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

Commonwealth Day 2018

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Good afternoon. The first item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-10573, in the name of Stuart McMillan, on Commonwealth day 2018. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the theme for Commonwealth Day 2018, which is Towards a Common Future; acknowledges the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's (CPA) British Islands and Mediterranean Region to strengthen its role within the association; congratulates Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians on its efforts to increase female representation in Commonwealth legislatures and towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes, and notes the hope that the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in April 2018 will achieve its aims to reaffirm common values, address shared global challenges and agree how to work to create a better future for all citizens in the Commonwealth, particularly young people.

13:15

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Commonwealth day 2018 marks 41 years since the first simultaneously observed Commonwealth day was celebrated in 1977. It is important to note that there has been cross-party support for the motion, and I would like to thank every member who has supported it.

This year, we have events in Scotland to celebrate Commonwealth day. The upcoming Commonwealth games, which will be held from 4 to 15 April on the Gold Coast of Australia, will be the largest integrated sports programme in Commonwealth games history. I had the privilege of meeting two of team Scotland's hockey athletes at the Greenock Morton community open day on Sunday. I wished them well and I wish all the athletes well for the games, particularly all those from team Scotland.

Here in Scotland, 2018 also marks the year of young people, which I am sure members would agree dovetails quite nicely with Commonwealth day. Since its founding in 1977, Commonwealth day has had a special emphasis on young people. Its main purpose is to highlight the common ties and history of the 53 countries and territories from

right across the world that make up the Commonwealth. It is always celebrated on the second Monday in March, because leaders at the time of its founding noted that that was a day when most schools would be in session. That gives students and young people the opportunity to participate by planning events such as mini Commonwealth games, simulated heads of Government meetings, and other events that celebrate the diverse culture of Commonwealth member nations and territories.

This year's theme is towards a common future, which builds on last year's theme of a peace-building Commonwealth. The theme seeks to explore how the Commonwealth can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all citizens through sub-themes of sustainability, safety, prosperity and fairness, in line with the theme of the 2018 Commonwealth heads of Government meeting in London. The events will include performances and faith and civic gatherings involving citizens from all over the Commonwealth. There was even a procession including young flag bearers representing each of the 53 nations and territories.

According to the Commonwealth organisation facts, the Commonwealth comprises 2.4 billion citizens, of which 60 per cent are aged 29 or younger. That is an extremely young population. Moreover, one in three young people aged between 15 and 29 lives in Commonwealth countries, which is about 640 million out of 1.8 billion. Huge emphasis is placed on cultivating and shining a spotlight on the impressive talent of our young people in the Commonwealth, be it in sports, academia, politics or the arts. In the charter of the Commonwealth, there is a dedicated section affirming the importance of young people. It explicitly states:

"The future success of the Commonwealth rests with the continued commitment and contributions of young people in promoting and sustaining the Commonwealth and its values and principles, and we commit to investing in and promoting their development, particularly through the creation of opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship."

Those powerful words echo similar sentiments that are expressed through the themed year of young people here in Scotland.

Some of my constituents in Inverclyde participate in the Inverclyde-Malawi schools partnership, which connects our schools with schools in the Chiradzulu district of Malawi. The Inverclyde partner schools supported various projects and built strong partnerships with students in Malawi. Our young people are the future, and, by creating those connections through our Commonwealth link, a strong bond is formed, with the potential to create long-lasting positive outcomes for the futures of Malawi and Scotland.

The bonds that our young people make help to form the future that we want to move towards as part of the Commonwealth.

The Queen, in her annual message ahead of Commonwealth day, said:

“Through exchanging ideas, and seeing life from other perspectives, we grow in understanding and work more collaboratively towards a common future.”

Exchanging ideas and understanding perspectives are key, especially at a time when the future can be uncertain. The values and aspirations of the Commonwealth charter, which include democracy, human rights and the rule of law, along with the commitment to the development of free states and the promotion of peace and prosperity, become crucial as the guiding principles for the family of Commonwealth nations. By celebrating Commonwealth day every year, we reaffirm our links, our commitments and our values and aspirations, and we pledge to work towards a more positive common future.

As we mark Commonwealth day here in Scotland and the Scottish Parliament, let us look forward to what we can build together as part of the Commonwealth by recognising our current bonds and fostering new ones through our young people. The 53 nations and territories cannot achieve their goals alone, but, with collaboration, we can work to deliver shared ideals and common goals. I look forward to seeing the future that we create together with the other Commonwealth nations and territories. I wish all 53 nations and territories a happy and productive Commonwealth day.

13:21

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Stuart McMillan on securing this debate to mark Commonwealth day 2018. Scotland's ties with other Commonwealth countries are well known. Whether it is the names of our towns and cities echoed in those of other settlements across the world or our widespread diaspora, there is scarcely a corner of the Commonwealth, or indeed the globe, without a Scottish connection. My only uncle, William Arthur, was one of many Scots who, in the 1960s, seized on the opportunity of cheap transit to Australia as part of the assisted passage migration scheme, making him one of the tens of thousands of £10 poms. Willie, as he was known, spent 18 years in Australia, working and starting a family before returning to Barrhead in the early 1980s. Consequently, I am one of the many Scots to have first cousins in Australia who can regularly be seen enjoying days of endless sun on pristine beaches in smug, self-satisfied Facebook posts.

As I have spoken of Australians, I must mention two who have made a big impact on my life. The first was the piano teacher Elisabeth Jacobs, whom I had the privilege of studying under during my late teens and early 20s. Elisabeth returned to Australia a decade ago but, in her more than 20 years in Scotland, she was highly sought after as a teacher at the then Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and as a private tutor. Given that many of her students are currently active as professional musicians across Scotland, Elisabeth Jacobs has left a formidable legacy, which is brilliantly embodied in the now world-class Scottish international piano competition, which she was instrumental in founding.

I also wish to recognise Dr Jane Stanley, who is a senior lecturer in music at the University of Glasgow and a highly regarded composer. I had the privilege of completing my postgraduate degree under Dr Stanley, and her teaching made a huge impact on my understanding of music and compositional craft.

I highlight Elisabeth Jacobs and Dr Stanley not only because of my personal connection to them but because they are two outstanding Commonwealth women who have succeeded brilliantly in the realm of classical or art music, a domain that for far too long had been male dominated.

Given the size of the Commonwealth, it will not have escaped members' notice that I have focused exclusively on Australians. However, there is a simple reason for that—a constituency-based reason, no less—which is that Johnstone in my constituency of Renfrewshire South is the birthplace of Sir George Houstoun Reid, who was Australia's first high commissioner to the United Kingdom, as well as being Australia's fourth Prime Minister. This year marks the centenary of Sir George's death and, although he may not be a household name today, he was a significant figure in his time. In an age when debates raged on the merits of free trade or protectionist policies—plus ça change—Sir George was a committed free trader and the most prominent leader of the Australian Free Trade Party.

As he was a key player in the major political debates of his era in Australia, as well as a Prime Minister and the first high commissioner to the UK, one would be forgiving for thinking that those achievements represented the total of Reid's career. However, following his tenure as Australia's top diplomat to the United Kingdom, he went on to be elected to the House of Commons, where he served for the last two years of his life and acted as an unofficial spokesperson for the dominions during the first world war.

The story of Sir George Houstoun Reid, who was born in Johnstone in my constituency,

encapsulates the interconnectedness, shared values and identity that characterise the Commonwealth. It is an institution that demonstrates that nations with complicated, and sometimes challenging, past relationships can come together and collaborate as equal partners. The lesson that we can all learn from that has never been more relevant.

13:25

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the Parliament's annual debate on Commonwealth day, for which this year the theme is towards a common future. I thank Stuart McMillan for lodging the motion.

The Commonwealth is one of the world's oldest political associations of states. As Stuart McMillan said, today it comprises 53 independent countries and is home to a staggering 2.4 billion people. In 1949, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was established to support Commonwealth parliamentarians. The Commonwealth women parliamentarians group was formed in 1989 and strives to achieve, in particular, better representation of women in legislatures. More generally, it seeks to promote, and has succeeded in, the furtherance of gender equality. Furthermore, the Commonwealth charter of 2013 states:

"We recognise that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights."

With this year's towards a common future theme in mind, it is clear that gender equality is recognised as being in the interests of all in the Commonwealth, as it is necessary for it to develop and progress.

The CWP's strategy for 2017 to 2019 focuses on thematic priorities, which include ending violence against women, women's economic empowerment and women in leadership. The establishment of the strategic plan has two main objectives, namely to increase awareness of the existence and work of the CWP and to create a resource centre as a hub for information that can serve as an important resource to help tackle the CWP's thematic priorities.

When the British Islands and Mediterranean region CWP steering group committee met in London in October last year, members had the pleasure of meeting the girls network, which is a mentoring organisation for young people that aims to inspire and empower girls from the least advantaged communities. During the discussion with the girls, the committee members explored issues such as culture and stereotyping, which can be barriers to achieving ambitions. Many of

the girls said that their mothers had been denied the educational opportunities to reach their potential and that they were therefore determined that their daughters would not suffer the same fate. It was hoped that meeting the women parliamentarians would help to give the girls more confidence and motivation to achieve their goals and help the girls realise, "If they can do it, we can do it too".

I want to touch briefly on online abuse, which has increased with the rise of social media. The subject was raised at the CWP international working group meeting that was held at Wilton Park in Buckinghamshire at the beginning of last year. It was recognised that women parliamentarians need to share knowledge and learn lessons to address the abuse that they are subjected to by anonymous individuals who are not prepared to engage face to face. A good example of such work can be found in Parliamentarians for Global Action, which is a non-profit, non-partisan network of 14,000 legislators in 140 countries. It is crucial that parliamentarians continue to work together to counter abuse against women and young girls, in whatever form that takes, as we move together towards a common future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise to you, Ms Mitchell, because the clock was not working for your speech. Nevertheless, you kept to time. There's a trooper.

13:30

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Like colleagues, I am pleased to speak in the debate as well as to be a member of the CPA Scotland branch's executive. I thank Stuart McMillan for bringing the debate to Parliament.

Since its inception in 2000, the CPA Scotland branch has continued to grow, and has built on existing links, established new ones and strengthened its role within the association. I take the opportunity to thank the staff in the Parliament's United Kingdom and international relations office—in particular, CPA Scotland branch secretary Margaret Neal—for their work in supporting elected members.

One of our many areas of work has been the relationship between Scotland and Malawi, which Stuart McMillan mentioned. I was fortunate to lead a delegation to Malawi a few years ago to visit projects, provide seminars for members of the Malawian Parliament and expand our knowledge. Some of the projects that I visited were under the auspices of the healthy lifestyle project that is based in Coatbridge high school, which does fantastic engagement work in Malawi and at home.

A priority in recent years, which is even more to the forefront in this centenary year of votes for some women, has been the work by the Commonwealth women parliamentarians to support and to encourage increasing women's representation and gender equality, as Margaret Mitchell outlined a moment ago. Margaret Mitchell is, of course, our representative on the CWP and has worked hard both to ensure that our branch offers input, and to report back on activities. We are ahead of other branches in having appointed a male champion—Maurice Corry—of women's representation.

Building on last year's theme of a peace-building Commonwealth, this year's theme considers how we can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all citizens through sub-themes of sustainability, safety, prosperity and fairness.

On prosperity and fairness, global inequality has increased in recent years. Oxfam's most recent report, "Reward Work, Not Wealth" tells us that

"In the period between 2006 and 2015, ordinary workers saw their incomes rise by an average of just 2% a year, while billionaire wealth rose by nearly 13%".

It seems, therefore, that the extreme wealth of the few is rising while those at the bottom are still struggling to survive.

Oxfam's report also points out that

"Even in emerging countries with rapid economic growth, many workers, including a disproportionately large share of women, remain trapped in low pay and poverty wages."

That shows us that economic growth and the trade and investment that give rise to it do not, in themselves, guarantee that living standards for the worst-off Commonwealth citizens will improve. With the Commonwealth being home to around a third of the world's population, many of whom live in developing economies, it is important that we use our common ties and shared commitment to justice and fairness to work quickly towards the goal of building domestic and international economies that reduce inequality, and function for the benefit of ordinary people.

I was recently in Bangladesh for the CPA executive meeting and the 63rd Commonwealth plenary conference. That was an interesting experience. Commonwealth parliamentarians who attended the conference were given a briefing by His Excellency Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, the Honourable Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. Following that briefing, parliamentarians from many countries called for urgent action from the international community to resolve the continuing humanitarian crisis that faces the Rohingya community in Bangladesh. The CPA Malta branch proposed the adoption of a

statement on the matter, and a CPA position was adopted by consensus. I would have read it out, but I do not have time.

I thank members who have put themselves forward to attend events and seminars not only to share our knowledge and experience, but to learn from parliamentarians from throughout the Commonwealth. However, engagement is becoming more difficult, as members find it hard to be away from Parliament because of votes. The Presiding Officer is the branch president and the First Minister and leader of the Opposition are the vice-presidents, so I am sure that they take seriously the branch's ability to participate in important CPA work. I ask the business managers and the Parliamentary Bureau to consider ways to ensure that our branch can fully participate in the CPA's work, including attendance at executive committee meetings.

It is the year of young people in Scotland, so I thought that I would finish by quoting the Honourable Emilia Lifaka, a member of the Cameroon Parliament, who was recently elected CPA chairperson. She said:

"Over one billion young people hold the key to unlocking the challenges that we face—beyond our respective borders. The CPA and the Commonwealth are truly global organisations."

I thank Stuart McMillan again and wish everyone a happy Commonwealth day 2018.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sure that Elaine Smith's business manager heard what she said. It is up to members to raise with their business managers issues such as whether there can be a pairing system for parliamentary votes.

13:35

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I, too, thank Stuart McMillan for ensuring that we can have the debate. I particularly want to thank Joan McAlpine, Tom MacArthur and Maurice Corry for being here. The other members who are here are—dare I say it?—hired hands, to some extent. I want to acknowledge colleagues from different parties who speak—at least, I assume that they are going to speak—in this afternoon's brief debate on Commonwealth day.

I must confess that, of late, I have often asked myself whether the Commonwealth is still relevant. One of my political heroes, Shirley Williams, sorted that out for me on the "Today" programme the other morning. In a typically brilliant interview, she took John Humphrys apart as only Shirley Williams could. As you would expect, she made some strong arguments against Brexit, but she also spoke strongly in favour of the Commonwealth, and argued for its relevance to the nations of the United Kingdom, and the United

Kingdom as a whole, in an entirely cogent way that I have not heard for some considerable time. We need more of that, and I will outline why.

I sometimes think that our CPA branch would need to experience a crisis of some sort before colleagues from across the political spectrum would rush to our meetings. However, there has been huge change, particularly in Africa. At the last branch meeting, I talked to John Davies, a very able diplomat, who is the new CPA chief executive in London. It is good to have him on board. We spoke about the regime change in Zimbabwe and what it means for the Commonwealth, and about the positive role that the CPA can play in assisting the country through a period of change.

We also talked about the regime change in South Africa, which is in some ways even more extraordinary, with the disgraced President Zuma departing and being replaced by President Ramaphosa, who has an utterly fascinating and enthralling background in the pre-apartheid and post-apartheid eras. We discussed what that could mean for the Commonwealth, and in particular for Africa, in terms of the role that it plays in the Commonwealth.

It is also exciting to learn that Gambia has re-entered the Commonwealth. Further, among all the process stuff that we deal with in the CPA day in and day out, it is good to hear the good news that Canada and Australia—part of the old Commonwealth—have rejoined the organisation, which will give it much-needed strength and resilience.

I want to make three points about why the Commonwealth is relevant to us here in Edinburgh and Scotland. The first reason concerns the role that we can play, which Stuart McMillan and others have mentioned, and which Elaine Smith talked about through her example of the work that the delegations to Malawi that she and colleagues from across the political spectrum have been involved with. That work has taken place not only in the previous session; it goes right back to the early sessions of the Scottish Parliament. We have looked at what we can add in that regard and how not only members but—just as important—committee clerks can help with how their part of parliamentary process can work. We should continue to do that, but we have to be realistic about what we can achieve.

The second reason concerns what we can do to encourage colleagues from across the political spectrum to take up the opportunities to meet political colleagues from various jurisdictions across the world. We should not be frightened of the attention that we might get simply because we have jumped on a plane to Ottawa, because the benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages of

making that kind of visit. We return with knowledge about other jurisdictions and the problems that they have, in contrast to our own fairly smooth-running operation, and we can see the things that can be commended in our system—although, having sat through last night's meeting of the Finance and Constitution Committee as it considered the withdrawal bill, I am beginning to wonder about that.

I take Elaine Smith's point about sorting out party whipping so that we can encourage more colleagues to take part in such visits, particularly colleagues from the governing party—there are always difficulties with the governing party allowing its back benchers to miss votes and so on.

