has a role to play. I am proud to present it to Parliament today.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the minister for prior sight of her statement. I broadly welcome the measures that she has announced, although it should be noted that some of the conclusions and the recommendations are exactly the same as those that were contained in the science and engineering education advisory group's 2012 report, which suggests that progress has been painfully slow.

I have a couple of questions to put to the minister. First, in 2015, the Royal Society of Chemistry called for us to have specialist science teachers in primary schools on the back of evidence that it had collected suggesting that primary 4 to 7 is the best age to capture the imagination of young people when it comes to science. The Scottish Government rejected that call on the ground of cost, but it has since found money to support bursaries for graduates who might be persuaded into teaching from other professions. Will the Scottish Government commit to a proportion of that bursary support going into science specialism in primary schools?

Secondly, the minister is clearly well aware of recent Scottish Qualifications Authority trends in STEM. She will know that, in 2007, there were 50,231 SQA higher entries in STEM, and that, in 2013, there was an increase in numbers to 54,618, which was pleasing. However, with the new highers programme, entries for 2016 were only 41,054 and, in the same period, the number of STEM teachers in secondary schools fell from 6,037 to 5,864. Does the minister accept that, notwithstanding the recent demographic trends, the reduction in STEM teacher numbers is a serious part of the subject-choice issue and partly explains why insufficient pupils are studying STEM subjects at higher level?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I take up Liz Smith on one of her points. I disagree with the idea that the best time to inspire young people is between primary 4 and 7. This morning, I was in an early years setting with children aged four to five who were utterly engaged and enthused in STEM. The headteacher was very keen to press the view that we need to start at that stage and not wait until primary 4 because, as the research has shown, by the age of seven, children, particularly young girls, think in terms of what is a boy subject and what is a girl subject. Primary 4 is already too late, and we have lost some young people because of that.

On Liz Smith's point about specialist STEM teachers, I said in my statement that we will invest in a network of specialist STEM advisers who will support and share the good practice that happens across Scotland with each and every school. I saw great examples of what an adviser can bring to a collection of schools in the work that we have done in partnership with the Wood Foundation. That is why we have followed the process that we have.

On the number of young people taking STEM subjects, Liz Smith is right to point out that the school cohort is falling. Between 2010 and 2016, the secondary 4 to secondary 6 cohort has fallen by 5.6 per cent. That explains some of the STEM statistics. If we compare 2007 and 2017, we see that 13.4 per cent more young people passed the full range of STEM highers, so we are seeing progress. However, that increase is not enough, which is why we have the strategy and is exactly why we are putting in place today the schemes to encourage more young people into making STEM choices.

Within curriculum for excellence, we need to look at the senior phase, across three years. We need to allow schools to choose the subject choices and curriculum at a local level, while allowing young people to have a wide range of subject choices available to them, including the sciences.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The minister will get no argument from Labour that Scotland must be, as it has been historically, a STEM nation, so a strategy to achieve that is welcome. The question is this: is the strategy urgent or bold enough? Liz Smith is right that we have, since 2007, lost more than 800 STEM teachers from our schools. Enrolment and pass rates in STEM subjects in recent years have fallen not just at higher level, but at national 4 and 5 levels.

Meanwhile, STEM teacher training places lie unfilled. In maths alone, universities have filled fewer than half their available places. We have long argued for bursaries as an incentive for STEM trainee teachers, so those that have been announced are welcome, but will the minister explain why they are only for career changers? We urgently need new physics, maths and computer science graduates also to choose teaching; they need to be incentivised, as well.

As long as our teachers are among the poorest paid and most overworked in the world, the profession will not attract the STEM talent that we need. What will the Scottish Government do to fix teachers' pay and workload in order to make teaching an attractive option for all graduates—especially graduates in STEM subjects?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As Iain Gray knows, teacher pay is negotiated through the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers, which is made up of representatives from local government, unions and the Scottish Government. Those discussions are on-going; the Scottish Government is playing its part in that process and is committed to securing an outcome. The Deputy First Minister has said many times that he is committed to tackling teacher workload, and he has demonstrated that in his time in post, particularly in respect of nationals 4 and 5.

Iain Gray talked about teacher recruitment. I am pleased that he welcomed the bursaries for student teachers in STEM subjects. It is important that we encourage more people into those subjects, but that is only one of the actions that the Government is taking. We have invested £88 million this year so that every school can access the right numbers of teachers, and we are working with local authorities to increase teacher numbers to reach an additional 253 teachers this year.

We are increasing funding and places at our universities in order to recruit teacher trainers, and we are developing new ways for individuals to get into teaching. Unfortunately, some of the places have not been filled, but when the final figures are produced at the end of next month, we hope to see an increase in levels over last year's levels.

Work is on-going and we continue to look at innovative solutions through new routes into teaching and through bursaries, which demonstrates our commitment.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I welcome the minister's statement and the continuing recognition of the importance of STEM and the strategy that has been laid out. Will the minister expand further on how she plans to strengthen the partnerships between school, colleges, universities and employers, and how she will encourage such things as workplace opportunities for students within STEM curriculum areas?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We are already seeing strengthening partnerships between schools, colleges and employers and, increasingly, there are opportunities for young people to undertake work placements through the my world of work and developing the young workforce programmes. That includes a growing number of foundation apprenticeships that start at school, and modern and graduate apprenticeships.

We will build on that through the work in the STEM strategy around the new network of STEM hubs that I mentioned, which will be important in linking, in the first instance, secondary schools and colleges, before broadening out into wider

collaboration. It is important that we get the different sections of the education system to work coherently together to build inspiration and enthusiasm for STEM, and thereby ensure that more young people not only take STEM subjects in school, but go on to take them in college and university, or in an apprenticeship, and then get into STEM careers.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): In February 2017, as part of the Scottish Government's strategy to encourage greater uptake of STEM, it was recommended that STEM graduates be able to undertake postgraduate courses at the same time as they undertake the probationary teaching course. Will the minister say how many graduates have taken up that option in the academic year 2017-18? What plans does the Scottish Government have to extend the approach?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It is important that we look at different ways of getting individuals into teaching—not just people who are at university doing their first degree, but people who are changing career, at whom bursaries are aimed. I will write to Oliver Mundell with the numbers. I think that the scheme that he mentioned and the other schemes that I have talked about today demonstrate our commitment to considering a wide variety of options that will enable people to come into STEM subjects and STEM teaching.

As I go about on visits, one of the challenges that I hear about is that of encouraging people who are undertaking their first degree who might never have thought about entering the teaching profession. I have seen excellent approaches being taken by the University of Glasgow to encourage students who are studying for a first degree—in particular in computing science—to move into STEM teaching, which is a particularly challenging area.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I remind members that I am a parliamentary liaison officer on education.

Will the minister explain how the Scottish Government will support external organisations in linking the STEM strategy to curriculum for excellence, particularly with regard to the experiences and outcomes in the science curriculum?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: A great opportunity that we have in encouraging interaction with STEM is presented by the great goodwill of businesses and employers in the private sector, who want to get involved in what is happening in our schools, colleges and universities. Businesses want to bring their expertise and inspiration into the school setting.

The challenge at the moment is that there is a plethora of great ideas out there, many of which are directed at the senior phase and at pupils who are already interested in STEM, rather than at the primary school and early years settings. As part of the strategy, Education Scotland will bring those ideas together so that teachers and educators can consider what is relevant to the area of curriculum for excellence that they teach their classes, and so decide which project will be most beneficial to them. I hope that that will enable us to get the best of what is on offer, and that it will encourage more private sector businesses and employers to get involved in the primary school and early years settings, in particular.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): The strategy gives key responsibility to Skills Development Scotland for improving gender equality in STEM careers. Given that last year only 40 per cent of MA starts were women, and that the figure has declined since 2012, is it right to have such confidence in SDS? Is the minister proud of SDS's track record on apprenticeships in STEM?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We have to face up to the fact that there are challenges to do with the number of young women who are taking STEM subjects at school, who are in STEM apprenticeships, and who are studying STEM subjects at college and at university. We have to look carefully at the issue and consider how to tackle it.

SDS is doing a great deal of on-going work, particularly on apprenticeships, to encourage employers to see the benefit of taking on not just more apprentices but more women apprentices.

A challenge that we must all face is that we see young women's interest in STEM decrease as they go on to specialise in different areas. SDS will have to face up to that challenge, as will the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, our universities and our colleges. They are well up for that challenge.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I draw members' attention to my declaration in the register of members' interests: I am a board member of the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre and a member of the British Computer Society.

Will the funding council review the criteria and routes for entry into teaching for computing graduates, in order to allow them to teach computing alongside other curriculum subjects including maths and physics, rather than their being constrained by the current route, which puts them in schools' business studies departments?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The entry requirements for initial teacher education are set by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Provision for the GTCS to award computing graduates provisional registration in dual subjects exists, provided that the student meets the entry requirements for teacher education, which provide that the initial degree must have sufficient content of the subjects that will be taught.

From August 2017, there will be further flexibility for dual registration in order to enable probationers who hold, or are working towards, a teaching qualification in two subjects to elect to do their probation year in both subjects, thereby successfully gaining the standard for full registration in both subjects. That includes combinations of STEM subjects, including computing and maths.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): On the recently announced bursaries, I previously submitted a written question on whether qualification for a bursary would depend on the industry in which the applicant had previously worked and on the length of time that they had been in the workplace. The Deputy First Minister confirmed that eligibility will not be based on the industry, and the minister has confirmed that it will be based on qualification. Will the minister confirm for how long an individual must have been in the workplace to qualify as a career changer, and why the Government will use that as the correct criterion?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am more than happy to speak to Ross Greer further about his suggestions for how the bursary will work. If he has particular issues, concerns or suggestions in particular areas, we will be more than happy to look at those, as we progress into the detail.

The important aspect of the scheme is that it is to encourage more individuals from a variety of STEM industries to bring that experience of STEM and their work-life experience directly into the classroom. If Mr Greer has particular suggestions about what would make that scheme more successful, I will be more than happy to work with him on that.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): By what date does the minister expect the teacher shortages in STEM subjects will be overcome, particularly in the north-east's Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council areas?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I have said in answers to other members, the Scottish Government is undertaking a range of initiatives to deal with the challenges that we face in teacher recruitment—in particular, in some STEM subjects. The bursaries that I have just spoken about with Mr Greer represent one of those initiatives. If Mr Rumbles would like to take the same positive attitude as Mr Greer has taken, and work with the Government on positive

suggestions, I will be more than happy to hear them.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): As someone who taught a technology subject at further education level until last year, I warmly welcome today's statement on the STEM strategy.

The minister will be aware of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee's recent report on the gender pay gap. How will the STEM strategy help to close the gender pay gap, given that people who work in STEM sectors are generally better paid than most, but the sectors are still stubbornly gender-segregated?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Gillian Martin has raised an important point. We need to look not only at what happens in schools and the education system, but at what happens when young people, in particular young women, take up posts in STEM industries. Scotland's full-time gender pay gap of 6.6 per cent remains below that of the United Kingdom, but is marginally higher than it was in the previous year. We have come a long way, but we have not come far enough. Ms Martin should be assured that equality for women is at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision for an equal Scotland. Our programme for Government contains a number of commitments for progressing, including legislating for gender balance on public boards and confirming the full membership of our advisory council on women and girls. We will keep pushing for further progress and will keep taking decisive action to tackle the drivers of the pay gap.