On the third reason, it is right to mention Maurice Corry's role as our CPA women's champion. As Elaine Smith pointed out, we were one of the early legislatures to have such a post. It is a good step to have taken. I am sure that Maurice Corry will be an admirable advocate in that role, and we strongly support him in it.

We should make much of Commonwealth day, but we should never be frightened of challenging the first principles of why the Commonwealth is relevant in the 21st century and of occasionally resting on a few old political heroes, like Shirley Williams.

13:39

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Tavish Scott for his very kind words. I am deeply honoured to undertake the role.

I, too, thank Stuart McMillan for bringing the debate to Parliament today. It is an excellent day to have the debate. Commonwealth day means so much to many of us, and members will express why that is throughout the debate.

I welcome the opportunity to speak today to celebrate the great partnership that is the Commonwealth of nations. Through that network of nations of shared common values, we have been able to develop strong and cherished connections. Throughout history, the support between Commonwealth nations has been crucial. In world war one, members played a crucial part in contributing to the British war effort, participating on all fronts. In world war two, more than 8 million men from the Commonwealth served in the British armed forces, continuing their role in supporting Great Britain in times of war, conflict and need. I encourage members to go and visit their local war memorials in their villages, towns and cities to see just how many Commonwealth men and women served in our forces and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Commonwealth citizens can apply to serve in the British armed forces, and many do so. The British armed forces face shortages of recruits from the UK, and citizens of the Commonwealth have stepped up to serve. For example, one in 10 members of the Royal Regiment of Scotland—my regiment—was born abroad, with many coming to serve from Fiji, South Africa, New Zealand and Uganda. That system of support is a defining factor of the relationships between the Commonwealth nations.

Each year, we celebrate Commonwealth day before the annual meeting of the Commonwealth summit, which allows member states collaboratively to make decisions that will help all the citizens who are part of the partnership. This year, the summit will, as Margaret Mitchell said, work under the theme “Towards a common future”, which focuses on promoting progress in sustainability, safety, prosperity and fairness.

As a member of the Scotland branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I have had the opportunity to serve, as we know, as a women’s champion who is a man. Last week, on international’s women’s day, I mentioned that in that role I will advocate gender equality throughout the Commonwealth. Although member states are united under common values and goals, each country is unique and suffers from different problems in varying degrees. All member states face problems in gender equality, which they should constantly strive to address and improve on.

Within the Commonwealth, we have countries that have incredibly progressive gender equality legislation—for example, Rwanda, which has the most women in Parliament in the global community. However, there are also countries where such representation is lacking and no woman holds a seat in Parliament, including Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.

By sharing ideas on how to address the inequality that is deeply ingrained in many of our cultures, we can collaborate to find effective ways to create a more equal society. “Towards a common future and towards common progress in creating equality through the Commonwealth”, is the message.

The Commonwealth also allows us to connect and to learn from people whom we might not otherwise have the chance to meet. I recently met two senior officials of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. I became acquainted with Jacob Abraham and Sheron Narayan through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. When they shadowed committees and offices in the Scottish Parliament for two weeks, I discussed with them my involvement in the CPA as the male

women’s champion for this Parliament, and other topics to do with the Commonwealth.

That is a demonstration of how the common bond of being part of the Commonwealth can bring together people and facilitate discussion of ideas, issues and different ways of approaching problem solving. Towards a common future, towards sharing ways of thinking and collaboratively working together to achieve our goals: that is the Commonwealth.

On Commonwealth day, there were multifaith events and demonstrations of talent from various member states, with the purpose of bringing us all together and showing that the diversity throughout the Commonwealth should be celebrated. Our differences, although they define each country with unique characteristics, can also be a way to bring us together and to learn from each other—towards a common future, but with acceptance and honour for our differences, because they make us stronger together.

Commonwealth day has kicked off a new year of this exceptional organisation by bringing together nations from around the globe to achieve similar goals. Together, we can create societies that are fairer, with equal opportunities for all. We can create safer communities for the people of the Commonwealth, we can establish sustainable practices for a healthier environment for future generations, and prosperity can be spread among all Commonwealth nations to ensure a positive and successful future.

This is another year for making progress in areas that need improvement and for sustaining good practices that are performing well. On Monday, we celebrated: now, it is time to get to work and to continue making the members of the Commonwealth as strong and influential as possible. I wish a happy Commonwealth day to all.

13:44

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I apologise to you and to Mr McMillan for my late arrival. I got the starting time of the debate wrong, as there have been so many changes to business recently.

I congratulate Stuart McMillan on securing today’s debate on Commonwealth day. The contemporary Commonwealth is a unique organisation that enriches our lives, as we have heard from other members. As they have pointed out, the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 sovereign states that includes some of the world’s largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries. It is unique because, unlike most unions of nations, no one Government in the Commonwealth exercises power over the others.

The Commonwealth games is one of the most widely-known facets of the organisation, with nations and territories from all over the Commonwealth, no matter how small, able to compete as equals. With the 2018 games due to start next month on the Gold Coast, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Glasgow games in 2014, at which team Scotland came fourth with a fantastic 19 gold medals.

There is a serious point to be made beyond that simple boast. The lasting legacy of the 2014 games can be seen all over Scotland. We know about the regeneration of Glasgow's east end but, in areas such as Dumfries and Galloway, legacy funding has been used to enhance many different projects, such as a shared-use path between the town of Dalbeattie and the 7stanes mountain bike centre, as well as allowing Maxwelltown high school in Dumfries to purchase new gym equipment.

The motion rightly welcomes this year's theme of "Towards a Common Future", which looks to explore how the Commonwealth, as an entity, can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all of its 2.4 billion citizens through sub-themes of sustainability, safety, prosperity and fairness. The theme is already present in the work of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, which is a great example of the bonds that exist between Commonwealth nations. Across Scotland, the partnership celebrates more than 1,000 civic links between all 73 Holyrood constituencies and Malawi.

Since 2009, Lockerbie academy in Dumfries and Galloway has developed a partnership with Thawale primary school in Malawi. The main aims of the partnership are to develop and sustain the link between the two schools, which is equity-based, educational and mutually beneficial. The partnership touches on all parts of the curriculum, from teaching African drumming and music to looking at human rights in modern studies and learning about David Livingstone in history. The project engages pupils, staff and parents in the wider community in partnership, and it encourages pupils in both schools to be responsible citizens in their local community and to understand that they are citizens of the wider world community.

Examples such as the one in Lockerbie show why the Commonwealth continues to resonate with so many people in Scotland today, and they are why the tone of this afternoon's debate has been celebratory, as it should be. However, having spoken about the Commonwealth, what it is and how it enriches our culture in Scotland, I want to quickly explore what the Commonwealth is not, which is empire 2.0. It is important not to confuse the modern Commonwealth that we celebrate with a nostalgic yearning for empire. The

Commonwealth is a collection of independent nations that have their own interests.

Earlier this year, the UK Government reached out to secure agricultural quotas at the World Trade Organization post-Brexit, and a number of Commonwealth members were first in the line to challenge those. At the Commonwealth leaders summit in London, in April, they will discuss trade, but some advance reports say that the trade adviser has said that they are expected to express support for a strong, rules-based multilateral trading system to explore ways to support implementation of the WTO's trade facilitation agreement—which, for those who do not know about it, enhances support for small countries to build trading capacity and better participate in trade. It will also launch a Commonwealth trade review that focuses on new technologies such as digital trade and fintech as well as on further reducing trade costs.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that the Commonwealth is powering ahead with its own agenda, notwithstanding the fantastic partnerships that we have here. It is a modern union of equals, and long may that continue.

13:49

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): Can I check how long you wish me to speak for, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You can speak for seven minutes or until 2 o'clock, when the next part of business calls, but do not feel obliged to speak until then.

Dr Allan: I will not feel obliged.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a reflection on your speaking capabilities, by the way.

Dr Allan: It is very useful guidance. Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Like everyone else, I welcome this debate to recognise Commonwealth day and thank members for their many contributions. I also thank Stuart McMillan and the Scotland branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for lodging the motion.

As many members have noted, Commonwealth day was marked on Monday, with celebrations taking place in Commonwealth nations across the globe. The First Minister represented Scotland at the Commonwealth day service at Westminster Abbey, and I participated in a big lunch event arranged by the Scotland Malawi Partnership here in Edinburgh. In that respect, it is important to say that Mr McMillan and Ms McAlpine mentioned

some of Scotland's particular Commonwealth links with Malawi. A simultaneous lunch was held in Lilongwe, in Malawi, and we were delighted to be able to connect with our Malawian partners by videolink and to share food, stories and excellent performances by the Zathu band Girl Effect.

To explain, Zathu is a cultural movement, born in Malawi, which uses the power of music and storytelling to tackle topics that are challenging for young people, such as the gender gap, self-expression and sexual health. That focus on gender and youth will be echoed in many of the events leading up to the Commonwealth heads of Government meeting in London, in April, in which 53 independent countries participate. As Ms McAlpine said, all 53 of them value the independence that they have.

I am pleased to say that Scotland will be represented in much of that activity. As it is the year of young people, I am delighted that Young Scot and the Scottish Youth Parliament will represent Scotland at the Commonwealth young people's forum in April. Scotland is the first country in the world to dedicate a full year to celebrating young people, giving them a stronger voice on issues that affect their lives and shining a light on their achievements. This year is not just a year of activity and events but provides us with a real opportunity to change the way that all generations work and live together. What happens locally is just as important as what happens nationally or internationally, and we want to empower our young people to become responsible global citizens who can make a real difference in the world.

Representatives from the Scottish Government will attend the Commonwealth women's forum, where panel discussions will cover issues of gender equality and ending violence against women and girls—a theme that was mentioned by Margaret Mitchell and Elaine Smith, among others. The Scottish Government is committed to preventing and, ultimately, eradicating such violence, and our work to tackle gender-based violence is underpinned by the equally safe strategy. A delivery plan for equally safe was published in November last year that sets out a co-ordinated and action-focused approach to tackling violence against women and girls. It includes 118 actions that we intend to take between now and 2021 to ensure that everyone is playing their part to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence.

We are clear, heading into those forum discussions, that equality and human rights underpin Scotland's values, and other countries' delegations that visit Scotland following the heads of Government meeting will be left in no doubt as to our position on those matters. We are

committed to continuing such engagement in a positive and constructive way, recognising that every country is at a different stage in its journey towards the full realisation of international human rights standards. Scotland stands ready to play its part in assisting others when we have knowledge and good practice to share.

The debate has been a chance to mention some of Scotland's many family connections with the Commonwealth and our many historical connections including links to our respective constituencies—themes that were explored by Tom Arthur and many others.

Looking to the future, the Scottish Government stands ready to support initiatives such as Birmingham's hosting of the 2022 Commonwealth games, which was recently announced. Our having hosted the fantastically successful games in Glasgow in 2014 allows us to share our experience and foster stronger links between the two cities.

As Tavish Scott discussed, we should take the opportunity of Commonwealth day to reflect on the relevance of the Commonwealth to the future. As he said, that relevance certainly exists and is represented in this Parliament's commitment to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which will continue to be a very useful way of fostering links in the future.

Elaine Smith: I repeat the point that it is becoming more difficult to participate. Does the minister agree that ways ought to be found to ensure that we can participate?

Dr Allan: I am with the Deputy Presiding Officer in that respect. Sympathetic as I am, I think that all parties should probably take up such issues with their representatives on the Parliamentary Bureau and pursue them through that route. We should do everything that we can to encourage people to participate in the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I believe that Scotland shares many of the ambitions and values that are held by the Commonwealth nations around the world. We are committed to active participation in that global network and in the development of our common future. The Scottish Government welcomes the important work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and, in particular, the Scotland branch. Therefore, I am happy both to celebrate Commonwealth day and to support the motion.

13:56

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Portfolio Questions

Health and Sport

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is portfolio questions on health and sport. It would be good to get as many people in as possible, so please bear that in mind.

NHS Grampian (Waiting Times)

1. **Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support NHS Grampian and reduce the board's waiting times. (S50-01887)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): NHS Grampian is using the £4.9 million from the £50 million that we made available to boards in the current financial year to address long waits across the whole patient pathway, in specialties including orthopaedics and ophthalmology.

NHS Grampian has received £470,000 of the £4.85 million cancer funding that has been released in 2017-18. That funding has been provided to ensure that cancer patients continue to be prioritised and treated within the expected waiting times, wherever that is clinically possible. That revenue is being targeted to increase scope and diagnostic and imaging capacity.

Peter Chapman: For the past nine months, NHS Grampian has had the worst waiting times in Scotland. In that time, more than 18,000 people have waited more than 18 weeks for treatment. Core revenue expenditure for NHS Grampian is the second lowest in Scotland, with spend per head of only £1,671. Does the cabinet secretary admit that that is unacceptable, and will she apologise to the people of Grampian?

Shona Robison: In 2018-19, NHS Grampian's resource budget will be £920.6 million. That is an uplift of 2.1 per cent on the budget for 2017-18, which is the highest uplift for any territorial national health service board.

The situation would be worse if we had applied the Tory tax plans, which would have taken £49.5 million out of Grampian's resource budget. It really does not hold up for Maurice Corry to come here complaining about NHS Grampian's resource budget when he would have taken almost £50 million out of it, had his plans gone ahead.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): As the cabinet secretary will be aware, the waiting times affect not only people in the NHS Grampian

region, but people who are covered by the island health boards, including people in Orkney.

Can the cabinet secretary update Parliament on what discussions she or her officials have had with NHS Orkney about the additional investment that is going into NHS Grampian and how it meets the needs of island patients from Orkney and Shetland?

Shona Robison: Liam McArthur will be aware that the involvement of NHS Orkney and NHS Shetland in the discussions is very important. As he knows very well, many of his constituents rely on the services of NHS Grampian for procedures that cannot be carried out on the islands. NHS Orkney and NHS Shetland will have received their share of the £50 million waiting times initiative funding, as NHS Grampian has.

I expect—I know that this is happening very much in the north of Scotland—boards to work together and maximise collaboration in order to ensure that they can shorten the patient journey and share resources. I also expect that where there are, for example, shortages of particular specialist staff, they will look for north-wide solutions in trying to recruit them. That work has been led very well by Malcolm Wright. I am very happy to write to Liam McArthur with more detail, if he would find that helpful.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Although I welcome the extra cash for NHS Grampian, I draw the cabinet secretary's attention to the growing frustration that is being expressed by the campaign group called Affa Sair on the long waiting times for pain clinics, particularly in Moray, given that people do not want to have to travel to Aberdeen all the time for treatment. Can she investigate that matter and perhaps provide an update to me and Affa Sair directly? One member of the campaign group, Brenda Carnegie, was quoted in *The Press and Journal* this week—

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

Richard Lochhead: One member of the group was quoted as saying that she had waited more than two years for injections that she should get every six months. Could the cabinet secretary investigate that issue as well, please?

Shona Robison: I will be happy to do that and to get back to the member. Nationally, almost three quarters of patients who had been referred to a pain clinic were seen within the 18-week standard, which is a significant increase on the previous quarter. However, there was, of course, too much local variation across boards, which we want to eradicate. I can assure Richard Lochhead that the Government is very committed to ensuring that all patients, no matter where they live, have

swift access to the full range of services that they need.

I am aware that waiting times in NHS Grampian are longer than we expect. In the past year, it has had significant staff absences that have affected waiting times. Recent recruitment has been successful, which has enabled additional clinics to be offered, but I will be happy to look into Richard Lochhead's query about pain clinics in Moray and get back to him.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have a supplementary question from Lewis Macdonald.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Early diagnosis can make the difference between successful and unsuccessful treatment of diseases such as cancer. Given the importance of that and of early investigation—on which, I know, the cabinet secretary will agree with Cancer Research UK—will the cabinet secretary tell us what specific steps she will take to reduce waiting times for diagnosis and investigation for patients with such diseases in Grampian?

Shona Robison: Lewis Macdonald will be aware of the work that is being done by the cancer strategy on improving cancer services across Scotland. As I said in my initial answer, NHS Grampian has received £470,000 of the £4.85 million cancer funding that was released last year. The focus of that money has very much been on increasing scope and diagnostic and imaging capacity, which will continue to be our focus.

We know that once a person is diagnosed, their journey to treatment is very short, so it is the diagnostic pathway that we need to shorten. Lewis Macdonald might be aware that I chair a national group of the very best experts in the field, who are looking at best practice. There is still variation in the diagnostic pathway, so we are seeking to ensure that we do everything possible to shorten it. I will be happy to keep the member apprised of any details.

Neonatal Expenses Fund

2. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when details of the fund to support parents of premature babies in hospitals will be announced. (S5O-01888)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): We are pleased to announce that the neonatal expenses fund will go live on 1 April, and will be available to families of all babies in neonatal care. We have worked with NHS boards and the neonatal charity Bliss to develop a clear and simple scheme that is universally accessible, and we have written to all boards this week to outline the details. I also put on record Mark Griffin's active pursuit of the issue, which is well understood and very welcome.