Powers over flexible working, including parental leave and pay, are reserved to the UK Government, but we are doing all that we can to ensure flexible working practices by funding, for example, family friendly working Scotland, which is working to change workplace cultures. We are also investing in programmes to help women get back into work after career breaks, including in STEM industries.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): According to Skills Development Scotland, in 2015-16, only 79 of the 1,458 young people who started engineering and energy-related modern apprenticeships were female. In 2016-17, that number had fallen to 67 of 1,185. That means that just over 5 per cent of the young people who started engineering and energy-related modern apprenticeships were female. What real progress is the minister aiming for over the course of the current parliamentary session in terms of the number of young women who start engineering and energy-related modern apprenticeships?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I said in answer to an earlier question, SDS is looking at that in

great detail. We have a gender action plan that sets out the work that SDS will do on apprenticeships.

There are also gender action plans from the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council for universities and colleges to tackle the gender gap that exists in some of their STEM subjects.

It will be difficult to make progress on the issue, but we need progress. The figures that Jamie Halcro Johnston pointed out show the wide gap between the numbers of women and men coming forward for apprenticeships. We will make progress partly through careers advice and the opportunities that are presented to girls when they are still at school in terms of subject choice and looking at future avenues. Taking up an apprenticeship, particularly in engineering, might not be the first thing that is presented to them and might not be something that other influencers, including parents, families and teachers, present to them as positive options.

We have a challenge to take on in respect of inspiring young girls to take part, and in ensuring that families and educators see the opportunities that women can have when they take on such courses. That is why the work that I talked about with regard to careers advice is important. We must ensure that we look at the advice that young women between the ages of 3 and 18 are getting, including on apprenticeship offers in engineering.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): As other members do, I warmly welcome the fact that the strategy sees training and recruiting new STEM teachers as a priority. However, inspiring young people into STEM will also be key. Will the minister say more about the young STEM leaders programme and how that initiative will be taken forward—in particular, on how it will engage young people from deprived communities?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The young STEM leaders project will work alongside the UK network for STEM ambassadors. One aspect that works particularly well is young people inspiring other young people to take on STEM opportunities so that they can see someone from their own community and of their own gender and background taking on STEM subjects, succeeding in them and having career opportunities afterwards. I saw that in the work that I was doing in Glasgow this morning, where I saw young people in secondary school inspiring pupils in a primary school, who were then inspiring pupils in an early years setting. That work goes on with university students, too. It has been proved to cause a change in attitude not just among students, but among teachers, which is why we

are looking to make that activity more systemic throughout Scotland.

Diet and Obesity Strategy

15:03

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a statement by Aileen Campbell on developing a new diet and obesity strategy for Scotland.

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): I am delighted to update Parliament on our proposals for improving diet, activity and weight in Scotland and to announce the publication of our consultation document. It forms part of our wider efforts in public health to improve Scotland's health and ensure the sustainability of the national health service.

As the nation's waistline expands, so does the cost of dealing with the challenges that are posed by obesity, which include the cost to our NHS, the cost to our economy and, importantly, the human cost of poor health and wellbeing.

Over the past 15 years, progress towards meeting our national dietary goals has remained stubbornly challenging. Recent Scottish health survey figures show that two thirds of us in Scotland are overweight or obese. One in five children is at risk of being overweight or obese, and it is of great concern that that particular health problem is more marked in our most deprived areas, where the obesity rates for children are very substantially higher.

Poor diet is associated with 13 types of cancer, heightened risk of type 2 diabetes and a range of cardiovascular and other conditions that can be debilitating and can shorten life expectancy.

Although the statistics are important, we must also understand the implications for people's day-to-day lived experience, their happiness and their sense of wellbeing. I heard about that lived experience today at the Heart of Midlothian football fans in training session, from people such as Wattie, who described how his life has been transformed through getting fit and losing weight. I thank Hearts for hosting us today.

What makes the obesity challenge all the more heart breaking is that we know that much of that poor health can be avoided and prevented. We know that, if we get the strategy's approach correct by intervening early enough, appropriately and correctly, we can help people and communities avoid poor health, prolong life expectancy and enjoy life. That is a goal worth pursuing. The strategy outlines the way in which we believe that we can help shift the culture away from poor health and obesity being the norm and towards good health and positive choices being

embraced. Scotland has an exciting opportunity to lead the way.

It is important that we recognise the progress that has been made and that, while acknowledging that some problems persist and remain, we are not embarking on this work from a standing start. The healthy living programme supports healthier options in grocery stores; the healthy living award recognises good practice in catering settings; the healthcare retail standard in the NHS shows how promotions can be rebalanced towards healthier food; and football fans in training and the daily mile are proof that regular physical activity is achievable, no matter a person's age.

That work and commitment have helped slow the rate of weight increase. Just as we have done in relation to other major public health matters, however, we recognise the need to go a lot further. That is why I am publishing a bold plan for improving diet, weight and activity for Scotland. There is no simple solution and there is no quick fix. A growing body of evidence points to the action that we must take to make a real and tangible difference to people's lives, to communities and to the country as a whole. I am grateful to Obesity Action Scotland, Cancer Research UK and others for their important work in this area.

There are three main pillars to our proposed approach and I will focus on them in turn.

I am clear that improving the food environment is the single biggest change that we need to see in Scotland. The reality is that many of us find it challenging to make healthy choices in an environment where food and drink that are high in fat, salt and sugar are cheap, widely available and heavily promoted.

I do not doubt for a minute the value of food labelling and other ways to help people make informed decisions. However, the odds are stacked against most shoppers. We have data that shows that 35 per cent of all food and drink purchased in Scotland is on price promotion—around double the figures for Germany, France and Spain. We know that food that is high in fat, salt and sugar is more likely to be bought on promotion, compared to healthier alternatives. Cancer Research UK's recent survey found that 89 per cent of parents in Scotland believed that supermarket promotions influence what they buy, with more than half stating that multi-buy offers lead them to buy more junk food than they really want.

Therefore, consistent with our programme for government, the new strategy proposes action to restrict the promotion of food and drink that are high in fat, salt and sugar. During the consultation, we look forward to hearing people's views, both

within and beyond the parliamentary chamber, on how we can best approach that collectively. The first steps will be to consider what products that are high in fat, salt and sugar and what types of promotion should be targeted, such as multi-buy, or X for Y.

There is more that we can and will do to improve the environment, particularly to protect children from exposure to junk food advertising. It is disappointing that the UK Government did not take the opportunity to extend current restrictions on broadcast advertising before the 9 pm watershed. Many credible commentators have identified that as a crucial measure in the fight against obesity. If a commitment to do so is not forthcoming, we will request that the relevant powers are devolved to the Scottish Parliament. We will not let the matter drop.

On the devolved powers that we can use, use them we will. We will seek to extend the current restrictions on non-broadcast advertising of junk food to places that are commonly used by children. Those could include streets and safer routes to schools, or locations such as visitor attractions. If we want to make good on our shared ambition to make Scotland the best place to grow up in, we must ensure that we provide our children with the best chance and environment to be healthy.

I said earlier that weight is a major contributory factor to serious disease. I also said that much of that disease is preventable. I will put that into perspective. More than a quarter of a million people in Scotland have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and around 9 per cent of the health budget is used on their care. We know that 87 per cent of them are overweight. More worryingly, Diabetes UK estimates that a further half a million people are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Although this is at the extreme end, around 1,700 people have had a major lower limb amputation as a result of their diabetes. That is all preventable.

In a population of 5 million, the costs are significant: the cost to people and their families, the cost to our health services and the cost to our economy. Those costs give us a strong economic and health imperative to act.

Type 2 diabetes is an example of where we can have a significant impact. We know that losing weight and maintaining healthy weight can improve the health and lives of people who are affected by type 2 diabetes. Even more important, that can delay, prevent and even reverse the onset of the disease.

The strategy therefore signals our intention to establish supported weight management as a core part of treatment for people with, or who are at risk of, type 2 diabetes. That is entirely consistent with

our aspiration to offer a world-class diabetes service. To support that work, we propose investing £42 million over the next five years to support the delivery of that ambitious, innovative and potentially transformative approach.

The consultation also proposes action in many other important areas. It proposes action in the early years, because we know that habits formed in childhood can last a lifetime; in leadership, where the scale and pace of change needed will require long-term commitment right across the public, private and voluntary sectors; and in physical activity, because we know that an active lifestyle, alongside a healthy food environment, will be to the lasting benefit of everyone in Scotland.

This Government and this Parliament have led the way on public health with our groundbreaking strategies on smoking and alcohol. We must now focus on the next great challenge—diet, weight, and activity—in the knowledge that we are at our best when we are bold. In doing so, we must keep people at the forefront of our minds. As Minister for Public Health, I have seen first hand how lives are transformed by healthier weight and diet. That happens when people are empowered, enabled and equipped to make positive decisions about what they eat. It is about ensuring that good habits are established in the early years and educating our teenagers with the knowledge that they need as they emerge into adulthood, enabling them to make choices that sustain good, healthy lives for themselves and as the potential parents of the future.

The consultation paper that I am publishing today sets out an ambitious and forward-thinking set of proposals. Over the coming months, I look forward to having many conversations around the country about our ideas and considering the many ideas that I know will come to us. If people think that there is a case for going further, we will certainly look at it.

This Parliament is at its best when we work together, across political boundaries, united by a desire to create a better Scotland for us all. Regardless of the bumps that we will no doubt encounter along the way on this journey, if we succeed, we stand to gain the biggest prize—a healthier, happier and fairer Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we must move on to the next item of business.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I thank the minister for prior sight of her statement and welcome the Scottish Government's intentions in launching the consultation on a new diet and obesity strategy for Scotland. It cannot come soon

enough, because we know that, as the minister outlined, two thirds of Scottish adults are overweight and nearly one third of children are now deemed at risk. Turning that around requires support from all Government departments, public institutions and businesses and from all sides of the chamber—I very much take that on board.

One of the key priorities of which the Health and Sport Committee has become acutely aware is the need for a cross-portfolio approach to the issue. I hope that the minister will look at how that will be taken forward across all local authorities and all ministerial portfolios in the Government. I hope that today will mark a point to which we can look back to see how the Parliament has made a real difference. Today we will also need to make sure that we see an end to the potential Scottish National Party swim tax and the proposed extra charges for some of our leisure facilities. How would that fit into the strategy? How will the Government measure the progress of the strategy?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Miles Briggs for his question and acknowledge his interest and his suggestion that there is a willingness to work across political parties to make sure that we can make good on the aspirations that I have set out today. Of course, he is absolutely right that public health demands the attention of not just the health department but all departments across Government and beyond, and of our local authorities as well as other public and private bodies.

The strategy that I am setting out in the consultation document also indicates where there can be cross-portfolio working, whether that is in education or in the planning world, in relation to how we plan and shape the spaces and places that we live in to make sure that they are conducive to healthier, happier lives and also nudge us in the direction of making active travel choices.

The programme for government also articulates that desire for us to work across portfolios to make sure that we can create the healthier country that I think we all seek to create. I hope that that gives some reassurance that there is a desire right across Government to work collaboratively—to work together—and to disregard the boundaries that are set by ministerial portfolios, because life does not fit into one single, neat ministerial portfolio.

On how we will measure success, we have focused on diabetes and on promotion in the early years so that we can measure some of the impacts through the primary 1 weight chart. When we take the weight of primary 1 children, we can chart improvement. We can also track purchasing through our endeavours to tackle the promotion of

unhealthy foods. The SCI-Diabetes database can also evidence the improvement that we seek to make in that area.

I hope that that provides reassurance that the strategy is not designed simply to be warm words. There are clear ways in which we want to measure success because we are determined to take an evidence-based approach to tackling this great health challenge that we face in Scotland.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for prior sight of her statement. The obesity crisis is the single biggest public health challenge facing Scotland today and one that, sadly, too often impacts on our most deprived communities. Two thirds of adults and over a quarter of children are overweight. Those are the worst rates in the UK and among the worst anywhere in the world.