Mark Griffin: I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer and for the work that has gone into setting up the fund. I am delighted to say that it will start on my daughter Rosa's first birthday. I ask the cabinet secretary what levels of support the fund will provide each day, and whether there will be daily limits. The cabinet secretary will be aware that babies will be born before 1 April who will still be in hospital after that date. Will she give an assurance that parents of those babies will be able to access the fund? How will use of the fund be tracked throughout the financial year, and what provisions are in place should the fund become exhausted within that year?

Shona Robison: I cannot think of anything more appropriate than the fund being launched on baby Rosa's birthday.

The fund will support parents with the costs of travel, parking and meals. I can tell Mark Griffin that we will make it very easy for people to claim. A leaflet and a copy of the claim form will be given to a family when their baby is admitted to a neonatal unit. In addition, posters will advertise the scheme to ensure that people are aware of it.

It is also important that we review and monitor the scheme to see whether adjustments are required, so we will review it after six months and at the end of the first year in order to evaluate the provision. We can consider whether any changes to the scheme are necessary and we will, of course, want to hear from parents who use it.

On babies who are born prior to 1 April, I will write to Mark Griffin with that information, because I want to give accurate information. I will, going forward, be happy to keep the member informed of the details, given his active interest.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): What engagement has the Scottish Government had with the UK Government regarding the extension of maternity leave and statutory maternity pay for parents of premature or sick babies? I remind Parliament that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the cabinet secretary.

Shona Robison: Fulton MacGregor raises an important point about additional support that families in such situations would no doubt welcome. I am aware that in September last year, at the request of Margot James—the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy—the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service published new guidance for employers to help them to support staff who have given birth to premature or very sick babies. I certainly welcome that move to provide information to parents on their rights and to employers on how best to support parents, and I

hope that it will have positive results for parents. The Scottish Government supports the proposal, which I believe has also been suggested by the neonatal charity, Bliss. We will work with colleagues who have responsibility for childcare and the early years and for social security to ensure that we keep pressure on the United Kingdom Government to do its bit.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I start by paying tribute to Mark Griffin for helping to secure the £1.5 million fund for parents of premature babies.

Alongside the fund, the health secretary announced in December that she was working with health boards to ensure sufficient and free accommodation for all parents whose premature babies are in hospital. Can she update Parliament on the progress that has been made on that front?

Shona Robison: All boards have some provision for accommodation where there is a need for a family to stay. Four out of the 15 units currently offer accommodation for parents in their unit, and 11 others offer accommodation elsewhere in the hospital. We continue to work with boards to ensure that there is sufficient free-of-charge accommodation available to all parents who need it. Progress is being made, but there is still progress to be made.

Pollution

3. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis the health secretary has made of the potential implications for Scotland of the findings in the recent annual report of the Chief Medical Officer for England, which addressed the impact on public health of pollution. (S5O-01889)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): We welcome the broad-ranging and thorough report from the chief medical officer for England. Work by the Scottish Government, our partners and stakeholders to deliver environmental protection and improvement is supported by Scotland-specific advice from the chief medical officer for Scotland and from Health Protection Scotland. Many of the issues that are identified in the report have relevance for Scotland, and Health Protection Scotland will consider the findings in detail to add to the evidence base that is directing the work that is taking place—for example, through cleaner air for Scotland—to reduce the burden of disease from pollution in this country.

Mark Ruskell: One of the main findings of the report is that we simply do not know the combined effects of different forms of pollutants such as noise, light and air and the impact that those can have on health inequalities. Such issues greatly concern my constituents who live in the shadow of

the Mossmorran plant in Fife. Will the minister support calls for a long-term health study of the combination effects of those different forms of pollutants around the Mossmorran site?

Aileen Campbell: We recognise that the chief medical officer for England's report was wide ranging and that it identified a number of the issues that Mark Ruskell has mentioned, including noise, light and air pollution. Work is currently being carried out on a number of those issues in Scotland, and I will be happy to take into account any concerns that his constituents may have. I am also happy to meet Mark Ruskell if that would help and if he wants to elaborate further on some of the specific concerns that his constituents have. He raised the three issues of noise, light and air pollution. Work is taking place across all those issues, and we will continue to make improvements where we need to.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The minister will be well aware that air pollution from particulate matter is responsible for 2,000 early deaths in Scotland each year and that exposure to nitrogen dioxide in PM_{2.5} causes 2,500 premature deaths each year according to the Royal College of Physicians. Does the minister share my view that those who are least responsible for air pollution are the worst affected and that they are the most vulnerable in our society? Does he also share my view that the action that is required includes the urgent roll-out of low-emission zones, additional funding for active travel and bus regulation?

Aileen Campbell: As David Stewart knows, the Government is taking a number of actions on a range of the issues that he outlines. We are, as a country, meeting both domestic and European air quality targets across much of Scotland, but we understand and recognise that there are hotspots of poorer air quality in a number of urban areas. The member is right to identify the inequality that is linked to some of the people who are most impacted by that.

We have set more stringent air quality targets than the rest of the UK. Scotland is the first country in Europe to legislate for particulate matter—a pollutant that is of special concern for human health. We also have money and resources for the efforts that we want to make, not least for the low-emission zones that the cabinet secretary announced fairly recently.

We are making progress in a number of areas in recognition of the fact that the issue has an impact on people's quality of life, and we need to endeavour, across portfolios, to alleviate that impact as best we can.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask members to be a bit more succinct with their questions and

ministers to be a bit more succinct with their answers, so that more members can get in with supplementary questions.

Healthier, Wealthier Children

4. **Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made rolling out the healthier, wealthier children approach to income maximisation across Scotland. (S5O-01890)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government remains committed to embedding across all the national health service boards the key principles of the healthier, wealthier children's approach of health and advice services joining up to ensure that pregnant women and families have access to financial advice when they need it. To progress that, we asked NHS Health Scotland to carry out a scoping exercise—which ran between March and October last year—with all NHS boards to establish their current position on the embedding of health and advice service referral pathways.

The scoping exercise showed that, although a number of boards have formalised referral pathways, some are at an earlier stage in their journey. NHS Health Scotland has established a short-life sub-group of Scotland's health promotion managers group to make recommendations to the Scottish Government on the next steps to ensure that all boards establish pathways. We expect to receive those recommendations in April, and we will consider them carefully to inform our next steps.

Alison Johnstone: Our research suggests that, based on the success of the healthier, wealthier children programme in 2012, rolling out the programme across Scotland would lead to gains of at least £9.4 million for pregnant women and families in the greatest need. The evidence that we have clearly suggests that the programme helps to improve health and reduce inequalities. The minister has made the point very clearly that—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can you reach the question, please, Ms Johnstone?

Alison Johnstone: The minister has made the point very clearly that referral pathways are key. Will the minister be specific about what additional resourcing will be provided to deliver those pledges? How much cash will the Government use to fund the roll-out?

Aileen Campbell: The analysis that Alison Johnstone outlines shows the compelling need to make sure that this can happen. That is why it is important to understand the situation across the country. The child poverty delivery plan will be essential in progressing the healthier, wealthier

children programme, as it will provide resources to progress that important programme. I am not in a position to outline the exact funding that will be provided, but we will endeavour to keep the member up to date. She is right to articulate that, by spending a little, we can potentially save many people and many families a lot and help to reduce inequalities.

Health Inequalities

5. **Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle health inequalities, and what role having access to arts and culture can play in this. (S5O-01891)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): One of the biggest challenges that we face is in reducing health inequalities, which are a symptom of wider social inequalities. That is why we are focusing on the underlying causes that drive health inequalities. We are focusing on ending poverty, ensuring fair wages, supporting families and improving our physical and social environments.

The Scottish Government is working in collaboration with individuals, communities and organisations across Scotland to develop a culture strategy that will set out a vision and priorities for the future development of culture in Scotland, enabling everyone to have the opportunity to take part in or contribute to cultural life in Scotland.

We know that people who engage with and participate in cultural activities report better health outcomes. We are, therefore, seeking to better embed arts and culture into health and care settings, and many organisations that work in the arts, such as the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival, are recognising the health benefits that they can bring to their audiences.

Rachael Hamilton: Aileen Campbell is correct in saying that the Scottish Government found that participation in culture has significant links with good health and high levels of life satisfaction. In fact, Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, said:

“Starting young, and being encouraged to take part in culture as a child, makes it more likely that the benefits of taking part will be experienced as an adult.”

Does the minister agree that recent decisions concerning the Scottish Youth Theatre and other services have the potential to damage the nation's health? Does she agree that more needs to be done to increase access, especially for young people, to arts and culture throughout Scotland to improve health outcomes?

Aileen Campbell: I concur with the sentiment expressed by the cabinet secretary that, if we

enable young people to participate in the arts and culture, they are more likely to be able to enjoy them in later life. The same goes, perhaps, for sport. That is why we have endeavoured to offset the cuts from the UK national lottery, which have threatened many of our cultural and sporting organisations that enable young people to participate in the arts and culture. I recognise, too, the on-going and topical issue of the Scottish Youth Theatre. I understand that discussions on that decision are continuing, so that that much-loved and well-respected organisation will have some sort of sustainable future.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Given that the minister seems aware that health inequalities, including inequalities in mental health, are often a symptom of poverty, will she commit the Government to addressing the shortfall in funding for other community projects that give more deprived communities an opportunity to engage in the arts and cultural activities?

Aileen Campbell: Again, I imagine that my colleague Fiona Hyslop would have more to say about that, and I will certainly direct the request for the information that Elaine Smith seeks to the culture department.

As I said in my response to Rachael Hamilton, in order to protect some of our cultural organisations, we have offset the cuts experienced from the UK national lottery, which have threatened many of the organisations that rely on that revenue source—that is the same story that we experienced in sport. It was important that the Scottish Government stepped in to offset those reductions.

As I said in my original answer, we want to reduce and reverse inequality, and we want to make sure that many young people get the opportunity to participate in arts and culture. That is why it is important that we continue to press the national lottery for an adequate strategy to reduce the fall in revenues.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

6. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how the NHS monitors children diagnosed with foetal alcohol syndrome. (S5O-01892)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government funds NHS Scotland to provide a range of services to promote and protect the health of children. Hospital, general practice and nursing services provide on-going healthcare to children diagnosed with long-term medical conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome. In July 2017, we launched the foetal alcohol spectrum disorder care pathway, which is an e-learning resource for health

professionals that aims to help with the diagnosis of the condition and to support the families and carers of affected children.

Rona Mackay: In Scotland, we have benefited from the support needs system, which allows the recording of children with diverse types of health needs, including those resulting from foetal alcohol syndrome. That system is currently being reviewed. Does the minister agree that it is important to have an interconnected system throughout Scotland? Will the review consider our having a single data recording system instead of one that is fragmented into health board areas?

Aileen Campbell: Rona Mackay is absolutely right to point to the fact that we need consistency in how we diagnose and record the incidence of foetal alcohol syndrome. The health boards record diagnoses of conditions on their local information systems, and the FASD care pathway, which we launched last July, provides all health professionals with the necessary information to help with the diagnostic and support process. There is also a multidisciplinary professional Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network group looking specifically at the assessment and diagnosis of foetal alcohol syndrome. That group is due to report by the end of this year, and we will certainly ensure that the points and issues raised by Rona Mackay on the consistency of diagnosis are part of that work.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Brian Whittle has a quick supplementary question.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I ask this question on behalf of a constituent who wants to know, from a social care intervention and child protection perspective, what the process is following the birth of children with foetal alcohol syndrome and those experiencing the effects of opiates.

Aileen Campbell: The prevalence of foetal alcohol syndrome is complex and there is no single treatment for foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which varies in its presentation and severity although it is recognised as a lifelong condition.

There is evidence that early intervention support to enhance learning and manage self-regulation and behaviour can be beneficial. That involves early enrolment with relevant educational resources and other agencies such as social and psychological services. Enhanced awareness and recognition of FASD and adopting the getting it right for every child approach to support families can optimise the long-term management of FASD. If the member would like to write to me about the specifics of his constituent, I would be happy to take the matter further.

Clinical Review of Cancer Access Standards

7. Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making with the clinical review of cancer waiting times, and when the results will be published. (S5O-01893)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The clinical review of cancer access standards in Scotland provides an excellent opportunity to examine how information on cancer waiting times could be best used to modify and enhance the patient experience. It will determine whether any amendments or modifications are required to ensure that the cancer waiting times standards best meet the needs of patients and the national health service for the future.

A wide range of views from stakeholders, including patients, the public, primary and secondary care clinicians, data staff and third sector organisations have been collated to help to formulate the review recommendations. They are being finalised with a view to publication in the spring of this year.

Maurice Corry: Is the cabinet secretary able to describe what actions are being considered as part of the clinical review of cancer waiting times targets to minimise inequalities of service across the health boards and to ensure that those missing the target are given the support needed to improve performance? Will the review look at the areas that have been suggested by Cancer Research UK?

Shona Robison: The review is first about making sure that our targets are fit for purpose and then looking at what adjustments, if any, need to be made. There is broad clinical agreement that the existing 62-day and 31-day standards have been crucial in driving up performance and patient care, although there is still some improvement to be made.

It is also about looking at things such as pathway complexity and making sure that that is understood. For some cancers, that pathway is more complex and the targets need to be appropriate in those circumstances. Whether some of those cancer types should be within the targets should be considered because, as the member will be aware, not all are.

I do not want to prejudge what the recommendations will be, but the right people are looking at this and I am confident that they will help us to make the improvements, whatever they are, that will ensure that our cancer services are fit for purpose for the future.

Ambulance Waiting Times

8. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce ambulance waiting times. (S5O-01894)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Ambulance Service is undertaking a number of measures to look at ways in which it can improve response times to calls from patients and healthcare professionals who request an ambulance. It is also looking to improve pathways for patients to ensure that they receive the most appropriate clinical response to meet their needs. The service is committed to ensuring that it continues to deliver a high-quality level of emergency healthcare to the people of Scotland, and the Scottish Government continues to support the service as it takes forwards that work.

Jackie Baillie: My constituent Elizabeth Clayton is 100 years old, registered blind, and lives in Renton, which is minutes away from the Vale of Leven hospital. She became ill at 2 pm and her doctor called for an ambulance to take her to the Vale. No ambulance appeared despite phone calls from the family, and at 10 pm that same day, the call was upgraded to a 999 emergency. The ambulance eventually arrived at 1 am, 11 hours after it was first called.

Will the cabinet secretary apologise to Mrs Clayton, who waited for 11 hours in considerable pain? What action will she take to support our dedicated paramedics by increasing the capacity of our ambulance service?

Shona Robison: In such a case, I expect the Scottish Ambulance Service to be investigating. If Jackie Baillie has not already passed the case on to the Scottish Ambulance Service, she should. I also want to see the details and, of course, I would apologise to Mrs Clayton.

I would also want to know the context of when this happened. Jackie Baillie will be aware of some of the challenges that the Scottish Ambulance Service has faced during the winter but, for Mrs Clayton, that is no consolation. I would therefore want to look into the details of that case as soon as possible.

Jackie Baillie will be aware that we have increased the funding to the Scottish Ambulance Service to strengthen the workforce, with the recruitment of a further 224 paramedics this year, which is in line with the commitment to see 1,000 more paramedics recruited by the end of 2021. She will also be aware that, in addition to the response in emergency vehicles, a lot of training of community paramedics goes on. They will be able to see and treat people within their own homes, where that is appropriate. If Jackie Baillie

can furnish me with details of the case, I will make sure that it is fully investigated.

NHS Grampian (Funding)

9. Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of information provided by the Scottish Parliament information centre suggesting that NHS Grampian has been underfunded by £165.6 million since 2008, whether it plans to provide additional funding to meet that long-term shortfall. (S5O-01895)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): I will repeat the response that I provided to Mike Rumbles in this chamber on 24 January. NHS Grampian will receive a resource budget uplift of 2.1 per cent in 2018-19, which is the highest percentage uplift of any territorial board. That includes a £5 million share of additional NHS Scotland resource allocation committee parity funding and takes the board's annual resource budget to £921 million.

Over a seven-year period, the Scottish Government has invested an additional £1.2 billion in supporting those boards that are below their NRAC parity levels. In 2018-19, all boards will be within 0.8 per cent of NRAC parity, and that will be the first time that that has been the case.

Mike Rumbles: The minister will be aware of the shocking report that was published yesterday, which highlighted that more than a quarter of patients who suffer chronic pain disorders have been forced to wait longer than 18 weeks for treatment. Once again, NHS Grampian has the worst results for Scotland, with 542 people waiting desperately as the deadline for treatment has come and gone. Does the minister now agree that 10 years of underfunding have left NHS Grampian unable to deliver the same level service as is received by patients in the rest of Scotland? Just repeating an answer from January does not help.

Shona Robison: The answer from January is factually correct. I repeated it because facts matter. NHS Grampian has received the highest percentage uplift of any territorial board and it is within 0.8 per cent of NRAC parity.

Earlier, I said that the chronic pain waiting times had significantly improved from last quarter to this quarter, but there was local variation. That local variation is for those both above and below NRAC parity. If we look at NHS Ayrshire and Arran, for example, we see that it has work to do as well. It is not correct to link the variation to the issue of NRAC parity.

What NHS Grampian needs to do, and is doing, is recruit the staff that it needs to provide the clinics. If Mike Rumbles had listened to my earlier answer he would have heard me say that NHS

Grampian has had difficulties with recruiting people to staff the clinics. It has been on a recruitment campaign and has had some success with that, but it is not a money issue—it is about the ability to recruit staff. Perhaps if Mike Rumbles met people from NHS Grampian more often, he might get the detail that he requires.

Health Inequalities

10. Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the health secretary has had with the housing minister regarding action that can be taken to mitigate the cost of health inequalities brought about by poor or unsuitable housing. (S5O-01896)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Ministers and officials have discussions on a wide range of issues aimed at tackling health and social inequality. I have met the Minister for Local Government and Housing regarding ways that we can collaboratively create a fairer and healthier Scotland.

For instance, the new fuel poverty strategy and the warm homes bill will contribute to a number of Government objectives and help to improve outcomes across Scotland. The Government's overarching ambition is to see a Scotland where everyone lives in a warm home, has sufficient income for healthy living, has access to affordable, low carbon energy, and has the skills to make appropriate use of energy.

Andy Wightman: Year-on-year increases in housing costs mean that, for many people, housing affordability remains a key driver of inequalities, particularly in areas where there is a chronic shortage of affordable housing. We know that the national health service would be able to achieve around £60 million a year in preventative savings if investments were made in affordable housing, but does the minister agree that in comparison with England and Wales we have inadequate data on the effectiveness of investment in housing to improve health, and does she also agree that housing is a key health intervention for many people?

Aileen Campbell: Absolutely. The reason why I continue to work with my colleague Kevin Stewart is the real impact that good-quality housing has on health outcomes and reducing health and social inequalities. That is why the Government has invested considerably in housing. Over the previous parliamentary session, more than 33,000 affordable homes were delivered, of which more than 22,000 were for social rent. The ambitions continue, with more money being put in to ensure that we achieve our desire to reach 50,000 affordable homes over the lifetime of the current session of Parliament, through a 76 per cent increase on our previous five-year investment. The

Government gives incredible importance to housing, because of the allied health benefits and associated ways in which it can help us to tackle inequality. I am happy to engage with the member further, but I know that Kevin Stewart, the Government and I remain committed to ensuring that we can create a healthier and fairer Scotland by continuing to meet the ambitious targets that we have set and that are being delivered on.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Meetings)

11. Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport last met the chief executive of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and what issues were discussed. (S5O-01897)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Ministers and Government officials meet regularly with representatives of all boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, to discuss matters of importance to local people.

Jackson Carlaw: With new local plans, local authorities very often resolve housing demands with the provision of major new estates. Although councils can provide for future education needs, community healthcare partnerships have to try to anticipate requirements for future health provision such as general practitioner services. Is the cabinet secretary satisfied that the process underpinning that is sufficiently robust and well resourced, particularly where a major new estate is created and the existing GP lists are at full capacity, as is currently the case in a particular example in my Eastwood constituency?

Shona Robison: The member makes an important point. We now have health and care partnerships working across health and social care and bringing in a housing element to those discussions. There is a need to ensure that, in planning for new house building, the local services that the residents will require, including health services and primary care services, are taken into account, and we expect our partners to do that. If we can do more in that space to ensure that that is done early enough, we will do so. As the member will appreciate, expanding any health service takes time, and there can sometimes be a mismatch between the planning process and the house building process. I am happy to communicate further with Jackson Carlaw on that matter, if he would find that helpful.

Cowdenbeath Football Club

12. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what assistance it can provide to Cowdenbeath Football Club with its club 135 campaign, honour the past,

ensure a future, which aims to secure the future of the club. (S5O-01898)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): I am aware of the good work that is being carried out in support of Cowdenbeath's club 135 campaign. I know that the club has strong and deep roots in the town that date back more than 135 years. Like many football clubs at all levels in Scotland, Cowdenbeath is an important part of the local community, and I am encouraged by the spirit shown by the club, supporters and the wider community to raise £135,000 to help to build a sustainable future. I have instructed my officials to contact the club directly to discuss the campaign in more detail.

Claire Baker: I welcome the minister's response. As the minister recognises, the club is 137 years old and is very important to the local community. However, the club no longer has the large mining community that it used to have for its support, and the rent from the weekly market and the stock cars no longer comes to the club, as it lost its ownership of Central Park. An emergency general meeting and a public meeting had to be cancelled recently because of snow, but the club is clearly in a mode of fighting for survival. I welcome the minister's commitment that officials will contact the club. Will she join me in calling for locals and football lovers all over the world to help save the club?

Aileen Campbell: I am happy to lend my name to that call for people to get behind the club's campaign. Fans are the lifeblood of Scottish football. Certainly, if anyone can make a difference to the club, it will be the supporters. I am happy to meet the member on the back of my officials' meeting with Cowdenbeath Football Club and to do what we can to raise awareness of the supporters' efforts.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes general questions. As we have half a minute before the next item of business, I would like to say something about the slot.

When we are handling portfolio questions, the Presiding Officers try hard to strike a balance in terms of supplementary questions. I have seen a few grumpy faces around the chamber this afternoon, but there has to be respect for members who have submitted questions and who have taken time with their supplementary questions. That must be borne in mind. It must also be borne in mind that, when people take far too long to ask questions, it means that we cannot take the questions of some of their colleagues. I ask ministers to reflect on that with regard to their answers, too.

Procurement

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-10962, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on procurement.

14:41

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The public sector spends more than £11 billion a year procuring goods and services—billions on construction projects. I am sure that we can all agree that that is money that should support the delivery of public services, providing decent jobs and helping to grow the economy.

It is hardly controversial to say that public money should be spent for public good. However, in this area, I believe that we are being failed by the Scottish National Party. Instead of the economy growing, Scotland is flirting with a recession. Productivity is down, industry after industry reports massive skills shortages, and growth is all but stagnant. Instead of supporting the delivery of public services, the SNP outsources to companies such as Carillion, which has contracts worth at least £630 million with public sector agencies in Scotland.

There are companies that have engaged in the blacklisting of trade unionists and companies that have engaged in poor employment practices. It is simply not good enough for the Scottish Government to say that it is in favour of public services and workers' rights when its actions undermine them.

Promises that were made during the passage of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 have yet to be kept. Guidance that was published by the Scottish Government to support the act is welcome, but clearly there is little monitoring of implementation. The first monitoring reports for 2017-18 are due soon, but the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution will not be publishing a report until the end of 2018-19. Why do we need to wait so long?

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): Jackie Baillie made the point that it is important that the actions that we take reflect the words that we use. Does she want to reflect on the massive extent of the outsourcing that was undertaken by the Blair Government, and also on the complete lack of action that was taken on the issue of blacklisting by Labour Governments from 1997 to 2010?

Jackie Baillie: Oh dear; I would hope that the SNP would raise its game. This is about what we do with public money in Scotland. I invite Keith Brown to think and act in accordance with what he

says that he believes in, because we would support him if he were actually to engage in fair work practices.

I well remember the debates during the passage of the 2014 act. Five times, the SNP voted against the inclusion in the bill of the living wage—apparently because the European Union would not allow that. A year later, after a campaign by trade unions and the Labour Party, the SNP provided the living wage to care staff, which was welcome. At the time, John Swinney told local authorities that that was still against EU procurement rules but that we would be doing it anyway. It is amazing what one can do when one has the political will. It is a shame that the SNP does not want to take that approach in all public sector contracts, because, instead of investing in decent, well-paid jobs, the SNP is helping to line the pockets of directors and shareholders—directors of failing companies whose eye-watering bonuses and pensions are protected while former Carillion employees have the rug pulled out from under them.

I want to speak about two Unite workers on Carillion Network Rail contracts, the first of whom works on the extension to Waverley station. He said:

“The impact of me being on a zero hours contract is unacceptable. My partner and I have two young children under the age of 10. Since the collapse of Carillion I have been going without work for days and weeks at a time.

There is a clause in my contract that says that I cannot take other work with another company ... I have been missing wages ... we struggle to make ends meet. The worst came recently when, having been offered no work whatsoever for two weeks, I took the hard decision to apply for universal credit.

I am fit and able to work, however I am now having to resort to claiming state benefits in order to keep a roof over my family's head and put some food on the table.

On top of all of this, when I do work, I am having money taken off my wages due to an umbrella company's greed. This is public money for a public service, why are umbrella companies who add nothing of any value to the project I am employed on profiting from the tax payers money? Something needs to change and change very soon.”

Rail worker two is employed on the Shotts-Cleland electrification project. This is what he said:

“I wait for a text every Friday to say if I will be working the following week. If I go away with my family there's a real chance that my place at work will be taken by another worker and I'll have no work. If I take a day off I might be replaced, if I call in sick I might be replaced, if I don't work every shift I'm offered, no matter how short noticed, I might be replaced.

I pay an umbrella company up to £100 a week to get my own wages. I have no holiday pay, no sick pay. I can't work anywhere else if there's no work for a few weeks. I also pay both employers and employees NI contributions.

Furthermore, I can't plan a day out at the weekends in case I'm offered work. I'm paid the national minimum wage

for a safety critical job due to the money the umbrella companies take.”

That is a national disgrace. We desperately need an urgent review of procurement to end the exploitation of workers.

Those are not a couple of isolated incidents. The Aberdeen western peripheral route has been plagued by allegations of bullying and harassment, health and safety staff have been undermined, agency worker regulations have been ignored, and the project uses subcontractors who have used gangmasters.

Another example are the agency workers who are hired by the Scottish Government through a temp agency. Agency workers are supposed to be short term and used to allow the Government a bit of flexibility. Some members may recall that, about three years ago, the Scottish Government was—rightly—embarrassed by the *Daily Record* into paying agency workers the same as its permanent employees. All sorts of promises were made then by the SNP about the use of agency workers. Those promises ring hollow today.

One of those agency workers has been in touch with me. She has been employed at Disclosure Scotland as an agency worker for five years. That is not about short-term flexibility; it is about avoiding making her a permanent member of staff. Shame on the Scottish Government for doing that. That agency worker does not get sick pay or holiday pay, and she has no job security. Many of her colleagues are being moved from night shift to day shift. If that happens to permanent employees, they continue to receive their shift allowance, but an agency worker for the Scottish Government gets nothing. Some of the agency staff are being let go because of a downturn in work. There is no redundancy payment; there is not even a goodbye.

I remind members that that agency worker has worked continually for the Scottish Government for five years in a temporary position. I will give members an idea of the scale of the situation. Last year, 80 workers were on one back shift in her work. Aside from the four team leaders, two were civil servants on permanent contracts—the rest were agency workers. The agency worker tells me that those who are being let go are told that they should not worry because they can get work at the new social security agency down at Atlantic Quay, with the Scottish Government. Apparently, the agency is hiring a lot of agency staff. Is that what we should expect of the new flagship Scottish Government agency? Really—temporary staff? The Scottish Government could make them permanent.

This is the truth about procurement by the Scottish Government: those contracts, which are

signed off in St Andrew’s house, are leading to the exploitation of workers at Shotts. Those decisions, which are taken by the transport minister, are leading to zero-hours contracts at Waverley station. Those decisions, which are taken by the economy secretary, are leading to the use of subcontractors with a history of using gangmasters. Those are the decisions of the Scottish Government, where agency workers on lesser terms and conditions are employed for years instead of permanent staff. That is the SNP supply chain. It is using Scottish taxpayers’ money to support the exploitation of Scottish workers, and that absolutely needs to end right now.

Then, of course, there is the troubled Scottish Futures Trust. We should not let the SNP fool us. Its method of financing construction projects is a variation of the private finance initiative. A report that the Scottish Labour Party commissioned from well-known economists, Margaret and Jim Cuthbert, exposes a range of problems. The current approach is cloaked in secrecy. There is evidence of secondary market sales of debt, which nets the equity investors up to three times the original capital that they put in. It is a bit like someone going to Wonga for a mortgage when they do not have to. We know that private financing now costs more than borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board—in fact, it is double the cost.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Jackie Baillie: I will in one second.

One local authority could apparently get a loan from the Public Works Loan Board for 2 per cent interest, but it was forced by the SFT to use its private lender, with an interest rate of 4 per cent. I am happy to give way, and I invite the member to say whether he considers that to be good value for money.

John Mason: Does the member at least accept that that is better value for money than the PFI projects that Labour supported?

Jackie Baillie: If the member looks at Margaret and Jim Cuthbert’s report, he will see that their analysis suggests that the costs are absolutely the same. I suggest that he looks forward and does something about it, because he should know that the changes that were made to the hub building programme, as a result of the changed classification of public sector projects, mean that there is no cap on profits, no need to meet procurement guidance and a greater role for the private sector. The result of all that is more private ownership, more private control, more private profit and less Government accountability—that is the SNP way of doing procurement.

We need an immediate review of the Scottish Futures Trust. It is not delivering value for money; it is simply delivering bigger profits for the private sector. Instead, Scottish Labour would empower the public sector to deliver contracts in house, because the SNP is not getting value for money.

Let us look at the example of Burntisland Fabrications. At least £3 billion is invested in renewables, but just a tiny proportion of that money stays in Scotland. As the GMB would rightly point out, think about the jobs and investment that our communities would benefit from if more of the supply chain and manufacturing was anchored in Scotland. However, there is no planning and no joining things up. There is no anchoring of the supply chain in Scotland. There is little consideration of small and medium-sized enterprises. As the Federation of Small Businesses has said, there would be a significant boost for Scottish local economies if more procurement money was spent with SMEs—how disappointing it is that we do not do enough of that. We need to get a bigger bang for our buck. We need nothing short of a wholesale review of procurement, which would include construction projects and facilities management projects—the lot. We need to do a lot better.

Scottish Labour believes that everyone who is on a public contract must be on the living wage. We believe that there should be an end to bogus self-employment, which employers use to save on national insurance costs. We believe that there should be no more zero-hours contracts, no more blacklisting, no more insecure work and no more agency workers on poor terms and conditions. There should be no more umbrella companies and no more contracts with tax dodgers. The differences that Labour in government will deliver are investment in SMEs, anchoring the supply chain in Scotland and decent, secure, well-paid jobs as part of all public contracts. That is the difference that a Labour Government will make in Scotland and, indeed, in the United Kingdom. Shame on the SNP for its complacency in allowing Scottish taxpayers' money to be used to exploit Scottish workers.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that the procurement of goods, services and construction projects by the Scottish Government and the wider public sector should provide value for money, ensure that good employment practices are followed, have a supply chain that is anchored in Scotland and provide opportunities for businesses and jobs; regrets that the Scottish Government has failed to achieve these objectives, and believes that an urgent review of procurement, including employment practice and the operation of the Scottish Futures Trust, is required.

14:54

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): As Jackie Baillie has accurately pointed out, more than £11 billion a year is spent on goods, works and services across the public sector in Scotland. That is a substantial figure, and it represents a substantial contribution to our economy. It makes procurement one of our most powerful tools in helping us shape and deliver our ambitions for an inclusive society where the benefits of economic prosperity are shared.

The internationally recognised Scottish model of procurement takes into account a balance involving cost, quality and sustainability. It has four key strategic objectives—improving supplier access to public contracts; embedding sustainability in all that we do; maximising efficiency and collaboration; and delivering savings and benefits—and it has underpinned the significant progress that we have made over the past few years.

Our aim in creating public contracts Scotland in 2008 was for it to develop into a one-stop shop for advertising public contracts in Scotland, something that, not so long ago, was transformational in opening up public spending to the SMEs that Jackie Baillie mentioned. That aim is now a reality. The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced a mandatory requirement, and in the last financial year, public bodies advertised more than 15,000 contracts on public contracts Scotland, 75 per cent of the suppliers that were awarded the contracts had a Scottish address and four fifths of those suppliers were SMEs.

We are also delivering savings to allow money to be reinvested in public services. Collaborative procurement is continuing to deliver more than £150 million per year in savings. In fact, from financial year 2008-09 to date, Scottish Government-led collaborative procurements have generated just short of £1 billion in savings.

However, as members will know, our focus goes beyond savings and efficiency to considering how we can open up opportunities for businesses of all sizes to compete for public sector work.

Jackie Baillie: The cabinet secretary talks about savings, but I cannot help but wonder whether some of those savings have been made on the back of poor terms and conditions for workers. Why does the Government not engage in fair work practices? What about the rail worker in Shotts or the agency worker in Disclosure Scotland?