It is clear that the current obesity route map has not reached its milestones and bold, radical action is very much needed. Labour therefore very much welcomes the publication of this long overdue strategy and in particular the commitment to restrict the promotion of food that is high in fat, salt and sugar.

I pay tribute to organisations such as Cancer Research UK and Obesity Action Scotland, which have campaigned so effectively to ensure that, at last, the Government has recognised the importance of regulation in making the healthy choice the cheaper choice for families.

At this eleventh hour, will the minister give a clear commitment that the consultation exercise will not be used in any way to water down a commitment to tough regulation, whatever pressure she may come under?

Will the minister also accept that one of the reasons for the lack of effectiveness of the existing obesity route map was the failure to have regular, comprehensive measures of success? Will she therefore ensure that the new strategy is underpinned by clear, enforceable targets, not just for diabetes, and that the targets will be monitored and evaluated regularly by this Parliament so that we do not have to wait another six years should we need to change course again?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Colin Smyth and acknowledge his support for and his welcome of the consultation document and for his particular welcome of our intentions to put restrictions on high fat, sugar and salt foods.

I agree with what he says about the work that has been carried out by Cancer Research UK and Obesity Action Scotland as well as a whole host of other organisations out there that represent many of the illnesses and conditions that are associated with obesity. That has set the tone for us to be

able to move forward with momentum on this journey of tackling obesity and the challenges that it poses for us.

I cannot be more straightforward—we want to restrict the marketing and promotion of high fat, sugar and salt foods. There is no intention for us to do what I think happened with the UK Government's proposals: it set out a consultation that indicated a direction of travel and then unfortunately, when its strategy was published, it fell short of some of the aspirations that had been built up. That is not our intention. We will be bold, imaginative, innovative and we are determined to make a difference on the issue.

We will, of course, listen to what others have to say on the matter. I noticed that some of what Colin Smyth said had a grudging tone—I am not sure whether that was what he intended. I hope that the 12-week-plus consultation process will give Colin Smyth and his colleagues time to formulate some ideas of their own, rather than coming to the Parliament and asking us to do more without always being specific on what action we need to take.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have 10 members who want to ask questions, but we have only 15 minutes left, so I want short, sharp questions and quite brief answers, minister.

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I welcome the boldness and ambition in the statement. Environmental factors may play a role in determining both nutrition and physical activity. Will the minister expand on how the Scottish Government intends to work to change the obesogenic environment in order to change behaviours?

Aileen Campbell: I recognise the real interest in the issue that Maree Todd has expressed in her committee role and in the chamber.

In the strategy, we have set out a number of actions that we want to take to challenge and change the obesogenic environment—it is unfortunately so conducive to obesity. That is why we have outlined actions to restrict price promotions on high fat, salt and sugar food and drinks, and action to extend the current restriction on broadcast and non-broadcast advertising of junk food to reduce exposure, especially that of children, to those foods. We also have plans to develop an eating out of home strategy, which will include action on better labelling, calorie caps and portion control. We also want to ensure that we are in a position to support our small and medium-sized enterprises to allow them to reformulate recipes to increase the range of healthier options available.

I hope that that package of measures will go a long way towards changing the obesogenic culture.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I, too, welcome the minister's statement. As she has highlighted, obesity is linked to many other complications and conditions. Driving behavioural change will be crucial to the success of any obesity strategy and will be most effective for the younger age group. What focus will the consultation have on early intervention, both in terms of our relationship with food and access to physical activity, irrespective of background or personal circumstance? Will malnutrition be addressed as—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but I can allow only one question.

Brian Whittle: It was a really good question as well. [*Laughter.*]

Aileen Campbell: I thank Brian Whittle in the spirit of recognising that there is cross-party support for some of the approaches that we are taking. I also recognise his keen interest in the subject.

Early intervention will be the focus of what we do. We do not want to wait until a problem presents itself before we tackle it. Early years intervention is a big part of the ideas that we have put forward in the strategy, using opportunities around the expansion of childcare, the fact that we have a range of different things going on around the food that is given to children in a school setting and ensuring that we use opportunities in the classroom to instil good habits early on.

However, early intervention must not just be associated with action in the early years. There are a range of measures and prevention is the hallmark of our approach.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Obesity used to be a condition of the wealthy and is now a condition of the poor. What is being done to address the key issue that contributes to obesity, which is poverty and food poverty?

Aileen Campbell: There are a range of actions. My colleague Angela Constance has set out a number of actions that she and Jeane Freeman are planning around creating a fairer country by ensuring that the powers over social security that are coming to the Scottish Parliament are delivered in a fair and equitable way, with dignity being the hallmark of their approach. We are ensuring that we tackle child poverty and a range of other issues to challenge the inequalities that too often persist. We recognise that obesity has the most impact on our most vulnerable communities.

To go back to what Miles Briggs said, it is not just about me taking forward a strategy on my own—the issue has cross-portfolio interest across Government to ensure that we have a whole-country approach to tackling the problem.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Will the minister outline how the Scottish Government's obesity plan will link with curriculum for excellence and does she agree that the plan offers an opportunity for schools in ensuring the health and wellbeing of their pupils? I should declare an interest as the education parliamentary liaison officer.

Aileen Campbell: As Jenny Gilruth suggests, the curriculum for excellence provides us with opportunities to ensure that pupils develop a full understanding of food issues in the widest sense, for example learning how to cook, choosing food and the influence of advertising and culture.

Our proposals in the strategy will look to ensure that such work begins in those important early years, including with parents, and continues through pre-school facilities, ensuring a natural progression of advice and engagement. It is also important that we recognise that that work does not stop outside the primary school, because we also need to work hard to target and support adolescents. If we intervene in the early years, that work can potentially unravel if we do not have support for our adolescents as they emerge into adulthood. We need to ensure that there is age-appropriate advice and support at every part of a young person's life journey.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Along with Cancer Research UK and Obesity Action Scotland, the Greens firmly support restricting price promotions. I hope that the consultation is about how we restrict them, rather than whether we restrict them. How will the strategy make healthier food more affordable? How will it directly support producers of that healthy food?

Aileen Campbell: There is no intention to shy away from the big things that we need to do, particularly around restricting the marketing and promotion of foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. There is the opportunity for Alison Johnstone to contribute over the lifetime of the consultation to ensure that that message is heard loudly and clearly, and it is one that we are determined to continue with. I put on the record that we intend to continue to work with industry on that issue, particularly with our small and medium-sized enterprises with regard to the reformulation that they need to do to adapt. That is why we have set out £200,000 to support small and medium-sized enterprises to respond to the challenges that they will face.

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): Does the Scottish Government agree that all health boards and local authorities should develop strategies and performance indicators for striving to reduce obesity in children?

Aileen Campbell: We certainly encourage the use of the health visiting pathway, for instance, which presents opportunities to ensure greater measurement for children and their own indicators. We certainly encourage local authorities to use that information to take action in partnership with others. Our intention is also to maintain and expand the existing child healthy weight work, which is happening right across the country. However, I acknowledge the point that Gail Ross makes, and we expect our boards and authorities to take forward appropriate work in that regard.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Does the minister agree that physical activity in the early years has to be more than just the provision of the daily mile in our schools? In recent years, there has been a quiet erosion of unstructured sessional activity for young people in our communities. Will the minister commit to putting increased access to both youth work and play at the heart of the obesity strategy?

Aileen Campbell: There is a real progression for children in the early years in terms of their co-ordination skills, their ability to throw and catch, and all those things that they learn from play. The play strategy was so important because it gave play the serious emphasis that it required in order to ensure that children had the best start in life. That allows some young people to do what we have seen in the case of Judy Murray's children. She played simple games with her children and we can see what that led to for them. Play creates the firm foundations that allow young people to proceed to elite sport, if they want to, but it also instils good habits for children to be active and enjoy their childhood and to be active and enjoy sport later on in their lives.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): Scotland has a thriving food and drink sector, and the Food and Drink Federation Scotland estimates that 97 per cent of that sector is composed of micro to medium-sized businesses. Can the minister outline what support will be provided to SMEs to enable them to reformulate their products to support the delivery of the Scottish Government's ambition?

Aileen Campbell: We have set out in the consultation document that we will set up a fund of £200,000 to help support those small and medium-sized enterprises, because they will perhaps require a bit of support in responding to the strategy that we will take forward. There will be not only a financial offering, but advice and support from, for example, our agency Food

Standards Scotland, which will provide the expertise and knowledge to support those businesses in that transition. There will be both financial support, and advice and information support. That will be crucial for our very important SMEs, which are the lifeblood of our economies across the country.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): What plans does the Government have for health checks for 40 and 50-year-olds, given that it has scrapped those checks during its time in office? How will the diet and obesity strategy help to address diet, activity and healthy weight for older Scots?

Aileen Campbell: I have set out in the consultation document a lot of detail on the proposals that we are taking forward for type 2 diabetes, which I think will impact really positively on the age group that Annie Wells speaks about. There are a range of issues. It is also important to recognise that, unlike the UK Government's strategy, which just focuses on children, our approach is for the whole population. It is designed to try to shift at every age and stage so that it is impactful for everybody across the country should they require support.

I see that Annie Wells is shaking her head, but those are the facts. This approach is very different from the one that the UK Government has taken forward. It would be helpful if the Conservative Party members here applied the same pressure to their colleagues down south to get them to stop shying away from going forward with a 9 pm watershed for junk food advertising for the most vulnerable people in our society: our children.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The last question is from Clare Haughey.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Obesity plays a significant role in the development of type 2 diabetes, amongst other conditions. Will the minister outline what steps will be taken to assist those who are most at risk of developing type 2 diabetes?

Aileen Campbell: The diabetes prevention framework, which has been developed by an expert group, complements our strategy and proposals and considers the identification of high-risk groups. It supports early diagnosis, addresses the important questions of referral pathways to treatment, education and lifestyle management and is a fundamental pillar of our approach to how we effectively prevent the escalation of type 2 diabetes across the country.

Hydro Nation

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-08378, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on the hydro nation: maximising the abundant benefits of our water resources.

15:32

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): As we all know, water is life. It is a vital part of Scotland's natural capital that underpins everything that we do. Our economy, environment, health and wellbeing are all inextricably linked to water. With around 70 per cent of the area and 90 per cent of the volume of Britain's inland surface water, Scotland is extremely fortunate to have such a critical resource in abundance.

As a resource that underpins key industries such as food and drink, water of course also presents opportunities—opportunities to develop its value, to understand and optimise its use, to harness its power to increase the productivity and efficiency of our industries, and to enjoy its aesthetic qualities and contribution to our health, wellbeing and leisure. We should demonstrate exemplary practice in managing all our natural resources, leading by example and sharing with the world the knowledge and expertise that we have acquired in water.

All those factors come together under the aims and objectives of hydro nation. Our vision of Scotland as a hydro nation recognises the critical importance of water as part of our national and international identity. Today, I will outline how we are developing the economic and non-economic value of our water resources to deliver on our ambition to be a world leader in its responsible management. The approach is ambitious, innovative and outward looking. It places the people of Scotland at its centre and recognises our duty to them and to the environment that sustains us all.

In a world where over a billion people do not have access to clean water and many more live without basic sanitation, we see a clear role for Scotland to help to make a difference. I will set out some of the groundbreaking international work that is being undertaken in the name of hydro nation that is already improving lives and underpinning the Government's commitment to the United Nations sustainable development goals. However, I will begin closer to home.