Derek Mackay: The member raises a key point that I am just about to turn to. I think that savings, efficiency, collaboration, and growing and diversifying our economy are important, and they

are part of—and absolutely not instead of—our procurement strategy. This is all about supporting community benefits, creating jobs for people from priority groups and supporting apprenticeships, work experience and training opportunities for our young people.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Derek Mackay: No.

All those things are features of our procurement policies. We are also using public procurement to drive fair work practices in our public contracts. Statutory guidance that was published in 2015 requires all public bodies to have regard to fair work practices in relevant contracts.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary talks about striking that balance for the future of the economy in Scotland, but my concern—and the concern of Scottish Labour—is about the number of companies that are actually offering their employees the living wage.

Derek Mackay: I have a great deal of sympathy with what Labour wants to achieve, but the problem is that the actions of the Labour Party and Labour Governments have ensured that we do not have powers over employment legislation and other matters, which has impeded progress in this area. That is why when I talk about the important and significant matter—

Claudia Beamish: Will the cabinet secretary take another intervention?

Derek Mackay: I am still answering the member's previous one.

It is important that we recognise the legal constraints that we have to work within. Within those constraints, we have gone to the max on issues such as fair work and the living wage, and that is why it is so important that we keep the powers that we already have in relation to procurement in Scotland and do not allow the Tories to have their power grab and take them away from us.

We have been able to include other features such as the payment of the living wage, dealing with inappropriate use of umbrella companies or zero-hours contracts and recognition of trade union representation or workers' voices more generally.

We are currently working with public bodies to develop best practice guidance that will help them implement the statutory guidance and promote fair work in their procurement decisions. We continue to work closely with the fair work convention to ensure that we support the five dimensions of the fair work framework in all that we are doing.

Blacklisting has been mentioned, and it is important that I highlight our action to tackle that. Scotland has gone further than any other part of the United Kingdom in addressing blacklisting in public contracts, despite the fact that employment law is reserved. Since 2016, it has been the law that Scottish public bodies must exclude businesses from competitions if they have committed an act prohibited under the Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010 until they have taken appropriate remedial action or a period of three years has elapsed. That is the longest period allowed for under EU law.

Neil Findlay: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention on that point?

Derek Mackay: I have two minutes left and have further remarks that I think are important to make.

Recent weeks have seen the liquidation of Carillion, a major contractor with the public sector across the UK. Our first thoughts are naturally with the Carillion employees, who will be concerned for their jobs, and we have taken steps to support the men and women affected. Indeed, I understand that more than 90 per cent of former Carillion employees on the Aberdeen western peripheral route site have been transferred to the other two contractors on the project.

It is no accident that Scotland's public services are not as badly affected by the collapse of Carillion as those elsewhere in these islands. We have not entered into the wholesale use of private firms to deliver public services in the way that the UK Government has. That means that our schools, our prisons and our hospitals are not at risk.

Decisions around how and when to involve the private sector must be taken sensibly and with a view to the long term, unlike those involving the PFI projects, with their excessive private sector profits, that we inherited from previous Labour Administration.

Jackie Baillie: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Derek Mackay: I have 40 seconds left. I am addressing questions that Jackie Baillie raised.

The transparency of decision making in procurement is also key. The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires public bodies with a significant procurement spend to publish a procurement strategy. Bodies that have published a strategy will shortly be required to publish their first annual procurement reports under the act. Those will be used to prepare the Scottish ministers' overview report of procurement activity across Scotland, which we aim to publish by the

end of the coming financial year. We are confident that that report will tell a positive story, because we are proud of the progress that we have made in reforming public procurement over recent years, but of course we will look to see what further action we can take.

The UK Government's shameless attempts to grab the power to regulate public procurement away from this Parliament, under the guise of Brexit, are not only an affront to the principles of devolution, but threaten to undermine everything positive that we have done in the procurement area. In the UK, it is only Scotland that requires, by law, that any decision to award a contract is based not solely on price, but on quality too. In the UK, it is only Scotland that requires, by law, that companies that have engaged in blacklisting are excluded from procurement procedures. In the UK, it is only Scotland that requires, by law, that public bodies consider community benefit requirements in major contracts. That is progress that we have made and it should not be taken away and handed back to Westminster's control.

I move amendment S5M-10962.2, to leave out from "that the Scottish Government" to end and insert:

"the threat posed to the Scottish Government's ability to continue to lead the way in promoting sustainable procurement by the UK Government's attempts to use withdrawal from the EU as an excuse to take devolved powers away from the Parliament, and welcomes the Scottish Government's plans to publish a report of procurement activity in Scotland by the end of financial year 2018-19."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jamie Halcro Johnston to speak to and move amendment S5M-10962.3. You have seven minutes.

15:03

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The importance of procurement policy in how Government operates should not be underestimated. The Scottish Government, not to mention our local councils, is responsible for the stewardship of £11 billion—money that is transferred from the taxpayer to external bodies in expectation of an appropriate return. Because of that, value for money should be uppermost in our thoughts on these issues, and I welcome the inclusion of value for money as a central point in the Labour Party's motion today.

We are, it must be remembered, using public funds and are entrusted to ensure that those public funds are well spent. Procurement problems often end up in the national news, not simply out of journalistic desire to fill column inches, but

because the public—quite rightly—get frustrated when the use of their money does not meet the standards of propriety that they would, and should, expect.

A positive feature in recent years has been the opening up of the procurement system across the UK, but it is by no means perfect. Although advances have been made to make procurement more accessible, it can still be unnecessarily complex and create barriers to the greater involvement of small businesses. If we want to ensure that there is an element of fairness in all of this, scale should not determine a business's ability to compete.

One significant achievement at the UK level came in 2013-14, when the pledge to procure a quarter of the value of central Government's goods and services from SMEs was met. Increasing the involvement of SMEs, the third sector and supported businesses was also a key priority in the Scottish Government's procurement strategy, so it is disappointing to hear that the proportion of local authority procurement from SMEs in Scotland has fallen in the past five years.

The Scottish Government's economic strategy also points to the benefits that procurement can provide and observes that it can be a driver of innovation and sustainability through the powers granted under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. The act was a significant piece of legislation but, in many ways, we find ourselves rehashing the old debates that took place during its consideration. We must be cautious in assuming that procurement policy can be used to cure all ills in our economy.

In truth, there is a balance to be struck. Procurement can be used to promote responsible business practices, but that must not come at the cost of raising the barriers for entry into the procurement marketplace. That includes the price not only of compliance, which may be justifiable, but of additional reporting and monitoring. Although the consequences of too great a regulatory burden may be unintended, they would also be inevitable. Such a burden would reduce the social good of involving small businesses and encouraging local procurement and, ultimately, there would be an impact on the value for money that we hope to achieve.

Employment standards are, of course, a significant issue. In addition to the areas outlined by Labour, there could be an opportunity to encourage more investment in the skills, training, apprenticeships and employee development that the modern economy will require. However, we will struggle to do that coherently if the needs of businesses are not considered.

Our existing procurement policy continues to be far from perfect. Some level of inefficiency will always be a feature of the system, but there are several areas where we still have some distance to travel.

The fiasco of the Scottish Government's approach to information technology projects has rightly outraged many. Not only have costs escalated out of control in several areas, but projects have been delivered years behind the forecast delivery dates or dumped after considerable investment, as with the Scottish Prison Service's finance system. The most pressing example for my constituents must be the handling of the farm payments system, which has cost many dearly at a time when farming incomes were already being squeezed.

There are, of course, areas where we could look to make positive innovations. Some work has taken place to uncouple large contracts to ensure that smaller businesses can compete, but it is far from enough. Millions of pounds are administered in supporting the roll-out of broadband but the process is slow, unwieldy and delivered through two separate schemes but with a single contractor. Support for other delivery providers on smaller projects through Highlands and Islands Enterprise seems to leave space for improvement.

In my region, the procurement of ferry services is under review, although we received some preliminary findings in December through Transport Scotland. That procurement procedure seems to have been a relative success in the past, with local people and businesses largely supportive of the current operator, Serco NorthLink. However, it now appears that the Scottish Government might be minded to bring those services in house again with a public operator.

The Labour Party's motion refers to businesses having

"a supply chain that is anchored in Scotland".

I want to steer us away from any sense of the Parliament taking a protectionist or insular stance, and I do not think that that is what the motion intends. The debate is not a moment for crying "Scotland first" but, instead, a way of considering some of the benefits of local procurement, particularly at local authority level, in a way that reflects our interests in value for money and wider sustainability.

In another example from my region, livestock farmers in Shetland whom I recently had the pleasure of meeting observed that they had greater capacity to supply to schools, hospitals and care homes across the islands. Last year, Fergus Ewing observed that the Scottish Government "could do better" in that regard and

pointed out that the majority of food in the public sector—52 per cent—is sourced from outside Scotland.

My colleague, Brian Whittle, will speak in more detail on food and drink procurement. However, on procurement generally, I welcome figures highlighted by the FSB Scotland, which show that Shetland Islands Council is the top-performing local authority for procurement from local SMEs, followed by Orkney Islands Council. Indeed, the Highlands and Islands as a whole perform well on the matter, with Moray Council, Western Isles Council and Highland Council all performing above average.

There are obvious benefits to local procurement where it is available: it reduces environmental impact and increases the sustainability of local supply chains, and we gain a greater security of supply. Centrally directed policy should not stand in the way of such measures, and best value should reflect those wider interests. Perhaps some of the lessons from my region would be instructive for the country as a whole, given that, on average, only a fifth of councils' procurement spend goes to local SMEs.

We diverge from Labour on the need for "an urgent review". There is little explanation of why that demand arises, and although I hope that all parties are mindful that improvements can and ought to be made, we cannot simply accept that urgent reviews need to be called in every area of Government policy in which improvements are possible.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I am just finishing.

I welcome this Labour Party debate, and I hope that the Scottish Government will offer a constructive tone going forward. It would be helpful if ministers expanded on existing work relating to sustainable procurement later in the debate.

I look forward to progress being made on reforming procurement in a sustainable way that lets us meet the needs of the public sector and take advantage of the wider economy.

I move amendment S5M-10962.3, to leave out from "an urgent review" to end and insert:

"the Scottish Government should encourage and increase the use of sustainable procurement practices to cut wasteful spending."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to the open debate. Speeches should be six minutes. Time is really tight, so please be strict on yourselves.

15:10

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank Jackie Baillie for bringing the debate to the chamber.

We welcome Labour's proposals, as they are very much aligned with Scottish Green policies, which recommend three core principles of procurement: the phasing out of schemes such as the Scottish Futures Trust, public-private partnerships and private finance initiatives; the promotion of legislation on a presumption in favour of local procurement from local suppliers; and the preferment of procuring from ethical and fair trade suppliers. Above all, we need to introduce a best-value framework for public authorities that incentivises procurement from local suppliers and social enterprises and that enhances the opportunities for workers to earn decent wages.

I concede that public procurement laws have been improved, but they should allow decision makers to source products and services on the basis of sustainability, equality, community benefit and local supply, not just on the basis of short-term costs and returns. One of the reasons for which we are in favour of the Teckal exemption being applied is that public authorities can ensure that local, publicly owned enterprises are favoured in procurement processes.

Despite my strong support for the European Union and my resolve for our continued membership of it, current EU procurement and state aid rules that prevent member states from favouring local enterprise or supporting emerging industries often frustrate the Green principles that I have outlined.

Let us consider the Scottish Futures Trust, for example. It was very welcome that Labour commissioned the report from Jim and Margaret Cuthbert that called for a root-and-branch review of that scheme. I am deeply concerned that such a major, publicly funded enterprise can be allowed to operate without effective scrutiny. Despite the trust's assurance in its business plan that its function is

"to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure investment ... leading to better value for money and ultimately improved public services",

it is unclear whether its current annual operational budget of over £10 million actually delivers value for money to the public purse. Value for money should be procured via public services such as housing services.

Across Europe, Governments are increasingly looking to develop new and innovative policies to ensure that people have access to affordable housing. The Scottish Government's national housing trust programme, which was devised by

the Scottish Futures Trust, offers tenants the opportunity to—

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): May I correct the member? The national housing trust initiative was not initiated by the Scottish Futures Trust and is not connected to the non-profit-distributing programme that the Scottish Futures Trust runs. It is an entirely separate initiative.

Andy Wightman: I am happy to accept that clarification. Nevertheless, public money is going into offering tenants affordable rented homes with the caveat that, after five to 10 years, the homes must be sold to pay back the Government loans. Although sitting tenants have the first preference to buy their homes at full market value, many tenants will be unable to afford that, and they may be forced out of their homes and have to find alternative accommodation elsewhere.

Alex Neil: Under the new housing legislation, the tenants cannot be forced out. I am sorry, but that is just factually incorrect.

Andy Wightman: I am happy to have this seminar, but I am afraid that I do not agree with Alex Neil. The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 allows landlords to serve an eviction notice when they propose to sell their property. That is still a ground for eviction.

In Edinburgh, the average house price is 42 per cent higher than the Scottish average. That makes this city the least affordable place in which to buy a home, yet tenants of so-called affordable homes have to pay the full market price through the national housing trust model. That is very short-sighted, and it is clear that it is not the solution to providing genuinely affordable houses.

Other issues should be self-evident. For one, we should not have to go looking for answers as to how public money is spent on procurement. Transparency is vital, which is why, as Jim and Margaret Cuthbert rightly point out in their report, there are issues to do with accessing what should be publicly available information. For example, in the region that I represent, City of Edinburgh Council will not publish details of its PFI schools contract, nor will Transport Scotland release sufficient information on the development of the Queensferry crossing. The Scottish Government's and City of Edinburgh Council's growth accelerator model for the St James centre remains shrouded in secrecy. Freedom of information releases are more like pieces of cubist art, given how much they are redacted.

Such a culture of clandestine practice has now been established and enshrined in Scotland's public authorities, and it is common for public projects to be run as though they are private enterprises. That is unacceptable. Indeed, as the

Cuthberts reported in the *Sunday Herald* in September 2017,

“lack of information, compounded in many cases by actual secrecy, is a major problem in assessing how Scotland’s public money is being spent”.

Last October, I asked the Scottish Government whether it had evaluated the method of producing whole-of-Government accounts, as the UK Treasury does, and, if so, whether it would publish those results. In its response, the Government directed me to a letter from the permanent secretary to the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee concerning consolidated accounts, which, as members will be aware, are quite a different matter and only indicate how money has been spent instead of focusing on the wider long-term liabilities that are covered in whole-of-Government accounts.

Procurement plays a vital role in delivering public services and in supporting the economy. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the limited levers that we have are as robust as they can be. This evening, the Greens will support the Labour motion but not the SNP or Conservative amendments, as they delete key sections of the motion with which we agree.

15:16

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Jackie Baillie provided a compelling piece of evidence on the exploitation of workers. Use of public money on Scottish public workers must be made to a higher standard. The examples of agency workers, casual employment and zero-hours contracts are deeply concerning and deserve a better response than the typical one that we got from the cabinet secretary this afternoon when he said that it was all Westminster’s fault. The cabinet secretary and his fellow ministers are responsible for spending public money in Scotland and can set the standards for how those people are employed using such contracts. It is his responsibility and not Westminster’s, and he needs to be clear about that, too.

The deafening silence from the SNP benches was also striking. Members there looked on in stony silence this afternoon, because they knew that they had been found out on the exploitation of workers. A few years back, hardly a week would go by when we would not hear from the Cuthberts—the husband-and-wife team of Margaret and Jim—who were often quoted by SNP members in support of their cases for more powers for Scotland or for independence, especially during the debate on the Scotland Bill in 2012. I used to enjoy my Scotland Bill Committee evidence sessions in which Margaret and Jim Cuthbert were brought before us to tell us about the latest piece of evidence that supported the

SNP’s case. However, fate is such that they have returned to the political scene to undermine the SNP’s favoured private finance model, and it is a glorious irony that that has happened today. The Cuthberts’ report from last autumn highlights areas of concern for the Scottish Futures Trust, for the NPD programme, for the hub programme and for the growth accelerator model.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

As the Cuthberts stated:

“Most of these initiatives involve the setting up of various forms of public private partnership, designed so that the relevant capital expenditure is off the government’s books.”

In one neat sentence, they undermined the grandiose claims—which I remember well—of Alex Salmond in the 2007 SNP manifesto, in which he said that PFI was

“a type of privatisation, with all the disadvantages which that entails”.

A leading academic, Mark Hellowell, has pointed out that profits are not capped—the SNP said that they would be, but they are not—but are priced according to the rate-of-return expectations in the market.

Alex Neil: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

Peer-reviewed research has found that claims that the NPD model will eliminate excessive profits are not supported by the evidence. NHS Ayrshire and Arran points out that the NPD model is not a not-for-profit one, so it is pretty clear that the case that was put forward by Alex Salmond back in 2007—that he was sweeping away the PFI schemes—

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

I will come back to the cabinet secretary in a minute. I am trying to make a very important point that he should listen to. The case that the SNP made in 2007, that the evil PFI schemes were being swept aside, has been undermined by all those academics and the SNP’s own favoured economists.

I will let the cabinet secretary come in now if he is prepared to admit that the SNP got it wrong in 2007.

Derek Mackay: We can focus on the past, and it is interesting to talk about what the Liberals were doing at that time in signing up to PFI deals. However, my question is quite simple. Labour has

set out its stall: there will be no more revenue-financed, NPD pipeline projects, which might have been schools, hospitals and community facilities. What is the Liberal Democrats' position? Is Willie Rennie's position also that there should be no more NPD projects? That would be bad news for those who are looking for enhanced facilities across Scotland.

Willie Rennie: I am not ideologically opposed to the use of private finance in certain areas, but I am opposed to the hypocrisy of the SNP, which said in 2007 that it was going to wipe away the PFI schemes when the reality was that it just rock-bottomed them. That is what SNP members did in 2007 and they have been found out.

Let us go through the Cuthbert report. I think that it is pretty good. It talks about secrecy and says that the hubs are regarded as being

"beyond the scope of FoI"

despite having responsibility for handling considerable sums of public funds, including the terms of bank lending. The Cuthberts talk about the lack of clear definition for indicators used by the hubs and say that they are often "a non-standard form".

Having a small number of tier 1 firms means that they will dominate large-scale construction in Scotland, limiting opportunities for others. There will be a loss of headquarter jobs, research and so on because of the tier 1 firms being predominantly from outside Scotland. That is an important point. The minister said that those firms have Scottish addresses but he did not say that they are headquartered in Scotland, and they do not bring the jobs, the research, the management jobs and the leadership jobs that would come with that. He talked about their having a Scottish address and was very careful in the language that he used.

The report also talks about SMEs being limited to just subcontracting. Is the Government exercising sufficient scrutiny over the Scottish Futures Trust's activities? That is a big question that the Cuthberts ask. They also ask whether the sustainability of the financial commitment that has been entered into has been scrutinised. Has the Government's expertise been hollowed out when so much has been contracted out as it has under the Scottish Futures Trust?

There are many big questions that the Government needs to answer, and it needs to give much better answers than the cabinet secretary has provided this afternoon.

15:22

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I begin on a note of consensus. I believe that the

majority of members agree that public sector procurement should, to quote the motion,

"provide value for money, ensure that good employment practices are followed, have a supply chain that is anchored in Scotland and provide opportunities for businesses and jobs".

That is, of course, the approach that informs the Scottish Government's procurement strategy and it is why a community benefit requirement was given a statutory definition in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. It is therefore to be welcomed that there is continued strong support for the principle that decisions on procurement should be based on overall economic and social value, and not simply on the bottom line.

The remainder of the motion, however, displays the heroic levels of hypocrisy for which the Scottish Labour Party has become legendary. Before coming to the chamber to level accusations at the Government, Labour would do well to recognise the PFI plank in its own eye. When Labour Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liam Byrne stepped down, he left his successor a note stating, "I'm afraid there is no money." When the Labour Party demitted office in Scotland, it left John Swinney with a pile of invoices, which more than a decade later are costing the Scottish taxpayer £1 billion each and every year.

Labour's farcical approach to procurement and public finances means that over the years we will have shelled out £22 billion for projects that have a total capital value of £4 billion. If the Labour Party wants to be seriously taking on procurement, it should start by apologising for its reckless and short-sighted handling of public finances while it was in office.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Tom Arthur: No I will not, because I am about to come on to something important, to which Jackie Baillie failed to give due weight. The debate—apart from giving Labour members an opportunity to polish their brass necks—would normally have contained much discussion on how EU procurement directives and European Court of Justice case law would be interpreted in a way that is consistent with member's own political values. I would rather that we were in circumstances in which the debate could consider the evolving nature of the single market, developments relating to proposed revisions of the posted workers directive and what the potential implications of President Macron's vision of a more integrated Europe are on EU procurement law.

Jackie Baillie: Will Tom Arthur take an intervention?

Tom Arthur: I, will, if Jackie Baillie will let me finish my point.

However, Scotland now finds itself being dragged out of the EU against its sovereign will.

I will give way to a pithy intervention from Jackie Baillie.

Jackie Baillie: It will, indeed, be pithy. Can Tom Arthur tell me why the Scottish Government avoids EU regulations that give temporary workers the same conditions as permanent workers after 12 weeks, by using pay between assignment contracts and agency workers? Why does the Government avoid EU procurement regulations in that underhand manner?

Tom Arthur: I do not recognise that intervention from Jackie Baillie, but I am sure that my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution will be more than happy to address the specific point.

The implications of Brexit for our economy and our way of life are profound and catastrophic. Polling that was released today shows that 61 per cent of Scots say that both our economy and the wider UK economy will be worse off as a result of Brexit. That echoes the views of expert economists that I hear week in and week out as a member of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee. Given that a growing economy is fundamental to generating the revenue that is necessary for ambitious public sector procurement, the devastating economic damage that would follow a hard Brexit would have a severe impact on tax revenue, which would present huge challenges to the Government in respect of maintaining sustainable procurement that delivers wider social benefits.

It is not just Brexit's threat to the economy that would harm procurement in Scotland; the UK Government's power grab could make it all but impossible for the Scottish Government to deliver sustainable procurement. That is the fundamental issue in the debate, as is highlighted in Derek Mackay's amendment. Without powers over procurement in this Parliament, and without common frameworks that are agreed by consent, all of our deliberations will become academic. I fear the consequences if power over procurement in Scotland were to become the sole preserve of a right-wing hard-Brexit Tory Government at Westminster.

What concessions would be given in trade deals by a weak and isolated UK, and what would be the implications for our publicly owned national health service? Would there be a roll-back on workers' rights and protections, thereby incentivising bidding companies to engage in sharp practice in a race to the bottom? We do not have to look very far for the answers. It is clear that the hard

Brexiters are driving the agenda. They know that Theresa May is asking for a cherry-picked settlement that the EU simply cannot deliver and they are biding their time, willing the talks to fail so that when we reach exit day in little over a year, a bonfire of regulations can commence in earnest. We in the Scottish Parliament have a solemn duty to ensure that all the powers that currently sit with this Parliament, including those that relate to procurement, remain with this Parliament.

The future arrangements, laws and processes regarding procurement across the UK must be achieved through agreement—not through imposition. Our immediate priority must be to ensure that the powers of this Parliament are retained. Once that is achieved, however, we will then, as a Parliament, have a role to play in debating and discussing what shape the future procurement landscape should take in a post-Brexit world. For me, that must be a world in which procurement continues to be used to promote the fairest and most robust of workers' rights, one that is bold in its use of procurement as a lever to promote sustainable economic growth, and one that is as transparent, open and accountable as possible. I believe that those are principles upon which genuine agreement can be found.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): You are out of time, Mr Arthur.

Tom Arthur: Presiding Officer, I regret that that such future discussions will be necessary, but I still hope that the catastrophe of Brexit can be averted. However, if, as seems increasingly likely, we are to be torn out of the single market, it is vital that this Parliament has the powers to shape future procurement in Scotland.

15:29

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I have heard some speeches in this Parliament, Presiding Officer, but that was an absolute belter. Tom Arthur's approach was to talk about anything but the subject at hand—to talk about any other Government, any other council or any other authority, but not the responsibilities that his party has for public procurement in Scotland. It is an important issue and an important part of our economy.

Tom Arthur: Will Neil Findlay give way?

Neil Findlay: No, I will not. Tom Arthur should sit down.

Procurement is an important part of our economy that sustains many small and large businesses and millions of jobs. It has the potential to deliver a wide range of economic and social policy objectives, but all too often those

policy objectives come way behind financial considerations.

During the passage of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, Labour members submitted numerous amendments, including amendments that would have ensured that no public money was paid to contractors that engage people on zero-hours contracts, and that no public money went to companies that are guilty of blacklisting or are corporate tax avoiders. All those amendments were voted down by SNP MSPs, who trotted on as usual, voting as the minister told them to vote. Not one of them had an independent thought in their head.

Today, I want to focus my comments on the construction industry. For decades, it has operated as one big scam. Main contractors do all that they can to screw more money out of their clients, then they seek to screw as much money as they can out of their subcontractors, and that is repeated down the subcontracting line. All of it is about profit maximisation over build quality and the care and welfare of employees. Important issues such as health and safety, the provision of washing and toilet facilities on sites, and effective trade union recognition are all barriers to profit maximisation.

That is why we had the blacklisting scandal, in which thousands of trade unionists and environmental and social justice campaigners had their careers and families' lives destroyed by a conspiracy that was funded by some of the biggest construction companies, including Sir Robert McAlpine, Laing O'Rourke, Balfour Beatty and, of course, Carillion. The Scottish Government said that its blacklisting guidance would prevent those companies from getting future contracts until they had apologised, paid up and cleaned up, but that has been repeatedly ignored. McAlpine's is building the flagship V & A gallery in Dundee, Laing O'Rourke is building the Dumfries hospital and preventing Unite from accessing the site, and Balfour Beatty is working on the Aberdeen bypass. Carillion had dozens of contracts worth hundreds of millions of pounds.

I will give way to the cabinet secretary if he can tell me how many companies have been barred from applying for contracts through the blacklisting guidance. Can he tell me how many? Exactly! Not one!

I have also raised in Parliament the issue of bogus self-employment and workers receiving wages via so-called umbrella companies. Those companies are endemic in the construction industry and are operating on publicly procured projects funded via the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust. Workers are forced to work via an umbrella company and are paid the minimum wage, then required to pay both employers' and employees' national insurance

contributions, and to pay for a pay slip. They are then told to claim money back via expenses, which means that their employers avoid their responsibilities. Those practices were at play on the Queensferry crossing, and they are at play on the Aberdeen bypass and many other contracts.

I happily accept an intervention from Mr Brown.

Keith Brown: Does Neil Findlay associate himself with the remarks of Jeremy Corbyn, who blamed many of those things on what he called, as Nigel Farage has, "cheap foreign labour"? Does he have the same view of—

Neil Findlay: That is garbage, and Keith Brown knows it. Don't tell lies!

Keith Brown: I would like to be allowed to finish my intervention. Does Neil Findlay have the same view of people who come from overseas to work in this country?

Neil Findlay: Don't tell lies!

The Presiding Officer: Mr Findlay, do not use terms like that in Parliament, please.

Neil Findlay: Mr Brown should correct the record, because he knows that that is not what was said, but he twists people's words.

We have seen how pay as you earn has been exploited on contracts for which Keith Brown is responsible. He is responsible, and he should take his responsibility seriously.

We are still waiting to see the full effects of the Carillion collapse. Employees have been scammed out of their pensions and then signed up again by a new employer, but under umbrella companies. On Network Rail contracts, the Scottish Government should use its cash and influence to push Network Rail to establish an in-house contracting division to deliver those essential contracts.

In 2017, Scottish Labour commissioned the report by Jim and Margaret Cuthbert on the Scottish Futures Trust and its hub activities. That report exposed the lack of transparency around hub companies and the secrecy around them and who is investing in them, and it highlighted poor value for money.

I support the motion in the name of Jackie Baillie, but when I look at what is going on in the construction industry, I start to come to a different conclusion. I look at the Edinburgh schools project, the trams project, the private finance initiative, the non-profit distributing model—the only problem with the non-profit distributing model is that it distributes profit—blacklisting, umbrella companies and all of the other stuff that is going on in the construction industry, and I think that we might be getting to the stage at which we have to think about holding a public inquiry into how the

construction industry operates, because it is a scandal.

The Presiding Officer: You are at six minutes, Mr Findlay.

Neil Findlay: There is also a human cost. Last year, I heard from a Unite representative about a group of African men who were working on a major public contract for a foreign-based subcontractor. Some 30 or 40 of them were living in one house, and were paying £400 a month to do so. One man's wife, who was living in Portugal, died during childbirth along with her child, but the employer did nothing. The men who worked with that man had to have a whip-round to send him home to deal with that tragedy.

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, Mr Findlay.

Neil Findlay: That man was working on a Scottish public sector contract. People should be ashamed.

The Presiding Officer: I recognise that members' passions run high in debates such as this, but I ask everyone to refrain from using unparliamentary language at all times.

Neil Findlay: Members should tell the truth, in that case.

The Presiding Officer: I meant you specifically, Mr Findlay.

15:36

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I have come in at the right time to calm things down, as usual.

I would hope that we can all agree on certain things, such as that we want to ensure that everyone gets their trade union rights, that there is an end to blacklisting, that there is an end to zero-hours contracts, that there is an end to unfair treatment for agency workers, that there is maximum transparency on how the public pound is spent, that profits from any kind of contract are not siphoned off into offshore funds at the expense of our country, and that umbrella companies are not allowed to misuse their legal status for immoral purposes.

I want to say something to Labour in a non-partisan way. The Labour Party must practise what it preaches. It is sad to admit it, but last Saturday afternoon I listened to Mr Leonard's speech to the Labour conference in Dundee. One of the things that he rightly advocated was that we should do what we can to drive down the cost of existing PFI contracts. Indeed, I tried to do that, with some success, when I was the health secretary. However, that message has not reached some Labour-controlled councils such as

North Lanarkshire Council. For example, during the council's budget discussions in the past month, the SNP and others urged the council to do exactly what Mr Leonard said with regard to the massive payments that have been made on behalf of the taxpayers of North Lanarkshire over the past 10 years to PFI contracts for the school-building programme. However, every Labour councillor refused to review the PFI contracts.

Before Labour Party members start criticising everyone else, they should look in the mirror and think about what Labour councillors are doing. They should think about their track record. They sit there beside Lewis Macdonald, who is a fine man for whom I have a lot of time. However, I have been here long enough to remember when Lewis Macdonald was a deputy minister in the health department, under Andy Kerr, who was the health minister—it is a pity that Willie Rennie is not here to listen to this; I thought that we were supposed to listen to the rest of the debate after we have spoken. I remember when Andy Kerr, as Labour's health minister, tried to privatise a general practitioner practice in Lanarkshire and tried to privatise Stracathro hospital in the north-east of Scotland.

We will not take any lessons from the Labour Party. It has a shameful record, particularly on PFI contracts such as the contract for Hairmyres hospital, which will end up costing five times the cost of building the hospital. That contract was initiated under a Labour Administration. Indeed, I think that Jackie Baillie was a minister at the time that the Hairmyres contract was signed.

Jackie Baillie: I am always grateful when the member allows me to make an intervention. I think he will find that history might prove him wrong—I was not a minister for that long. Were the schools in North Lanarkshire built under the SFT, operating to the very rules that were set under his Government?

Alex Neil: I think that Jackie Baillie will find that they were mainly operating to the rules of PFI. I did not say that she was a minister for long; I said that she was there at the crucial time when the deal was done. She must therefore have been part of the collective Cabinet responsibility for that gross misuse of money to privatise a resource. Part of the deal was that, unlike in the NPD projects, at the end of PFI projects such as the one for Hairmyres, the facility is privatised, because it goes into the ownership of the private contractor. Under NPD, at least the facility ends up as a public sector asset.

I give way to Mr Scott. I am dealing with all the Tories at once.

The Presiding Officer: I call John Scott, but Mr Neil still has only a minute and a half left.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I thank Mr Neil for taking an intervention. Given that he mentioned Andy Kerr, who famously did all this work under PFI, does Mr Neil, as a constituent of mine and a representative of the Lanarkshire area, remember the things that Mr Kerr was seeking to close at that time—namely Ayr hospital and a hospital in his area? He might wish to comment on that.

The Presiding Officer: I am not sure that that is relevant. Mr Neil, you have less than a minute.

Alex Neil: That is a very helpful intervention. I have as good a memory as John Scott, who is absolutely right on that point.

Were you asking me to close, Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer: Yes.

Alex Neil: Unfortunately, therefore, I have to close. I say to the Government that reforms are needed—I will briefly mention two. First, I am not convinced about the use of framework contracts, and I think that we need to review them. Secondly, when it comes to housing, where the procurement is very diffuse, we are missing a big trick. We should have a national house-building agency to get the scale into house building through procurement in Scotland to create manufacturing opportunities in modular housing and the like; that would create added value and real jobs, and boost the economy. In particular, I hope that the agency would be located in my constituency.

The Presiding Officer: I thank Mr Neil for reducing the political temperature.

15:42

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to speak in this important debate. In fact, to be quite honest, these days I am delighted to speak in any debates on issues on which the SNP Government has competence. I thank the Labour Party for bringing this issue to the chamber.

About a year ago, I led a Scottish Conservative Party debate on public food procurement after researching where food for Scottish schools and hospitals came from. As I reported last year, the Scottish Government, through its central Excel contract, was importing £1.2 million of chicken from Thailand; it was also importing mashed potato, root vegetables, fruit, dairy produce and meat, all of which are produced right here in Scotland. Pre-packaged, processed food sourced from outside these shores is far too prevalent on the meal tables in our schools and hospitals.