In Scottish Water, we benefit from a world-class utility that provides water and sewerage services through a public ownership model for the benefit of

the vast majority of people in Scotland. We can take great pride that, year on year, its levels of performance show what can be achieved by a well-managed and highly motivated public sector organisation.

Since its establishment, Scottish Water has reduced service costs by over 40 per cent, environmental incidents by 34 per cent and leakage by 50 per cent. Equally significantly, Scottish Water has reduced its carbon footprint by nearly a quarter since it first reported in 2006. This year, the company reached an important milestone by facilitating enough renewable generation to meet 100 per cent of its electricity requirements. I emphasise that all that is in the context of an average household charge that is £38 lower than in England and Wales.

As well as underpinning our economy as a whole, water is a key business sector in its own right. It has now been recognised as such by our enterprise and development agencies so that we can tailor and deliver the support that it needs to grow and flourish. Scottish Development International has recently published an updated capability statement that presents our key strengths, experience and expertise.

In terms of the breadth of business support, innovation is integral to our approach. The establishment of the hydro nation water innovation service means that the sector is now benefiting from targeted and dedicated specialist one-to-one support to help tackle the barriers that are faced by small and medium-sized businesses in bringing their products to market. That is supported by two full-scale testing facilities at operational Scottish Water sites: Gorthleck for water treatment and Bo'ness for waste water. During the summer, I visited the Gorthleck plant and saw for myself how it is helping innovative businesses to develop their products. It is also hosting technical trials to review the feasibility of employing decentralised water supplies for remote households, which are growing our understanding of the options for an alternative provision model for those on private supplies who are struggling to maintain their existing supply. We remain fully committed to the service and are at an advanced stage of preparing to procure its evolution.

Sitting alongside the industry, our academic and research sector is delivering groundbreaking research, including through CREW—Scotland's centre of expertise for waters—and our innovative and challenging postgraduate hydro nation scholars programme. Funded by the Scottish Government and hosted by the James Hutton Institute, CREW provides a vital knowledge hub where calls for research are co-ordinated across academic institutions, Government and the water sector, which helps to improve the understanding

of water in the environment, industry, pollution, resource management and technology. The scholars programme is designed to deliver the water leaders of the future, with a cohort of 19 talented PhD scholars studying a wide range of topics that have been identified as key to moving forward understanding and enhancing Scotland's reputation as a centre for academic excellence. The programme delivered its first alumnus this summer.

Our industry is supported by a unique and internationally respected model of governance and regulation that reflects the sense of community and shared purpose that hydro nation has engendered. Our economic, environmental and drinking water quality regulators work closely and interconnectedly with Government and Scottish Water to improve performance and promote the sector's interests. Their expertise and impact is increasingly recognised through demand for advisory services to address challenges in other jurisdictions.

We have recently established the hydro nation international theme to reach out to the world and share our academic excellence and expertise in water governance and water management technology. Our approach aims to bring better coherence, alignment and consistency to our international activity, including the management of collaborative research projects; to deliver more actively managed academic networks that can respond collectively to funding call opportunities; and to support other opportunities for the wider sector.

I must make special mention of Malawi, a country with which we enjoy a special relationship. We are committed to supporting Malawi through hydro nation's contribution to the climate justice fund, with the aim of making the sustainable development goal 6 a reality. The programme has already delivered access to clean and safe water to more than 33,000 people, improved water resource management skills for more than 6,000 people, and resulted in more than 4,000 people using new irrigation techniques and conservation agriculture practices. We are building on those successes by extending the scope to include water pump technology enhancement trials, which will increase efficiency, and we are working with major United Kingdom retailers to secure in-country water sustainability for key export products such as tea and coffee.

We are also responding to the huge potential and need in India in relation to water resources by engaging with key Indian partners to introduce hydro nation and help build links between the scientific research and business communities. We are also exploring with our Indian partners the mechanisms for developing pilot technical projects

with the potential to tackle some of India's most pressing water issues.

In considering how hydro nation can make a significant global impact, we also recognise the public sector's potential to provide commercial and advisory services relating to water. My officials are working with a number of bodies, including the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Water Industry Commission for Scotland and Scottish Water International to understand and develop the potential for cross-sectoral collaboration and the structures to support that.

In these remarks, I have set out how we are delivering across each of the themes that are set out in the hydro nation strategy that was agreed with the hydro nation forum, which I chair: supporting our domestic industry; maintaining and improving service and quality standards for customers; and driving down carbon impacts through innovative energy generation. For those on private supplies, we will continue to pursue suitable options for an alternative provision model.

We will build on our academic strengths to ensure Scotland's place as a thought leader on water issues and continue to deliver on our commitment to the sustainable development goals through targeted international activity. We will develop and support new commercial opportunities for our businesses and public bodies, at home and overseas, developing our water economy and enhancing its contribution to a low-carbon economy that benefits all of Scotland.

I hope that, with these remarks, I have been able to bring home to members in the chamber who might not otherwise have been aware of the breadth of activity that goes on beneath the broad heading of hydro nation that Scotland is being recognised internationally as a country with expertise parallel to none, and I want to commend hydro nation to the chamber.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the importance of water to Scotland's national and international identity, and supports action to develop the water economy, as promoted by the Hydro Nation agenda, which is helping to make Scotland a world-leader in the responsible management of water resources by developing economic and non-economic value through the high level of performance demonstrated by Scottish Water, supporting the wider water industry and international activity, which, together, make a contribution to the UN's sustainable development goals and Scotland's low-carbon economy.

15:42

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am delighted to open for the Scottish Conservatives in this important debate on Scotland's water. Living about an hour away from Dalness in beautiful Glen Etive, which is Britain's

wettest place, and in an area—the west Highlands—that is one of the wettest parts of western Europe, I have seen my fair share of water. As a result, though, I particularly appreciate the value of our water and the many means by which we can use it to benefit local communities and our economy. I am proud of the fact that the region that I represent here contributes such a significant and important natural resource, and I am upbeat about the progress that has been made in delivering the ultimate goal of making Scotland a hydro nation.

We on this side of the chamber welcome the publication of the Scottish Government's hydro nation review report, and I thank the Scottish Government for publishing it well in advance of this debate. Indeed, we welcome the fact that the report was produced past the point at which reports are required by statute, and we hope that the Scottish Government will continue to provide Parliament with regular updates on the progress of the hydro nation agenda through the lifetime of this Parliament.

I am delighted that much progress is being made. Given that Scotland's water is worth £1.8 billion per annum to the Scottish economy, it is vital that we continue to invest, improve and lead the way in building the water economy. We welcome the many areas of progress that are noted in the report, and at this point I pay tribute to the scholars programme which, as the report points out, has produced its first scholar, Dr Christopher Schulz, alongside 16 other PhD scholars who are immersed in the programme. I am also proud of the fact that, as we continue to build our own water industry and economy, we are sharing those practices internationally, in particular with developing countries such as Malawi—which I will come back to later—to help them develop a thriving water economy.

We also welcome the fact that, as a result of the focus on the water economy, new technologies are being brought to market that will help, over time, boost the economic benefit of Scotland's water. In particular, we know that one of the goals of hydro nation is to deliver a low-carbon water nation and to ensure that we manage our water resource so that it reduces its carbon intensity. In that respect, it would have been interesting if the report had elaborated on what specifically is being done in that area, particularly the progress in delivering new technologies for treating waste water and producing clean drinking water, which, as we know, is very energy intensive. It will be interesting, nonetheless, to learn about the success of the new water treatment technologies that are currently being trialled at the Gorthleck innovation test centre, which the cabinet secretary mentioned.

We strongly welcome the work that is being done by the programme to support other countries to develop similar water programmes. I am encouraged by the strength of our continued relationship with Malawi and the manner in which that long-standing and historic connection has allowed us to share ideas, create new success stories for each other, and cement the positive impact that multination partnerships have on that state and its citizens. The report notes many positive steps in that relationship and how we are helping Malawi to develop its water economy, ensuring that its citizens can have the kind of access to water that we often take for granted. Furthermore, we are encouraged by the support that has been offered to India, and the best practice that is being shared with many developed states such as Ireland, Canada and Australia.

However, our global commitments to improve water resource will not be met simply through the action of one Government, which is why I strongly welcome the interventions of the UK Government and its excellent record in this sphere. The UK Government has committed to ensuring that another 60 million people are able to access clean water and sanitation by 2020. That is an ambitious target that will be met only through our continued commitment to international development. Between 2011 and 2015, the Department for International Development helped 64.5 million people gain access to clean water, improved sanitation or better hygiene conditions. DFID has built new wells, pumps, standpipes, toilets and sewerage systems, which is work that complements the work that has been done by the Scottish Government and by private sector organisations, charities and others here in Scotland.

Of course, the drive to improve global water access and treatment does not only involve the efforts of the Scottish or UK Governments, because our people have played a strong part in supporting water development abroad. Across Scotland, there are many individuals, small businesses, and charities that have set out to go further and support people whom the state has not yet been able to help. The Edinburgh-based beer firm Brewgooder is one good example of that. It was set up with a mission to donate 100 per cent of its profits to clean water charities and set a target of ensuring that 1 million people can get access to drinking water. So far, since 2016, it has helped 33,000 people and supported 60 different projects in Malawi, and I am sure that everyone in the chamber wishes it the best of luck as it strives to meet its overarching target.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I have a question that perhaps one of Mr Cameron's colleagues can answer in their speech. The first part of the amendment talks

about the recovery of phosphorus. I am interested to know whether that is for economic or environmental reasons because, of course, by the time the phosphorus from human waste is in waste water, it is extremely dilute, and I think that the recovery would not be economic. I would be interested to hear someone from the Conservative benches address that point.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is a technical question for you, Mr Cameron. Do you have the answer?

Donald Cameron: It is certainly an environmental point, if I can put it like that. Maurice Golden will go on to deal with the question—that is a hospital pass, if ever there was one.

There is a need to go further. Although the report sets out clear areas where there have been significant achievements, we on these benches feel that there are other important areas that have not been covered by the report. For example, there continues to be a concern over pharmaceutical pollution, which is largely caused by the improper disposal of medicines and human excreta. The non-profit organisation Health Care Without Harm states that many waste water treatment facilities are unable to completely filter out many of those pharmaceutical drugs and, as a result, those pollutants can impact land and other surface waters. Similarly, there are issues with the number of PCB—polychlorinated biphenyl—chemicals that are not able to be removed from waste water.

The cabinet secretary mentioned a local issue in my region that I am acutely aware of. I have dealt with several cases on behalf of my constituents concerning the difficulty that many people who live in remote communities have with getting their property connected to the mains water supply network. If they cannot have that done, they must rely on a private supply where the water quality and flow can often be an issue. I press the cabinet secretary to work hard for people in that position. Although there are obvious logistical and financial challenges, if we are to have a truly inclusive water economy, we should not forget the needs for everyone resident in Scotland when it comes to accessing a safe and reliable water supply

I will end by reiterating that, although there are some areas that need improvement, the Scottish Conservatives are confident that good progress is being made in a number of areas, and we commend the Scottish Government and its agencies for facilitating that progress.

I move amendment S5M-98378.1, to insert at the end:

“; recognises that the current level of phosphorus and priority substance recovery from waste water is not

desirable; agrees that river basin management and flood-risk management could be improved in order to improve water quality and reduce the impact of flooding, and believes that the market for business customers is imperfect and needs to be more competitive”.

15:50

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the hydro nation update report. Our dramatic coastlines, glistening lochs, powerful rivers and peaceful canals are important to Scotland at a fundamental level. Water resources support numerous industries, bring in tourism, boost our health and wellbeing, and provide about a quarter of our renewable energy output—and, of course, we drink it.

The continued preservation of the purity of our water resources and the careful monitoring of our supply are deeply important. The beauty of water landscapes is a strong pull for many tourists visiting Scotland, and the variety of attractions that are provided to us both by nature and by innovative industries cater to many interests.

When people around the world think of Scotland, our whisky comes to the minds of many. This iconic industry absolutely relies on a pure and reliable water source. While an extremely refined palate might be needed to guess the source of the water used, clean water is used in the numerous vital stages of the whisky-making process.

Water is significant for our sense of wellbeing. I highlight our canal system, a public asset that has made progressive strides in diversifying its value thanks to the efforts of Scottish Canals. In Glasgow, a collaborative initiative, the metropolitan Glasgow strategic drainage partnership, is under way to alleviate flood risk—which is a very important aspect of the management of our water—and to regenerate the underused land along canal ways. In Maryhill in Glasgow, canal-side land is being developed for social housing. That is a high-quality placemaking initiative, and the canal holds special opportunities for further developments in recreation and tourism, active travel and environmental improvement.

Hydro power is one of our oldest forms of renewable energy, and my colleagues on these benches will say more about that. It is easy to visualise the harnessable energy from the power of a rushing river or burn. The capacity potential of hydro power is significant—enough, I understand, to power more than 1 million homes, but achieving that is complex and will require joined-up policy across all levels of government.

For communities with water sources nearby, small-scale hydro schemes are an exciting opportunity. In my South Scotland region, members of the Strathaven town mill have plans for a hydro scheme to generate electricity for the

Strathaven Town Mill Arts and Heritage Centre, which is an example of a small charity dealing with big organisations and agencies such as Scottish Water, SEPA, the local authority and Scottish Power. With complex processes and contracts to negotiate, that is highly prohibitive for such organisations—except for the most determined applicants. Consideration should be given to allocating a project manager who can act as an overarching liaison on behalf of such community groups.

The nature of hydro energy means that output will fluctuate with the weather, which can make projecting an income difficult, yet funding requests require applicants to provide detailed forecasts. Furthermore, this year’s revaluation of business rates has left some small-scale hydro schemes facing rates increases of up to 650 per cent, I understand, which is completely unsustainable and unaccommodating.

We should be doing all we can to help such community-led initiatives stand on their own two feet, and to recognise the importance of the hydro power sector, at all scales, to Scotland’s energy future. If we truly want to support public initiatives and bolster community ownership, simplicity and flexibility are key.

In the context of sustainable development goal 6, to which the cabinet secretary has already referred, the Parliament of course recognises the daily and pervasive challenge of water safety and scarcity that many countries around the world face. The hydro nation’s targeted support through the climate justice fund is so important for the empowerment of communities in nations such as Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and Rwanda. The cabinet secretary also highlighted the work that is being done in India. I know from having been on the cross-party group on Malawi until recently that policy coherence across the portfolios is really important in what the Scottish Government is doing in that regard.

Water is our most basic need, and the benefits of a reliable and clean water source permeate so many aspects of life.

Although there is much in the Tory amendment to support, especially on dealing more robustly with the waste water challenges, as well as recognising the need for further flood management, we are not in a position to support the amendment due to the possible implications of further privatisation of Scottish Water Business Stream, which would not be in the public interest.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is just closing.

Claudia Beamish: Sorry?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I said that you are just closing. I have given you a little bit of extra time, but I will give you another 30 seconds.

Claudia Beamish: Thank you.

We will support the Scottish Government motion.

I move amendment S5M-08378.3, to insert at end:

“reiterates the importance the Hydro Nation’s support through the targeted Climate Justice Fund to water-scarce nations such as Malawi; calls on the Scottish Government to address the devolved barriers to the development of new hydro schemes, and recognises the value that excellent water resources add to Scotland’s tourism and food and drink industries.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate, with speeches of four minutes or thereabouts. There is a little bit of time in hand for interventions and members will get back their time.

15:56

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): The Scottish Government’s ambition to build the nation of Scotland into a truly hydro nation is an inspiring approach to utilising our country’s world-renowned natural resource.

I will use my time in this short debate to share how the Stirling constituency that I represent contributes to one of the Scottish Government’s key objectives: promoting our water resources as a source of clean, green, economic benefit. At the same time, I will assess our relationship with our water resources in a wider context.

Members will be aware that the spectacular Loch Katrine is located in my constituency. The loch not only is the birthplace of Rob Roy MacGregor, but has been the primary source of water for much of the city of Glasgow and the surrounding area since the mid-1800s. The connecting infrastructure to Milngavie water treatment works was initially opened in 1859 by Queen Victoria; a second aqueduct was opened in 1901.

Today, Loch Katrine is owned by Scottish Water, which manages a system that can deliver almost half a billion litres of water a day—yes, half a billion—to more than 700,000 residents in the surrounding area. That is a hell of a lot of water for 700,000 residents right enough. [*Laughter.*]

The loch is famously the water source for one of Scotland’s most widely consumed pints: Tennent’s lager. Loch Katrine’s contribution to the local area does not stop at its impressive supply of quality consumable water; it is also an attraction for tourists from around the globe. The SS Sir Walter

Scott steamboat has provided sailings on the loch for 117 years and it is still a huge hit with visitors.

Loch Katrine is an incredible asset to the local community. It encourages visitor support to local businesses and is a perfect example of a natural water resource being used to further the economic potential of the surrounding area.

Loch Katrine is nestled in the heart of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs national park—an area that I share with Jackie Baillie; occasionally, we have had ice cream alongside the water of Loch Lomond.

Members: Oh!

Bruce Crawford: The national park is home to 44 approved hydro schemes, of which 35 are in operation. The total output is 21.7MW, which is enough to power a staggering 15,400 homes, or almost half my constituency. One of the schemes, the Callander community hydro project, sells the energy produced, which creates a financial revenue stream for the entire community.

I was a bit surprised that Claudia Beamish picked up on the business rates issue, because my understanding from the hydro operators in my part of the world is that they are quite delighted with the discounted scheme that Derek Mackay, the finance secretary, introduced to deal with that issue.

Claudia Beamish: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You can, Mr Crawford, but you are staggering into your last minute.

Bruce Crawford: I will.

Claudia Beamish: My understanding from the community groups was that the business rates have been increased, so I will follow that up. I thank the member for making that point.

Bruce Crawford: I have shared a taste of what is happening in my constituency about our relationship with water and what can be taken to other parts of our country and around the globe. The Loch Katrine project was born out of a radical reform issue for the health of the city of Glasgow. If we could do that two centuries ago, just imagine what extra we could do around the globe today.

We need to be more imaginative about how we use our water resource. I would like to promote the idea that the A84, which connects my constituency to Oban, is a perfect route for numerous small hydro schemes to power charging points for electric vehicles. Such an approach would go some way to preparing our country for the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles. All that it would take is some out-of-the-box thinking. I will leave members with that thought on how best we can

utilise the fantastic resource that is Scotland's water.

16:00

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

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

I thank those members whose opening speeches have highlighted the great water resources that we have here in Scotland and highlighted that today's debate is a consensual one.

Scotland has the wettest climate in the United Kingdom, which many farmers are all too aware of after this season's stop-start harvest. This has been one of the most difficult harvests for many years; I have to go back to 1985 to remember one as wet as this. It has meant combines stuck in fields, high grain-drying costs and real frustration for our farmers. However, while too much rain can be a nuisance, too little rain is a disaster. In a world that is constantly demanding more food and water, Scotland is in an enviable position, which means that Scotland is green, beautiful and agriculturally productive.

Because of our abundant and pure supplies, Scotland is one of Europe's leaders in bottled water production—a real growth story, building successful businesses that are taking a big share of the ever-increasing demand for bottled water. Water is instrumental in the production of many of our key food and drink industries. The Scotch whisky industry, which is one of Scotland's greatest assets, uses large quantities of water throughout the production process. Without adequate supplies of pure, clean water, the whole distilling industry could not survive. Scotch whisky is the top contributor to the UK balance of trade and Scotland's largest export, and it contributes nearly £5 billion a year to the economy. The industry is built on our natural water resources and our fine malting barley.

I am proud to see that Scotland and the United Kingdom are doing so much internationally to share our knowledge and to help nations all over the world to access clean drinking water and better sanitation—something that we take for granted living in such a water-rich country. Hydro nation contributes to the climate justice fund, which supports work in Malawi, and is a good example of Scotland helping internationally. The UK Government's Department for International Development is committed to matching the success of the 2011 to 2015 programme by helping at least another 60 million people to get access to clean water and sanitation by 2020. I am pleased to see that the first students who are participating in the hydro nation scholar

programme are approaching the completion of their PhD studies. I wish them success for their futures and I hope that they can use their expertise to help with Scotland's hydro nation future.

Scotland has a long and proud history of hydro power development. The technology is one of the oldest forms of renewable energy in Scotland, with roots going back more than half a century. Indeed, in the north of Scotland way back then, we did not speak about getting electricity installed—we called it “the hydro”.

Scotland also has huge capacity for pumped storage, which is a technology that can bring multiple benefits to the generation system by ensuring that power is always available when it is most needed; it provides power at peak demand and then uses cheap electric at night, when demand is low, to pump water back up to the high dam, ready to be released again the next day. Hydro power already provides around a quarter of Scotland's renewable energy output, which is the equivalent of 12 per cent of our electricity needs. With significant untapped resources, that home-grown industry has potential to deliver even more.

I have mentioned some of the great benefits of Scotland's abundant water supply, how we can maximise our potential and how we will continue to share our knowledge and expertise around the world. I welcome the Government's ambition for Scotland to become a world-leading hydro nation.

16:05

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): In our living room at home, a large paraffin lamp sits to the right of the fireplace. The lamp is relevant to the debate because it is the lamp by which my wife used to do her school homework until the hydro delivered electricity to 14 Lochend, just outside Inverness. The history of Scotland is interwoven with the history of our use of water.

We in Scotland are fortunate. When we go out of this building at night and the rain is coming down, we curse gently and reach for our brollies or waterproof caps; in the Sahara, people would be dashing around to collect and preserve the precious resource. For many people in the world, access to water, and in particular to potable water, is increasingly difficult. It is undoubtedly the case that water is so precious that it has been the cause of wars and battles—and it might be again in the future.

Water is a naturally occurring chemical; H₂O is probably the most highly recognised chemical formula in the world. It is known universally, even to people with no particular knowledge of chemistry.

Those of us who are fortunate owe a duty to those who are less fortunate. The distribution is maladroit; where there are huge communities of people around the world, there is often little water. We have the potential to show the way on technologies to do with water. We can show leadership.

Bruce Crawford talked about how our Victorian predecessors created the infrastructure on which we continue to depend. In those days there were great debates—particularly in Glasgow when waste water infrastructure was being put in—about whether it was economically or socially desirable to do that. I do not imagine there being any interest in having such a debate today.

Water delivers a public good in Scotland and around the world; it must also be delivered for the public good. Scottish Water is an exemplar of how Scottish Governments of all hues can use our resources in a way that benefits our communities. We can use our natural resources to generate power, and the excess of resource enables us to support others around the world.

Redundant assets in our infrastructure, such as disused sewage treatment works, could become modern recycling plants. There is the hint of a desire to recycle phosphorus—I am waiting to hear from Maurice Golden on that. Phosphorus was first discovered in human waste water in 1669. I do not know whether Maurice Golden will encourage us in that regard.

Climate change is causing an even bigger skew in the availability of water to people around the world. The Mary Robinson Foundation—Climate Justice, which I am always happy to support, has made that a central plank of its campaign.