Our farmers produce the highest quality food. They are charged with custodianship of the countryside, paying the living wage and ensuring the highest of animal welfare standards, but when it comes to public procurement, a high proportion

of the food for our schools and hospitals, much of which could be sourced locally, comes from cheaper imports. That has a huge implication for the obesity strategy, the mental health strategy and just about every other strategy that the SNP brings to the chamber, but somehow those dots are never joined up. The call for support for our food producers remains unanswered by the SNP; there has been little improvement, despite the subject having been brought to the chamber last year, and despite the promise of a good food nation bill—I wonder where that has gone.

The information and communications technology sector is another area in which the public sector ships public money out of Scotland. Overspend in the final bill and overrun are recurring themes in Government ICT projects, especially in higher-value projects, which according to an Audit Scotland report are delivered by a small group of offenders. Scotland has been awarding all of its major local government ICT contracts to global foreign companies that have added no value to our economy. One company has hoovered up north of £600 million from the public purse through ICT projects, with the City of Edinburgh Council awarding the initial contract and Glasgow City Council and Borders Council piggybacking on to that contract without a public procurement exercise; I thought that that was illegal. Incidentally, that same company is responsible for the debacle that is the Scottish Government's common agricultural policy payments system, which is still unresolved despite currently being five times over the original budget of £29.5 million.

It can be done. Manchester City Council has dramatically increased spending in the local economy, which has gone up by some 20 per cent. The council made a conscious decision to increase where possible the spend on Manchester companies, which has gone from 51 to 72 per cent. In monetary terms, that has a value of £123 million. Crucially, nearly 60 per cent of that spend went to small and medium-sized enterprises. That is important, because access to the public procurement process for SMEs is vital if Scotland is to grow companies from SMEs into major international companies. It is a stepping stone. However, we are all aware that Scotland has an overreliance on and a high propensity of SMEs and is disproportionately short of major global players. That relates directly to the point in the Labour motion, which talks about “value for money” and

“a supply chain that is anchored in Scotland”.

In ICT, nearly three times as much money is spent with non-Scottish SMEs as with Scottish SMEs. For every £15 of Scottish public money that is spent on ICT, only £1 is spent in Scotland.

Overall, only 4.8 per cent of the ICT spend in Scotland stays in the country.

We need to attract talent from schools and universities. In ICT, we have a skills gap centred around software development skills, but the ICT industry requires far more skills than that, especially in project management, quality, contract management and infrastructure delivery capabilities, to name but a few. We need a strong indigenous ICT sector for our university and college graduates, not to mention the apprenticeship places.

I am pleased that the Labour motion specifically mentions construction, because I have been approached repeatedly by representatives of the construction industry in Scotland intimating that public contracts are being awarded to companies outwith our borders only to be subcontracted back into Scotland and Scottish companies, minus a hefty slice of the pie.

The same issues are evident in every sector. Audit Scotland highlighted that in posing the question about numbers and how many contracts are awarded to whom, and I have submitted a written question to the Government on that. However, Audit Scotland and I found that the Scottish Government was not readily able to give any kind of substantive answer. Now we know why the Scottish Government is reluctant to release the figures. Given that general lack of support and investment by the SNP Government and the subsequent low levels of trust or confidence in the local supply chain, it is not surprising that the ICT industry struggles to attract talent or to deliver the outcomes.

That brings me to Derek Mackay's amendment, which may be the most ridiculous amendment that I have witnessed in my time in the Parliament, and to Tom Arthur's rambling. The SNP Government has found the most strangled route to somehow include the United Kingdom Government and Brexit. To suggest that the Scottish Government leads the way in promoting sustainable procurement beggars belief. It has all the powers that it could possibly need to ensure that indigenous Scottish businesses at the very least get a fair crack of the whip, but it refuses to use them. Contracts for public services are farmed out to North America, New Zealand, India, South America, the far east and Australia, to name but a few. Unless I am mistaken, none of those countries is currently in the EU.

It is absolutely pathetic—although at least consistent—that the SNP would rather use all its energy to find a way to blame somewhere else for its failings than use Government powers to actually support Scottish business. Better for Scotland? I think not. Scotland is the biggest exporter of public sector money in Europe.

The Presiding Officer: It is time to close, Mr Whittle.

Brian Whittle: I will leave it there, Presiding Officer.

15:48

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Procurement will always be a challenge. It is a balancing act on a variety of fronts. Do we want to get something now and take on debt to pay later, or do we wait, save up and buy it at a later date? Do we purchase the cheapest option, which is sometimes called value for money, or do we pay a bit more and support local businesses and the economy?

In past times, Labour councils would apparently give contracts to companies with which they had a close relationship. They paid over the odds and there were more frequent delays than we see today. Then PFI/PPP was the bright, shiny new thing. I was a Glasgow councillor at that time, and I was not happy about the PFI projects that were to renew all the secondary schools in the city. Perhaps most galling was the fact that the Labour councillors would not admit that PFI was the only option and that they were doing it reluctantly; rather, they pretended that they wanted PFI all along. We got some good new schools, but we paid well over the odds for them and new problems arose such as questions of who was responsible for which repairs and whether something was classified as vandalism or wear and tear. School facilities also became unavailable at a reasonable cost for out-of-hours clubs and other activities.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

John Mason: No. If Mr Findlay showed the Parliament a bit more respect, he might be given a bit more opportunity to speak.

I remember problems with school IT in Glasgow because the senior officials did not have the IT expertise to deal with the PFI companies and we ended up with the senior officer from the education department resigning his post when the work went seriously wrong. Labour's record on procurement for services in Glasgow has also been far from perfect. I remember when the Labour council put money advice services out to tender and nearly all the citizens advice bureaux in the east end closed.

PFI/PPP and, to some extent, NPD, have been positive devices to bring in additional funding, but they have also been negative devices to get around the accounting rules on debt. Whichever way we look at it—whether we lease schools or borrow to build them—the money must be paid back sometime. I argue that the Scottish

Government has done its best to provide much-needed infrastructure across the country while living with a range of restrictions, including the need to keep to the EU rules on borrowing and procurement and the requirement to maintain repayments at a reasonable level of interest, which is currently 5 per cent.

Were Labour ever to get back into power, one of my big fears would be that, on the basis of its history of borrowing recklessly, it would not stick to an interest rate of 5 per cent or any other prudential level of borrowing.

Brian Whittle: Is the member going to blame the EU for the SNP Government giving much of the ICT contracts to North America?

John Mason: If the member has a specific contract to ask about, he should ask the relevant council or Government minister.

The point is that the EU has restricted us from awarding contracts to more local Scottish companies. The bad side is that that has not helped our companies; the good side is that that has been fairer—we all know that some other European countries would not allow Scottish and British companies in if it were not for the EU rules.

There may be some tiny silver linings within the huge Brexit cloud—maybe leaving the EU will remove some of the restrictions; maybe we could favour Scottish companies more—but we must be realistic, as that could have a downside, too. On the positive side, we could spend more money with Scottish organisations, and that money would more likely be recycled into the Scottish economy. However, Brexit might mean that we pay more for things. If we reject a cheaper product from Germany or China, or chicken from Thailand, and we pay more for goods, services or infrastructure, we would have less money and, I presume, less infrastructure to show for that.

I would be delighted if we could favour Scottish organisations, but we must consider how much we are willing to pay. Would we pay 10 per cent more for a Scottish product than for what is available elsewhere? Would we pay twice as much? What if the Scottish product was very different or much less popular, such as Scottish wine? I wonder whether Labour will argue that all the wine in Parliament should be from Scotland.

A key lesson that I learned in my economics class at the University of Glasgow is that trade can benefit both countries. We are better at producing and selling salmon, whisky and financial services; others are better at producing and selling rice, bananas and wine. If we are to restrict the importing of goods and services as Labour suggest, we should not be surprised if other countries cut the amount of Scottish goods that they buy. That could seriously damage the whisky

industry and other sectors, so we have to be a little bit careful that we do not all lose out.

Before we lecture others on how they should behave, let us consider whether or how we personally set an example. Do all the Labour members buy Scottish meat and butter all the time? Do they buy Scottish beer in the pubs? Are they willing to take their holidays in Scotland? We all need to set an example if we want others in the public sector to do that, too.

To conclude, I want to mention the briefing from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. I thought that it was helpful, and I am certainly positive about the four principles that it sets out. However, it also suggests that

“All procurement professionals must feel able to move away from a risk-averse approach”.

Although I broadly agree, the risk is that we would go back to where we used to be, with Labour councillors apparently giving contracts to their chums in the private or public sector and the public losing out as a result.

15:55

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am glad that the member is so keen on Scottish produce, but I wonder whether he is still boycotting Tunnock's teacakes. Perhaps we will find out.

I am grateful to Jackie Baillie for securing time for the debate. As we have heard, public sector procurement is worth £11 billion a year to the Scottish economy, and it is, as Derek Mackay has said, a powerful tool. We should be using that money to deliver high-quality public services, provide decent, well-paid jobs and ensure inclusive growth in our whole economy in order to reduce inequality. Willie Rennie is right: Scottish ministers should be setting standards. However, as we heard in Jackie Baillie's blistering speech, the SNP Government is failing to make full use of its powers over public procurement to make all this a reality, and, as a consequence, we are missing huge opportunities to balance our economy in a way that is fairer for all.

Frankly, it is a scandal that the SNP Government has consistently refused to support the extension of the living wage to public sector contractors. Its lofty rhetoric on progressive values means very little when it has literally refused on numerous occasions to put its money where its mouth is. Extending regulation of the living wage to all public sector contracts is well within the Parliament's competence, and it is a practical way of lifting living standards. The failure to do that means that our constituents are missing out on fair and well-paid jobs.

We should immediately stop awarding billions of pounds of public contracts to companies that do not pay the living wage. In that respect, the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 was a massive missed opportunity. Likewise, it is an outrage that billions of pounds' worth of public sector contracts are still being regularly handed out to companies that use zero-hours contracts and that have been known for notorious anti-worker blacklisting practices.

Alex Neil: I was the minister who took through the parliamentary process the bill that became the 2014 act. The member will also know my attitude to Brexit—I tried every possible legal way of building what she suggests into the bill, but EU rules would not allow it. Does the member not agree that one of Brexit's benefits will be the ability to have far better and more flexible procurement rules?

Monica Lennon: I thank the member and former minister for his intervention, but I understand that John Swinney was able to do what he has just talked about in respect of care. I defer to colleagues on the Labour benches who were here at that time and who have already said today that SNP members voted down Labour amendment after Labour amendment.

Let me turn to another favourite Alex Neil topic: local government. Reform of public procurement has the potential to improve the running of services, and harnessing in a positive way the collective procurement power of Scotland's 32 local authorities could have a transformative effect on our local services and economies. Local authorities' procurement power would also work in the context of city region deals. Such investment has huge potential in Scotland, but without strong leadership, particularly on acceptable employment practices, the deals themselves could miss further opportunities to reduce inequality and promote inclusive growth. Indeed, that concern was expressed by the Local Government and Communities Committee. There could also be a reinforcement of the status quo and a further rewarding of private companies with huge profit at the public's expense. The procurement process for over £100 million of public investment in the Glasgow city region deal was announced just last week and is now under way, but what guarantees are there that that money will be spent on companies that treat their workers fairly?

As the convener of the cross-party group on construction, I have, like many members, watched in horror the troubling collapse of Carillion and its effect on the Scottish economy, and I associate myself with Neil Findlay's comments in that respect. The situation has affected more than 1,000 workers in Scotland who are involved in the delivery of at least eight major public sector

contracts. With the risk to jobs and the cost to the public sector to keep services running as a result of the collapse, it is a prime example of the problems of private sector involvement in public sector contracts and private stakeholders putting profit before people.

Derek Mackay: Will the member give way?

Monica Lennon: I am not sure how much time I have, but I am happy to take the intervention.

The Presiding Officer: You have a minute and a half.

Derek Mackay: I thank Monica Lennon for taking the intervention. She mentioned the construction industry. The NPD model has brought a lot of additionality to that sector. Many people have argued that it kept the sector out of recession when there was that pipeline of investments. How does she think construction would fare if there were to be no more revenue-financed projects, as is argued for by the leader of the Labour Party in Scotland?

The Presiding Officer: Monica Lennon, you have one minute.

Monica Lennon: That is why we need a root-and-branch independent review of public sector procurement, as is set out in the Cuthberts' report. There are real concerns about NPD and the Scottish Futures Trust. People have raised concerns about the secrecy around some of those contracts. There are extremely serious issues around the future of funding for Government contracts, and we need transparency.

Research that has been published has also revealed that one third of Scotland's economy is owned by overseas companies. That figure is 10 per cent higher than when the SNP first took office, in 2007. We believe that we should make better use of procurement powers to secure the Scottish supply chain with well-paid, secure jobs that minimise the risk of wider economic shocks or collapse.

That is why, in this debate, Labour has set out a plan for doing things differently. Public contracts should be awarded only to organisations that meet a minimum standard. There should be no blacklists and no zero-hours contracts, and companies should have commitments to tackling gender segregation, to the living wage and to trade union recognition.

In conclusion, Presiding Officer, Labour has announced our commitment to enter into no further PFI contracts—

The Presiding Officer: Wind up now, Ms Lennon.

Monica Lennon: —and to use that money instead to invest in services. We believe that we

can do public procurement differently, more effectively and fairly, and I am proud to support the motion in Jackie Baillie's name.

16:01

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Ahead of today's debate, members were all sent a briefing on behalf of Unison entitled "Procurement". The email contains a fairly brief paragraph that surmises:

"It is hardly controversial to say that public money should be spent for public good. We should always be aiming to get ... best value. This isn't simply a matter of ensuring a high quality service but of delivering social value at every point."

I do not think that any MSP could disagree.

The briefing goes on to describe the Scottish Government's overall approach as "disappointing". There is a hyperlink attached. I encourage members to click on said hyperlink, if they have not already done so, where they will find a far more detailed briefing on the issues surrounding procurement, which is dated April 2016. Twenty-three months ago, Barack Obama was still the President of America and David Cameron was Prime Minister. A lot can change in two years, believe you me.

Although it is disappointing that Unison has not updated its parliamentary briefing on procurement to reflect the times, it is even more disappointing that Scottish Labour appears to have drafted its motion in a similar time vortex, as it contains not one mention of the potential impact that Brexit could have on procurement and services. We know that the issue is of particular importance, because on Friday it was confirmed by the Cabinet Office that

"The regime provided by the EU procurement Directives, covering public procurement contracts for supplies, services, works and concessions above certain financial thresholds, awarded by the public sector and by utilities operating in the energy, water, transport and postal services sectors"

would be affected. I digress.

Today's motion also comments on the use of procurement by the wider public sector. At almost exactly this time last year, I spoke in another Labour Party debate, which focused on education. In 2017, I spoke about my experiences working for the then Labour-controlled Fife Council and about how I, as a middle manager in a school, was driven to purchase school materials from predetermined providers, even though they were available more cheaply elsewhere. I spoke about my discussions with headteachers in my capacity as a constituency MSP and the number of them I had met who had been forced to pay Fife Council—their employer—£3,000 just to paint a

classroom. Even though those headteachers knew that they could have the painting work done more cheaply through a local company, because of Fife Council's procurement practices, they were not allowed to do so.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Will the member give way?

Jenny Gilruth: No, thank you. I would like to make progress.

Another headteacher in my constituency told me that she had to use her school budget to pay for her entire school to be linked up to wi-fi, whereas in new schools across Fife, wi-fi is provided free of charge and her counterparts do not have the cost deducted from their school budgets.

I do not want to be the former schoolteacher who only moans about the price of jotters, so let us turn our attention to another matter that is presently devolved—healthcare. The Parliament's Health and Sport Committee is currently carrying out an inquiry into the impact of leaving the European Union on health and social care in Scotland.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Jenny Gilruth: I would like to continue, please.

While the Labour Party has struggled to solidify its unique approach to the constitutional crisis in which we now find ourselves, the issue of public procurement has been directly highlighted by the submission that our committee received—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Please sit down, Ms Lamont.

Jenny Gilruth: —from Community Pharmacy Scotland. Perhaps Brian Whittle should read his committee briefings more carefully in the future, because it observes—

Brian Whittle: Will the member give way?

Jenny Gilruth: I would like to continue. He should do his homework next time.

Community Pharmacy Scotland says:

"Although technically devolved, the process and rules for public procurement of products or services over a set threshold value are set by EU regulation."

Ah ha! The B-word. Community Pharmacy Scotland goes on to note:

"Scotland ... has little policy freedom to deviate from pan-European arrangements. This is not necessarily a negative, however, as the EU legislation creates a truly level playing field and clear instruction for businesses in all member states, and opens up many more options for local government and public authorities when going through tender processes. It also drives improvement of industry, as feedback on rejected tender applications must be given if requested."