In Scotland, one of our most important exports is whisky, or uisge-beatha—the minister will no doubt criticise my pronunciation. “Uisge” means water; it is the essential ingredient of our national drink.

16:09

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate, particularly because I have hydro schemes in my constituency, which contribute a great deal to the local economy.

Scotland was one of the first countries in the world to harness electricity from its waters. As many members know, the Labour Party has a proud history of using hydro power to deliver social improvement. It was the late Tom Johnston—he was born in Kirkintilloch and was a Labour Secretary of State for Scotland—who was the driving force behind the Hydro-Electric Development (Scotland) Act 1943, which had the

ambition to deliver power and social improvement to the people of the Highlands. The North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board was created following the act and is regarded as one of Tom Johnston’s greatest achievements. The board’s first hydroelectric scheme was in my constituency at Sloy dam, at the top of Loch Lomond; it was commissioned in 1950.

We are nothing if not parochial, so of course I argue that Loch Lomond rivals Loch Katrine. I also point out that Bruce Crawford and I did indeed share an ice cream on the campaign trail; I am duty bound to say that he did not pay for it.

Scotland’s hydro legacy is still visible. The hydro building programme of the 1950s and 1960s resulted in infrastructure that still produces electricity today; Sloy dam is still going strong. There are also new hydro power schemes at Luss in my area, and there are plans for a community-run scheme in Arrochar.

Hydro power supplies 12 per cent of Scottish energy at present, but there is huge untapped potential to develop more hydro schemes. In my area, I have found that smaller schemes are highly efficient, generally have fewer environmental concerns attached to them and create a number of new and highly skilled jobs. If it is to make the potential of the hydro power sector a reality, the Scottish Government must do everything in its power to create an environment in which businesses feel comfortable about making long-term investment decisions that will create and sustain jobs.

That takes me to a brief discussion of business rates. I very much welcome the finance secretary’s recent announcement that he will fast track valuation of hydro schemes and increase the upper threshold for relief to a rateable value of £5 million from 1 April 2018. That said, there is an absence of clarity about whether schemes to generate more than 1MW will be entitled to any rates relief at all, and those businesses are struggling with the huge increase in business rates now.

What I considered to be a small-scale hydro power plant in my constituency, with a size of 1.042MW, went from paying nothing in business rates up to April 2016 to paying more than £90,000 for this financial year alone. The operators receive no relief whatever despite being only 0.04MW over the limit. There is little that they can do to reduce their costs except restructure their business and, when businesses are restructured, there is the possibility of losing staff. That hydro scheme is not only producing renewable energy that is good for our environment; it is a business that creates good-quality jobs and contributes a great deal to the economy in my constituency.

I respectfully ask the Scottish Government to reconsider business rates relief for hydro projects; otherwise, many may struggle to survive and new projects will not proceed beyond the drawing board.

16:13

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I have said before that climate change is one of the defining issues of our age and, in the Highlands and Islands, loads of great work is being done to enable us to find low-carbon solutions to meet our energy needs. Harnessing our renewable energy potential could transform my region from a low-wage economy with a long history of migration to a high-wage economy that attracts people. I will illustrate that point with a couple of hydro and marine energy examples.

Water is an abundant resource where I come from. More than half Scotland's hydroelectric schemes operate in the Highlands and Islands, and hydro power contributes about 12 per cent of Scotland's electricity. We need to take the opportunities in my region and elsewhere in the country to expand our hydro power industry.

In Ullapool, where I grew up, the community has been working hard over the past few years to create its own successful hydro project. At the opening of Parliament last year, representatives from BroomPower were my local heroes. I am sure that the cabinet secretary and all my colleagues will join me in congratulating the volunteers on all their hard work and perseverance, which has now delivered the project on time and within budget.

The steep-sided glens in the Lael forest and the very reliable annual rainfall of 110cm make the burns just south of Ullapool pretty energetic, and the project has the Scottish Government's backing. The opportunity arose from an invitation from Forestry Commission Scotland for communities to develop hydro projects on local, state-owned woodland through the national forest land scheme. Lochbroom Community Renewables raised funds to take forward the project with a community share offer that had the strapline, "Invest today, change tomorrow". The project raised £900,000 from individuals and businesses last summer and, next month, Flo the turbine—that inspirational name was given by local schoolchildren—will be generating electricity. I look forward to going along to the switch-on in a few weeks.

The brilliant thing about BroomPower is not just that local folk who invested might make some money but that any surplus income from the scheme will be used for projects in the future. The

community benefit fund will go on for the next 20 years.

Marine energy is another way in which the renewables industry in the Highlands and Islands can be a constructive part of the hydro nation. The Highlands and Islands are home to the Pentland Firth and the waters around Orkney, which has one of the most active tidal areas in the world. That area of sea off our north coast contains 50 per cent of the UK's tidal resource and 25 per cent of Europe's tidal resource, and it has an incredible potential for marine energy generation.

It is no wonder that Orkney is home to the world's only grid-connected wave and tidal test site at the European Marine Energy Centre. We also have MeyGen in the Pentland Firth, which is a world leader in tidal energy deployment and set a new record in tidal stream power production earlier this year.

That is an exciting industry that has incredible potential. The abundant resource and the cross-fertilisation of private industry and academic research make Orkney a fine example of a living laboratory. The people who work there are ambassadors for Scottish marine energy worldwide.

We are so lucky in the Highlands and Islands and across Scotland to have such potential in our natural resources and, without doubt, water is central to that potential. The Government's hydro nation agenda will make an important contribution to fulfilling that potential, which is great news for the Highlands and Islands and for Scotland.

16:17

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I welcome the hydro nation debate. It has been particularly heartening to hear about the international development work that has been taking place. I went to Malawi a number of years ago and met people who are directly impacted by the issue. Whether people have access to irrigation and sanitation is hugely important and can be the difference between life and death.

I turn to Scotland. One of the most dramatic benefits to have come as a result of our membership of the European Union has been from the directives that have improved the quality of our water at every turn of the water cycle. From the tap to the treatment works, and from the rivers to the seas, EU directives have set standards that have protected the health of our bodies, our beaches and our watercourses. It is vital that EU directives remain as the solid base for our environmental standards, whatever our future relationship with the EU might be.

Without the backstop of the European Court of Justice to enforce standards, I remain concerned about future Scottish Governments rolling back good progress. In closing, perhaps the minister will tell us what will replace the ECJ, given that the Government has now rejected environmental courts.

Keeping Scottish Water in public hands is critical to delivering on public needs at a time when pressures for post-Brexit market liberalisation will only grow. Alan Sutherland, who is the chief executive of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, said recently that, in his personal view, the introduction of competition for household water

“would be a derisory idea”.—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee*, 12 September 2017; c 23.]

Scottish Water has done little analysis of the impact of the trade deal between the EU and Canada—the comprehensive economic and trade agreement. However, if the public status of Scottish Water is not challenged under CETA, it certainly could be under future trade deals that are cobbled together as part of empire 2.0. There are risks that the Scottish Government should be mindful of as it seeks to further develop its position on trade.

We started the week with a debate about technologies from the past that have no future, so it is good to shift the debate to a technology that had a critical role in our past and will have such a role for centuries to come. Like Jackie Baillie, I am a big fan of Tom Johnston, a former West Stirlingshire MP. The Labour Party’s early work was, of course, always its best, and the post-war vision of the hydro board brought hope and power to the glens. I doubt whether all the projects would have got through today’s environmental regulations, but they delivered Scotland’s first renewables revolution.

I was privileged to meet Pat Agnew, who was an engineer, a pamphleteer and a Green Party energy spokesperson in Scotland for many years. He worked on the Cruachan project and many others during the Tom Johnston era. Some 30 years ago, he envisaged a second renewables revolution based on wind working with hydro. Sadly, Pat Agnew is no longer with us, but his vision is definitely still alive in the aspirations of the Government today.

In this century, communities are using hydro’s strong social licence to build new generation projects. I join Bruce Crawford in paying tribute to the Callander Community Development Trust, whose project on the Stank Glen fits seamlessly with the landscape while delivering great financial benefits to the town. There is huge potential with

hydro capacity, but we have to look at how to add certainty and de-risk the development of projects.

The UK Government’s cut in support for renewables has been damaging—especially for hydro, given its high up-front capital costs. The constant tinkering with the subsidy regimes destroys certainty for projects that seek commercial finance. Dramatic increases in business rates, although they have been averted for the time being, grid capacity constraints and charging regimes that do not recognise the benefits that hydro brings to the energy system can combine to make projects collapse and, if we do not get projects, we do not get community profit sharing.

I appreciate that many of those issues are not within the Scottish Government’s direct control, but building a unified position in the Parliament to support the next chapter in our hydro nation story is certainly worth fighting for.

16:21

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): In four minutes, it is difficult to do justice to a topic of this magnitude. I was tempted to donate my four minutes to Bruce Crawford, if only to find out how the afternoon with Jackie Baillie on the banks of Loch Lomond was to develop. Jackie Baillie has put an end to such speculation.

As the MSP for Orkney, I need no persuading about the extent to which our identity is shaped by water. At this time of year, that shaping can be rather more robust and unremitting than we would like. Nevertheless, I strongly support the energy aspects of the Government’s motion, to which I would add, as Maree Todd did, wave and tidal energy. It is right that many members have focused on the significant potential in hydro power, which already plays a significant part in our renewables production. There is real potential to grow that. Jackie Baillie’s point about small-scale projects is one that is worth holding on to.

Through pumped storage, there is also an opportunity to address security of supply. That needs routes to market, so I associate myself with the comments that Mark Ruskell made in relation to the challenges that face the sector.

I will concentrate on international activity. As the co-convener of the cross-party group on Malawi, I was delighted to see Claudia Beamish’s amendment highlighting the climate justice fund and the work that is being done specifically in relation to Malawi. I will talk about a couple of projects, one of which was alluded to by the cabinet secretary in her opening remarks.

I pay tribute to the University of Strathclyde, which is heavily involved in a wide range of

projects in Malawi. One is to widen access to safe drinking water, and has been enabled through the climate justice fund water futures programme. Professor Kalin challenged his students to come up with a device that could be retrofitted to the almost ubiquitous hand pumps in Malawi. Benjamin McIntosh-Michaelis and his colleagues rose to that challenge. The Afridev Hi-Lift now provides the ability to deliver water well beyond the pump, to premises such as clinics, in a way that was not possible before, when water had to be delivered by hand, usually by women and children, and often over very large distances. I have failed to do the project justice, but there is more information in a recent article in *The Scotsman* from last month, courtesy of David Hope-Jones, who provides the secretariat to the cross-party group on Malawi.

The other project is by Tearfund Scotland; it is also supported through the climate justice fund. It deals with food security and the availability of clean and safe water, through better management of water resources. One of the initiatives in that project is being delivered in Salima district, where the community is taking back control. I received earlier this week from Charlie Bevan, who works for Tearfund Scotland, an email that brought home the significant impact that the project is having on that community by delivering safe and clean water.

We are undoubtedly a hydro nation. Exploiting that is a logical step for us to take because it plays to our strengths. That is not just to the benefit of Scots; it is—as the two projects that I mentioned, and others, demonstrate—to the real and tangible benefit of citizens across the world, in some of its most impoverished nations.

16:25

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I am glad to support the Scottish Government's commitment to making Scotland a hydro nation. Water is fundamental to Scotland's economy, health, social wellbeing and environment. Our reputation as a hydro nation is growing. Our water resource is significant and, in a world in which demand for food and water is ever increasing, there is good reason to nurture our water to ensure its long-term sustainable use.

From the Water of Leith today to the maritime heritage of Leith and Granton harbours, the use, management and quality of water resources in my constituency have always been extremely important. I pay tribute to all those who work in our water industry and who contributed to Scotland's water heritage in the past. William Kinnimond Burton, for example, was an engineer who was born and educated in Edinburgh, and designed the water and sewerage systems in Japan and Taiwan in the 19th century, which helped to defeat

outbreaks of cholera in Japan by providing safer and cleaner water. He is rightly revered there. He did his apprenticeship at Brown Brothers and Co—a firm of hydraulic and mechanical engineers—which was previously based in my constituency.

Today, it is the public servants of Scottish Water, and others in our water industry, whose efforts and contributions we should all highlight and value. In my constituency, that is particularly true when it comes to the Seafield waste water treatment works. It is an important facility in the city, which has a growing population. The performance of the treatment works is extremely important to the long-term sustainability of our water network.

I thank the cabinet secretary for the constructive work that she has done with me so far, and for her engagement with the communities that I represent in commissioning a strategic review of Seafield, which I am sure will make a significant difference. Tomorrow, its initial findings will be shared with the stakeholders group; I look forward to working collaboratively with the cabinet secretary thereafter to see what progress needs to be made.

One of the great strengths of the Seafield works so far is that, as part of its waste water treatment, it generates a significant amount of electricity on the site, which makes the plant more sustainable.

That leads to another area that I want to emphasise—utilisation of our hydro capacity through innovative energy generation, as part of our journey to becoming a low-carbon economy. Many members mentioned Scotland's significant hydroelectric capacity. I, like others, was disappointed that the United Kingdom Government decided to cut feed-in tariffs of up to 45 per cent in respect of the development of hydro power, which unfortunately curtailed hydro power development after a recent period of renaissance.

Marine energy has also been highlighted: I will highlight tidal energy, in particular. Despite the fact that there is no specific contract for difference from the UK Government in the subsidy arrangement for tidal power, Scotland's tidal power industry is making significant progress, including by Nova Innovation Ltd, which is based in my constituency and has successfully delivered phase 1 of the world's first off-shore tidal array in Shetland, with an 80 per cent Scottish supply chain.

In conclusion, from Leith to elsewhere in Scotland, making Scotland a hydro nation and nurturing our water resource sustainably in the long term are crucial, and the hydro economy provides huge opportunities for growth. As a hydro nation, it is right for us to reach out to the world to share our knowledge and expertise, just as William Kinnimond Burton did in the 19th century.

16:30

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare an interest as a 100 per cent shareholder in Water Distribution and Energy Services Ltd, which, although registered, is not trading.

I welcome this Government debate on Scotland becoming a hydro nation, which is a strategy that was first launched in 2012. If any members have read Fred Pearce's book, "When the Rivers Run Dry: What Happens When Our Water Runs Out?", they will appreciate what a precious resource water—especially our Scottish water—is in a world that is rapidly warming due to climate change, and where potable water is a declining world resource, as Stewart Stevenson said.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, late of this Parliament, warned in a previous debate of future wars being caused by drought and lack of usable water. Although, living in Scotland, we take the resource for granted, significant water shortages have already occurred in Europe, notably in Spain and Cyprus, and north African and middle eastern countries are also daily becoming more arid.

I therefore welcome the Scottish Government's intention to develop Scotland's hydro economy sustainably in order to maximise the economic benefit of our water resources. I also support the aspiration to raise our international profile as a leader in water management and governance.

In addition, I note the intention to develop a water research centre, and suggest that it could, ideally, be located in Ayrshire, and preferably in my constituency, given the abundance of water and rainfall in our area—more of which later. *[Laughter.]*

Without doubt, with the world's population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, with climate change now happening in front of our eyes, with temperature rises taking place and sea-level rises also becoming a reality, the need to manage fresh water more carefully has never been greater, in terms not only of direct human consumption but of food production.

Many members know that the issue is dear to my heart—again, I declare an interest as a food producer—but we should recognise the enormous resource that we have in Scotland in terms of available fresh water. Of course, identifying a resource, and harnessing and exploiting it, are two different things.

For example, we have, as Maree Todd mentioned, an enormous resource in wave energy and in tidal energy, which we have not yet been able to access or harness significantly. Fresh water, although it is more manageable, has not yet been fully appreciated or recognised in Scotland for the resource that it will become in the future.

That is why I am a supporter of Scottish Water, and especially of Scottish Water Horizons. Scottish Water has become one of the Scottish Parliament's success stories. It was first set up under Ross Finnie's leadership, and Scottish Water's success and the sensible use of taxpayer's money have, in large part, put Scotland in the position of being able to aspire to becoming a hydro nation, as well as creating Scottish Water International.

Of course, more remains to be done on further improving water quality and river-basin management, as well as flood risk management. It would be remiss of me not to mention the flooding issues in Prestwick, in my constituency, which I have been raising in Parliament for many years now. Although other countries suffer from a lack of rain, part of Prestwick floods because the local drainage and sewerage system is unable to cope with the volumes of water and sewage that are now being delivered into the system. The system lacks the capacity to adequately deal with higher rainfall events.

At the risk of sounding like a stuck record on the subject, which is of great concern to my Prestwick constituents, I again ask the Government to fund Scottish Water to rectify the problem of external sewer flooding in my constituency and elsewhere. It is a request that I first made to Roseanna Cunningham in September 2010, according to the Scottish Parliament information centre, and it is a request that one of my constituents raised very recently with her at the Scottish National Party conference, I believe.

I welcome the debate and look forward to Scotland developing as a hydro nation.

16:34

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Scotland's vast water resource is not something that we have only recently come to recognise and nor is exploiting it a recent phenomenon. Against that historical backdrop there is an opportunity to adapt the innovation and technology of hundreds of years ago in order to meet modern demand and play a part in green energy generation.

Perth College, as part of the University of the Highlands and Islands has undertaken research to ascertain the number of historical small-scale hydro sites in north-east and central Scotland, which are predominantly old water mills. The work was carried out in collaboration with four local authorities: Aberdeenshire, Angus, Fife, and Perth and Kinross. The aim was to restore micro-hydro schemes for modern use. In my constituency, the location identified as having the greatest potential is the picturesque Barry mill. Powered by the Barry burn, the mill is a category A listed building that is

owned and operated by the National Trust for Scotland. Barry mill, which goes back to the time of Mary Queen of Scots—therefore trumping Bruce Crawford's Victorian example—is without doubt one of the greatest historical treasures in my constituency.

Bruce Crawford: Liam McArthur is probably able to trump everyone. From what I understand, Skara Brae has the oldest existing water supply, which dates from 3,000 BC and incorporated a working toilet.

Graeme Dey: I stand corrected. Being one of only a handful of mills still powered by water, Barry mill is also probably the largest and finest example of its type remaining in working order. The mill continues to be a real tourist attraction in Angus South, where visitors can enjoy guided tours and witness first-hand the intricate process of a fully operational grain mill.

The historical hydro power project is an incredibly exciting proposal. The next stage is for those behind it to work with local authorities to carry out a feasibility study on the selected sites. That would include assessments on a range of criteria, such as potential power output, proximity to the grid, and the capacity for community involvement in the project.

In my patch, Angus Council's green economy officer has already met with the National Trust and they are working collaboratively to assess the viability of the proposals for Barry mill. I am aware that Perth College UHI is also working with local authorities and local energy Scotland to put together an application to kick-start a pilot project as soon as possible. I hope that the proposal for a micro-hydro energy scheme at Barry mill will become a reality.

The Scottish Government is right to have recognised in the draft energy strategy the role that hydro power can play. I welcome the capping of business rate increases to 12.5 per cent for small-scale hydro schemes and the 100 per cent rate relief that was put in place for all renewable projects that offer a 0.5MW profit share for their local community. I raised the first issue with the Government on behalf of constituents.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution also took a positive step when he announced last month that the Barclay review of plant and machinery will fast-track the valuation of hydro schemes. It is absolutely vital that we continue in this vein, to encourage and support smaller scale innovation in Scotland as we move to cement our place as a global water leader of the future.

As a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, I finish by paying tribute to the sympathetic way in which

many of the new schemes are being constructed. I have visited three such schemes on the Invermark, Glen Prosen and Rottal estates—two of those are in my constituency and the other is in Aberdeenshire. In every case I was struck by just how well the schemes had been made to blend into the countryside. In some cases, from a distance you can barely make them out from the surrounding landscape. For me, that is a win-win.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We now move to closing speeches.

16:38

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): This has been a short but excellent debate on the hydro nation, with wide-ranging speeches from members such as Liam McArthur and Claudia Beamish, who focused on the international element. Donald Cameron discussed the very important issue of water quality and flood risk management. Jackie Baillie and Mark Ruskell spoke eloquently about Tom Johnston, who is one of my political heroes—the less said about the ice-cream the better, so I shall move on swiftly.

Members from across the parties focused on the three main aspects of the hydro nation: the development of hydro power to maximise economic benefits by reducing energy use, improving efficiency and creating a low-carbon nation; raising the international profile of Scotland as a leader in water management; and developing a water centre of excellence with international reach.

I would like to focus briefly on hydro power—as other members have done—as a case study of a hydro nation, not least because of its strong antecedents in my region, the Highlands and Islands.

We all know that hydro power is a key renewable that can help achieve our climate change targets, reduce reliance on imported gas and coal, and increase the diversity of our generation mix. We need to get our energy mix right. The lights might not be going out all over Edinburgh any time soon but, if we get the energy balance wrong in the next decade, we will be paying over a barrel or, indeed, over a therm of gas to countries with the political stability of Burma and the civil liberties record of Zimbabwe.

We all know that hydro power is the grand old man, if you like, of renewables in Scotland. The first public hydro power supply was in the Benedictine abbey in Fort Augustus, serving 800 inhabitants in 1890. In 1896, a hydro power station was built in Foyers by the British Aluminium Company. Around 1900, a large hydro power station was basically responsible for the development of the village of Kinlochleven. As

members have quoted previously, Tom Johnston, Labour's Secretary of State for Scotland under Winston Churchill, led the hydro revolution because in the 1940s he created a network of dams and transmission towers that produced electricity for poor Highlanders for the first time. When Tom Johnston left Parliament in 1945, he went off to chair the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board; and, just to complete the record, the Labour Government nationalised hydro power in its first term in 1945.

At that time, it was estimated that only one farm in six and one croft in 100 had electricity. Today, notwithstanding Donald Cameron's point, virtually every home has mains electricity. After the second world war, workers came from all over the world to work in the Highland hydro schemes. Germans, Poles and Czechs in particular were famed as the tunnel tigers, who earned 10 times the weekly wage of local estate workers. However, by the 1960s, the Highlands had changed beyond all recognition due to new dams on larger lochs. Rivers were diverted through aqueducts and underground tunnels to direct power from the glens to remote crofts and farms. What was once a threat to tourism is now a tourist attraction. For example, the dam and fish ladder at Pitlochry—the dreaded venue for many a Sunday school outing—is now a major tourist attraction that is visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year.

Hydro power is not some bygone relic of a forgotten age. The Glendoe project, which I visited a few years ago and which is near the banks of Loch Ness, is the largest hydro power station for half a century. It provides clean renewable energy that is enough to light every house in Glasgow. A new £14 million hydro scheme is now up and running in Lochaber, in the hills above Kinlochleven, from which villagers will get substantial community benefit. However, as has been pointed out, the reduction in UK tariffs by the UK Government makes the economies of building new hydro schemes increasingly challenging. I believe, though, that there are opportunities for a new hydro revolution. However, there are some limiting factors: the cost of grid connections; the reduction and phasing out of feed-in tariff payments; and the consent process. Scottish Renewables has also raised concerns around the route to market and the lack of financial certainty for those investing in small-scale hydro, not least community groups.

Scotland has a proud record on hydro power, which in no small measure is due to the iconic status of Tom Johnston. There is still much more to achieve in, for example, pumped electricity storage, run-of-the-river developments and streamlining planning processes. We all know that the task is great, but Scotland has both the

opportunities and the necessary skills. The sustainable development of hydro power can be a crucial contribution towards meeting our global climate change responsibilities. With the appropriate development, the right technology and the proven skills of our workforce, Scotland can take the lead in Europe and beyond.

16:43

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests with respect to my work with Zero Waste Scotland on phosphorus and priority substance recovery.

I will begin by briefly highlighting the three parts of our amendment to the Scottish Government's motion, which we support. The first relates to phosphorus and priority substance recovery, which is something that we must do in order to protect the environment and biodiversity. The second is about ensuring that our river basin management plans and flood risk management plans are more effective across the whole of Scotland. We have some great practice, but we need to spread it out and we need local authorities involved in that. The third is about improving the market for the business sector, which would ideally involve the introduction of a not-for-profit company that runs on the ESCO—energy service company—model and could share in the benefits of water efficiencies. That would be a useful introduction to the market.

I reaffirm my party's commitment to protecting and harnessing the benefits of Scotland's abundant water resources. Scotland has the potential to be the international lead in water management projects. We can and should provide expertise and research around the world by developing initiatives that will help people and tackle climate change. The hydro nation strategy is to be welcomed and we will seek to hold the SNP Government to account for its implementation. SNP members have spoken about their commitment to developing Scotland's water sector and raising our international profile as a hydro nation, and that is something else that we welcome.

We heard a number of interesting and worthwhile contributions from across the chamber in what has largely been a consensual debate. The cabinet secretary mentioned in her opening remarks that we must optimise and understand water use and that we must demonstrate exemplary practice and share it with the world. I agree with that. Bruce Crawford spoke about the scenic attraction of Loch Katrine, as well as talking about sharing an ice cream on Loch Lomond with Jackie Baillie—who, in her remarks, highlighted issues around business rates for hydro schemes.

However, a top priority for Scotland should be to address the amount of pharmaceutical and chemical waste that is appearing in Scotland's rivers, lochs and seas. I highlight the case of Lulu the whale, who was found dead on the Isle of Tiree. Her body contained shocking levels of PCB, or polychlorinated biphenyl—I have been practising that all day. Chemicals take a long time to break down, so the estimated £75 million a year of pharmaceuticals that are dispensed but never used, which often end up in the natural environment, should be an additional concern. Researchers have found some traceable contents in drinking water. Water treatment plants cannot effectively recover these potentially harmful chemicals, and the potential long-term environmental and health risks of pharmaceutical residues in water are a matter of concern.

Health Care Without Harm is an organisation that works to transform healthcare worldwide so that it reduces its environmental footprint and becomes a community anchor for sustainability and a leader in new technologies and practices. The use of a system such as the Swedish “Wise List”, which can be used to compare health outcomes with environmental impacts, would be a positive step forward for physicians prescribing new drugs, and I urge the SNP Government to look at that more closely.

Donald Cameron spoke about one of the goals of the hydro nation agenda being to create a low-carbon water nation where carbon intensity is reduced. Although I welcome Scottish Water's progress on that, I would like it to go further.

Stewart Stevenson talked about the potential for water wars internationally in the future, and he was absolutely right about that. I refer him to the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization centre for water law, policy and science at the University of Dundee, of which I am an alumnus, with respect to its work on the application of a water hierarchy and use of the EU water framework directive as a dispute resolution management system for watercourses throughout the world.

I commend the international links that have been established with countries such as Malawi and India. Liam McArthur's point in that regard was well made.

Donald Cameron highlighted the UK Government's work to help 64.5 million people to gain access to clean water and sanitation and welcomed the target that a further 60 million will have access by 2020. That work complements the work of the Scottish Government.

Peter Chapman, not surprisingly, highlighted the issues that farmers are facing as a result of our having the wettest summer since 1985, and he

stressed the importance of quality water to the whisky industry.

Indeed, as climate change continues to affect global weather patterns, Scotland becomes increasingly vulnerable to extreme flooding. That is why enhanced river basin management plans and flood risk management plans will be required. We must do more to protect communities.

The water market for business customers is currently imperfect and we believe that it needs reform. I recognise that deregulation has led to savings for Scottish businesses but, as with the consumer energy market, businesses need more information and advice to support the switch to companies to get the best deal. Bundling with other utilities is another way to drive down costs and improve service. Conservative members believe that the introduction of an ESCO to the market would be an improvement. A commercial not-for-profit business providing a broad range of solutions and sharing the benefits of efficiencies would be beneficial.

Claudia Beamish highlighted the issues around small-scale hydro and a community-led approach. The introduction of a project manager would be useful in facilitating such an approach.

I welcome the fact that Scotland is becoming an international leader. We need to take seriously the value of Scotland's water for the sake of our climate, economy and international profile as a hydro nation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Alasdair Allan to close the debate. Will you take us up to just before 5, please, minister?

16:51

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): I thank all members for their valued and considered contributions. This has been a very wide-ranging and constructive discussion, and members' contributions have produced many unusual images. One image was more unusual than most. The revelation that Bruce Crawford went to Loch Lomond to share ice cream with Jackie Baillie will live long with us, not least because I understand that already the considerable forces of Twitter and Photoshop have come together to ensure that it now has a much wider audience than any that I could possibly give it.

I thank my colleague, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, for setting out the impressive breadth of the Scottish Government's hydro nation agenda. In particular, I thank her for the way in which she has allowed many members to point out and dwell upon the fundamental importance of water as a

resource and its critical nature for life, which underpins everything that we do. It is right that we should take a systematic and wide-ranging approach to how we manage that resource and develop its value.

I reiterate our thanks to the hydro nation forum for its role in helping the Scottish Government to develop the hydro nation strategy. The strategy, which is tested and agreed by the forum at its biannual meetings chaired by the cabinet secretary, sets out actions and plans under four key heads or themes. The themes cover activity that is focused on national, international, knowledge and innovation aspects of water.

I will address some of the points that were raised in relation to the national theme, which sets out the key activities in the domestic agenda that are being delivered under the strategy. We heard about Scottish Water's successful journey to becoming a world-class utility that delivers services to the majority of people in Scotland. Its success in meeting and, indeed, surpassing performance targets while reducing costs and environmental impact was rightly held up by many members as an example of how public ownership can deliver results across the board for people in Scotland. We also heard about on-going action under the hydro nation agenda to tackle the particular supply challenges that are faced by some of our most rural communities.

We heard about the need for innovation as a means of reducing costs for consumers, and about its contribution to lowering environmental impact, increasing energy efficiency and developing a flourishing water economy.

It is important that we had the chance to discuss the knowledge theme, which recognises the strength in our universities and research institutions in relation to water. The work of our researchers and academics is making a significant contribution to understanding and tackling key issues across a broad front.

Hydro nation is helping to demonstrate to the world where Scottish expertise is leading the way or contributing to better resource management, whether that be in relation to water scarcity, access to adequate safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation or the development of thinking and mechanisms to tackle globally significant transboundary legal issues.

We have heard how, in the fields of economic and non-economic regulation and governance, Scottish expertise is being increasingly acknowledged as an exemplar of best practice and is increasingly in demand. We have noted how the hydro nation international programme is building on the strengths of the established and respected CREW model to bring better alignment

and consistency to outward-facing hydro nation activity. Not only that, but the initiative will develop stronger academic networks at home that can contribute to and support other strategic priorities.

As we have seen, and as Donald Cameron and many other members highlighted in the course of the debate, the hydro nation agenda is also an international one. Scotland recognises that, as a responsible nation in the world, it has a duty to contribute to solving global issues where it can bring its expertise to bear. The abundant water resources that we in Scotland benefit from undoubtedly contribute to the quality and distinctiveness of Scotland's environment.

However, while we are enjoying access to excellent-quality drinking water and high standards of sanitation, many, many millions around the world are not so fortunate. Last year, I had the very humbling experience of meeting women in a Malawian village who pointed out the effects of what they themselves recognised as climate change. They explained the practical consequence of that for them, which was that they each had to walk several more miles a day just to get water.

I am proud that Scotland was one of the first countries in the world to publicly commit to the new sustainable development goals in September 2015, and it is heartening to see hydro nation's direct contribution to the achievement of those goals in Malawi and other parts of the world. I am pleased that the Labour amendment, which the Government is happy to support, mentions Malawi, not only because of our on-going relationship with that country but because of hydro nation's contribution to the climate justice fund, which has already ensured access to clean water for more than 30,000 people and supported many more.

I also want to mention the Scottish Government's good and important work in India. For example, we are very happy to co-operate in the Ganga river health project, which is led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's centre for water law, policy and science.

With regard to one or two themes highlighted in the amendments, I think it important to say that I am not sure whether, after all the debate, we quite learned the thinking behind every aspect or intention of the Conservative amendment. There is much in it that is unobjectionable, but I would say that its last line fails to recognise the benefits that public ownership has brought to our water industry.

Maurice Golden: Is the SNP Government arguing that the market for business supply is perfect? Does the minister think that the market

would benefit from the introduction of a not-for-profit ESCO sharing model as an offer to business customers in Scotland?

Dr Allan: Not only is the market properly competitive in the interest of customers but more important, with 87 per cent of our water bodies achieving good status classification by 2027, there is public support for the public ownership principle. I do not think that we need depart from it.

I should say that I am happy to support the Labour amendment, not least because of the support that, as I have mentioned, it expresses for people in the developing world and their right to enjoy a decent water supply.

Before I conclude, I note that Roseanna Cunningham has indicated to me that she is happy to meet John Scott about the constituency issues that he diligently raised.

The annual hydro nation report tells a story of how we are moving from a potential to a genuine opportunity to make a first-class, world-class contribution to the debate about water in the world. We can be proud of not only what we have achieved in Scotland, but what we can achieve in the wider world.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S5M-08416, on committee membership, and S5M-08421, on substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that George Adam be appointed as a member of the Justice Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Stewart Stevenson be appointed to replace George Adam as a substitute member of the Justice Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-08378.1, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S5M-08378, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on the hydro nation: maximising the abundant benefits of our water resources, 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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, 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)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 32, Against 74, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-08378.3, in the name of Claudia Beamish, which seeks to amend motion S5M-08378, in the name of Roseanna

Cunningham, on the hydro nation: maximising the abundant benefits of our water resources, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-08378, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on the hydro nation: maximising the abundant benefits of our water resources, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the importance of water to Scotland's national and international identity, and supports action to develop the water economy, as promoted by the Hydro Nation agenda, which is helping to make Scotland a world-leader in the responsible management of water resources by developing economic and non-economic value through the high level of performance demonstrated by Scottish Water, supporting the wider water industry and international activity, which, together, make a contribution to the UN's sustainable development goals and Scotland's low-carbon economy; reiterates the importance the Hydro Nation's support through the targeted Climate Justice Fund to water-scarce nations such as Malawi; calls on the Scottish Government to address the devolved barriers to the development of new hydro schemes, and recognises the value that excellent water resources add to Scotland's tourism and food and drink industries.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-08416, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that George Adam be appointed as a member of the Justice Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-08421, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Stewart Stevenson be appointed to replace George Adam as a substitute member of the Justice Committee.

Meeting closed at 17:02.

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

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