Imagine that, Presiding Officer. On public procurement, Scotland's industry has been protected by the EU. I see no proposal in today's motion to continue that safeguard—

Brian Whittle: Will the member give way?

Jenny Gilruth: No, thank you.

I can therefore presume that the protections that are built into EU legislation, which will disappear when the UK leaves the EU, are not supported by the Scottish Labour Party.

Community Pharmacy Scotland also states:

“The concern that Brexit will bring is that a deviation from EU procurement rules could unfairly advantage or disadvantage a given business, and may make the UK a less attractive place to apply for contracts—this would even be the case for each of the home nations if a common framework agreement is not pursued ... Any deviation from EU procurement law which would allow more aggressive bargaining by public bodies could accelerate any decisions such as this and would have many unintended consequences including employment and R&D loss.”

The Conservative Party is intent on rolling back the clock on the devolution settlement. As a result, public procurement is now up for grabs. This is not the first time that a Conservative-led Government has attempted to undermine the very principles of devolution. We know that because, speaking last year, Wendy Alexander confirmed as much. Ahead of the 20th anniversary of devolution, she said:

“It was a battle because many Whitehall departments were highly sceptical of whether it made sense to devolve back to Scotland areas that they had hitherto been in charge of. So there was a huge amount of official scepticism about whether matters beyond those of education, health and housing should also come to Scotland.”

We moved beyond that scepticism on Friday. As today's Scottish Government amendment makes clear, sustainable procurement is at threat from the Brexit negotiations, because—make no mistake—devolution itself is at threat.

Labour's motion talks about providing

“opportunities for businesses and jobs”

but, depressingly and predictably, it makes absolutely no mention of the impact that leaving the European Union could have on those things. When it has the opportunity to debate, the Labour Party shuts the debate down and, instead, drags out something that it first bemoaned back in October 2017. Is that real change? It sounds like the same broken record.

16:07

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am delighted to be able to participate in this afternoon's debate. As we have already

heard, each year, the Scottish Government spends more than £11 billion on goods and services across the public sector, which is a considerable amount of money that is going into our economy. With such a high level of expenditure, it is incredibly important that we get the best value for money when we put public contracts out to tender.

It is therefore extremely disappointing that the current Scottish Government's record on public procurement is such a disaster and such a mess. At the moment, the Scottish Government seems to be presiding over one disaster after another. What we want are effective and efficient practices, but that is not what we are getting under the Government's watch, by any stretch of the imagination. Allocating financial resources to projects and contracts that ultimately fail is simply throwing taxpayers' money away, and it shows that the Government is not prepared to do what it should do.

The sheer scale of waste is quite simply unacceptable. A prime example of the SNP's ineptitude is its record on procuring IT systems. The system for delivering common agricultural policy payments ended up being £79 million over budget, and the system for NHS 24, as well as being £55.4 million over budget, was four years late. How can that be effective and efficient?

Moreover, the Scottish Prison Service's wasting of a staggering £440,000 of taxpayers' money trying to build a new finance system is a clear example of the problems of procurement across the public sector. The new electronic procurement system was stopped during its pilot phase. It only got as far as its pilot phase before it had to be stopped and cancelled, because the Prison Service could not establish why it had failed.

Sadly, however, those staggering overspends are not limited to IT systems—far from it. The Edinburgh sick kids hospital—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me a minute, Mr Stewart. Members on your own front bench as well as those on the front bench opposite are holding conversations across the chamber. We do not disrespect the member who is speaking in that way. Please continue.

Alexander Stewart: The Edinburgh sick kids hospital is another prime example. That project, which was signed off by the then First Minister back in 2008, will cost an extra £100 million, according to Government estimates. It was scheduled to open in 2013, and the best-case scenario is that it might open later this year, which is five years late.

No one can deny that projects of that scale might sometimes go over budget. We understand that. We also acknowledge that no one denies that

there might be delays, but under the current Government's watch, the projects that it has presided over have been appalling. The Government continues to preside over those projects, and ministers are prepared to stick their heads in the sand as if nothing is wrong. The issue is the sheer magnitude of the overspends and the length of the delays. Nobody wants a Government that is managing on a day-to-day basis, but we have a Government that is managing on such a basis right here in Scotland right now. The facts demonstrate that public procurement is yet another area in which the Scottish Government is utterly incompetent.

Unfortunately, those failings are not only the problems of the current public procurement system. All the small and medium-sized firms that are trying to get some of the public contracts are having real difficulties getting into that market. The most recent statistics that were revealed as part of the local government benchmarking framework showed a drop in the percentage of procurement money that is spent at local level and with local companies. We should be doing all that we can to expand and support our local communities and local businesses, but that is not happening when, even though we are spending billions of pounds a year in our own country, as we have already heard, the contracts are not being awarded in Scotland but are going elsewhere and being subcontracted back. That is not effective, nor is it efficient.

Recently, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity said that the Scottish Government could do better on the issue. He acknowledged that there is a problem, but no one else seems to think that there is a major issue here. You all turn up and tell us that we are getting it wrong, or that Labour is getting it wrong, but it is actually you who are getting it wrong. I welcome and acknowledge the fact that the cabinet secretary was prepared to make that statement. Our procurement policies should, wherever possible, aim to increase the participation of small and medium-sized businesses, and they should encourage the use of local suppliers.

We in the Scottish Conservatives are committed to getting procurement right and to stopping the wastage of hundreds of millions of pounds by the Scottish Government.

Tom Arthur: Will the member give way?

Alexander Stewart: No, I am in my final minute.

When undertaking any procurement process, it is essential that we, as elected representatives, keep the principle of getting the best value for taxpayers at the forefront of our minds. That is what the public and the voters would expect of us in this institution—to do the best that we can for

them and their finances and resources—but under this Government I am afraid that it is not happening.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Stewart. In your passion and commitment to your speech, you used the word “you”, which means that you were accusing the chair of flaws, and I have none. *[Interruption.]* Please remember to refer to people in this chamber as “the member”. I sense that there is some scepticism about my claim.

16:13

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I acknowledge our flawless Presiding Officer, as I make my opening comments.

We have heard much about ordinary workers being exploited and given uncertainty or given poor terms and conditions because of certain public procurement procedures and processes. Indeed, that has been much of the Labour proposition this afternoon. It will not surprise anyone who is listening to the debate to find a distinct lack of balance or self-awareness from Labour in making that contention. Let me give two examples, to take a more even-handed approach to the debate.

Let us look at the city of Glasgow and Cordia, which is an arm's-length external organisation and the council's care arm. It is to be brought back in house under full democratic control. There is an estimated recurring cost of £2.5 million for bringing it back in house. That is because low-paid—and predominantly female—workers who work with Cordia are on poorer terms and conditions, which were introduced by Labour. It has taken an SNP council in Glasgow to step in to do the right thing and ensure that those women will be paid properly.

That is balance in this debate. Everyone should get their house in order.

Let me give a second example. In Glasgow, someone in the third sector who was contracted by Glasgow City Council to look after the elderly in a care home setting was not necessarily—in fact, they were probably not—paid the living wage. That goes beyond Glasgow. Thanks to £125 million of investment by the SNP Government through integration joint boards, everyone in the residential care sector is now paid the living wage. That is real action in taking forward issues that people have been shouting about today, just to make party political points.

Let us get some balance into the debate. In Glasgow, under Labour, people in contracted-out care provision were on poorer terms and

conditions until an SNP intervention. That is a fact. Everyone should get their house in order, and there should be balance in this debate.

Jackie Baillie: I always share Bob Doris's concern about low-paid female workers. Does he agree that the Scottish Government's use on a continuous basis of agency workers, most of whom are women and are not on the same terms and conditions as civil servants, should end?

Bob Doris: I hope to address that point further on in my speech, if I have time. I have not, of course, spoken about Glasgow's equal pay scandal, which Labour has sat on for decades.

On a more constructive point—I hope that the rest of my speech is constructive—we got to the stage at which the living wage was paid to care workers by working in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and a negotiated settlement on what the costs would look like. That is real politics delivering benefit. We will get to where we want to be if we work together.

Let us look at some of the things that exist and have helped. The Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 seek to ensure that blacklisted companies are excluded from public contracts. I note Mr Findlay's concerns and will return to them. I also note that collaborative procurement, as set out in the Scottish Government's strategy on contracts and frameworks, has a buying power of £800 million every year. In the eight years that it has been in existence, it has delivered £615 million of savings to the public sector. That is a success for public procurement.

On the successes of public procurement and amending the use of PFI, in the past financial year, the Scottish Futures Trust has saved £138 million for the public purse. Had we used PFI rather than the SFT—if the SNP Government had used the model preferred by Labour when it was in power—that would have cost an extra £6.7 billion. Those are SNP Government procurement successes.

I want to focus on the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. Members will debate how successful that act has or has not been, but it was introduced by an SNP Government with a legislative requirement for a procurement report card. The first procurement report card will cover the timespan from January 2017 to March 2018. The Scottish Government has to assess where the procurement successes and weaknesses have been.

On the concerns that I have heard this afternoon, the Scottish Government has implemented a legislative process to tackle some of those issues. Let us use that process, wait to see what the report card looks like, and try to work

together with a degree of consensus to build on that.

Mr Neil made important points about things that could be improved. Mr Findlay raised points relating to his on-going concerns about blacklisting, and Ms Baillie raised some of her concerns. There has been much good work and progress on procurement. Nobody is perfect, including the Labour Party—that has been clear in the debate—but let us come together as a Parliament to try to improve public procurement for everyone in Scotland.

16:19

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I speak in support of Jackie Baillie's motion. In doing so, I will draw on examples from Fife, where the procurement of services through a market approach is not working.

I am sure that many would question the role of the market in providing health and social care in our communities. I draw Parliament's attention to Fife health and social care partnership's decision that it will tender for palliative care as part of a larger contract to provide social care in Fife. The end-of-life service is currently delivered by Marie Curie, which informed me last week that it had reluctantly taken the decision not to tender for the contract and would no longer provide its services to families beyond the end of May this year. Although Marie Curie says that it supports Fife health and social care partnership's quoted objective, which is

"to ensure that individuals have access to support that aspires to the highest level of quality and promotes the right of each individual to direct their own support",

it does not believe that that can be delivered. It said:

"With the maximum hourly rates quoted, and no margin for extending these, we do not believe appropriate levels of quality care can be provided to achieve these objectives.

The rates quoted would not allow Marie Curie to retain a sustainable, highly trained and experienced workforce that could deliver on the ambition of the tender objective.

The level of risk transferred to us in terms of the financial structure, rates and payment does not align with the delivery and performance requirements of a specialist health provision."

Is that really how the Scottish Government wants end-of-life care to be organised and delivered? I sincerely hope not.

However, the problem is not just in the care sector. I will now focus on further education. In October 2014, the then finance minister announced £140 million of investment to enable Forth Valley College and Fife College to build new campuses in Falkirk and Dunfermline. The Falkirk campus is going ahead, but Fife College has been

told that it is not getting the money. Two weeks ago, its principal told staff in a letter that the Deputy First Minister is now encouraging the college to explore a private finance schools hub option with Fife Council, which would include two high schools alongside the college. The principal stated in his letter to staff:

“Following further careful consideration of the private finance hub option, including constructive discussions with Fife Council and the Government agencies, I wrote to the Chief Executive of the SFC on 29 November setting out the College’s concerns over the private finance schools hub option.”

Those concerns included whether the procurement route is legally competent, with the potential for it to be subject to legal challenge; the requirement for complex and costly legal and governance arrangements to be put in place; a very real risk of a loss of direct control of its main campus by the college, which would compromise its ability to deliver its strategy; the potential that investment that has already been made in the existing project—some £2.5 million—will have to be written off; and the significantly higher overall cost of the private finance investment versus public investment.

The principal went on to explain that, on 12 December 2017, the chair wrote to the Deputy First Minister to reinforce the college’s concerns about the hub private finance route. On 9 January 2018, the Deputy First Minister responded to the chair and stated that his officials and Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council officials would be in touch with the college to address its concerns about the private finance hub model. He stated:

“Some three months later, we have not received a formal response from the SFC/Scottish Government to our concerns.”

I have to ask myself whether that is really how we are trying to fund investment in the future of our country. Is that the only way that we can build for the future in further education? That approach is failing Dunfermline, failing Fife and failing to build for Scotland’s future.

We should not let the SNP fool us. Its method of financing construction projects is a variation of public-private partnerships, but private financing now costs more than borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board—indeed, it costs double. That is why we need an independent root-and-branch review now of how public procurement is operating in Scotland, including the Scottish Futures Trust.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Tom Mason, to be followed by Angus MacDonald, who will be the last speaker in the open debate. That is fair warning.

16:25

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): Public procurement is an issue that should showcase the attitudes that we have when spending the money that is taken through taxation.

To its credit, the motion recognises that one of the prime concerns—if not the prime concern—should be to provide value for money for taxpayers. Unfortunately, the Scottish Government has not got close to fulfilling such an objective. There is a catalogue of waste going back years, with hundreds of millions of pounds taken from vital public services.

One need only glance at the SNP’s record to realise how far it is from providing value for money. Its record includes an IT system for farm payments that is £79 million over budget; an NHS 24 IT system that is £55 million over budget and four years late; Edinburgh sick kids hospital, which is £100 million over initial estimates and five years late; and motorway improvements that are going over their initial budget by £165 million.

Project after project is spiralling over budget. Think how much healthier our national finances would be if we had a Government that was capable of adequate long-term financial planning. There is of course a silver lining for the Government here—it is the fact that I have only six minutes to relay all the problems that we have. The difference is clear even in passing—the only party that will deliver value for money for taxpayers is the Scottish Conservatives.

Tom Arthur: Will the member give way on that specific point?

Tom Mason: We would scrutinise—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sit down, Mr Arthur.

Tom Mason: —all local authority spending choices to ensure optimum value. In areas where the SNP has failed to spend carefully enough, such as the NHS, farming and prisons, we would cut the waste and stop throwing away money that has been provided to the Government by the hard-working people of Scotland.

It would appear from the text of the motion that Labour wishes to use public procurement to protect Scottish industry. I am all for boosting our economy and creating better, high-paying jobs here at home, but that can be a slippery slope if it is not done properly. There should be a place in our supply chain for companies based outwith Scotland. Forcing public contracts to use Scotland-based businesses might not always be as efficient as using other sources, so it is worth having other options available.

John Mason: Does the member agree with his colleague Mr Whittle that we should be paying more to buy Scottish chickens rather than Thai chickens? Would that be value for money?

Tom Mason: I am yet to understand why we would need to go to Thailand to buy chickens, but that point needs careful consideration. It comes down to value for money, which covers a broader spectrum than just the cheapest price.

I would welcome a debate on how best to equip Scottish industry so that it can challenge for contracts without Government intervention. A key element of that is small and medium-sized enterprises. It has been noted that, over the past five years, local authority spending on SMEs has dropped, which should be deeply concerning to members across the chamber. I echo the comments by my Conservative colleagues that we should be aiming for better results here, with policy that aims to increase SME participation in the procurement process.

The motion also refers to the Scottish Futures Trust. Indeed, in that respect I noted a few similarities in Jackie Baillie's speech with the one that she delivered at the Labour Party conference at the weekend. I cannot be alone in finding it somewhat curious that Labour is calling for an urgent review of something that Audit Scotland is due to review later this very year. I happen to trust the ability and the opinions of Audit Scotland. We should let it get on with it and work in the best way it sees fit.

Jackie Baillie: I have—quite rightly—listened intently to speech after speech from Conservative members arguing that procurement is not working and it could be improved. Given the Cuthberts' report from last August, the live cases and the fact that the Conservatives share our ambition to expand SME-based procurement, does the member not consider that the best way to do that would be to support a review and our motion this evening?

Tom Mason: Audit Scotland is doing a review. We should just let it get on with it and wait to see its result. We do not want any additional reviews. After all, Audit Scotland is the expert body.

It is with that in mind that I urge colleagues to support Jamie Halcro Johnston's amendment today. Our choices in public spending reflect the attitude of those making those choices. When Government wastes money, it shows contempt for the people who work hard, pay their taxes and provide income for the state to spend. Recently, there has been too much waste, which I find offensive.

Undoubtedly, we can make improvements to how we go about public sector procurement. That should be done in a balanced and responsible way

that provides high-quality public services and value for money for the taxpayer. If those Scottish Conservative priorities were adopted, they would serve Scotland well.

16:31

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I am quite pleased that Labour has brought the debate to the chamber this afternoon, not least because I can highlight good-news stories about successful procurement from my constituency, such as the four NPD high schools that were delivered by the SNP administration of which I was proud to be a member.

Before I touch on the success stories, as well as on the disaster that was Labour's earlier PFI deal for another four high schools in the Falkirk district, I will bring positivity to the debate and highlight the forthcoming good food nation bill, which, I hope, will allow us to set into legislation soon the principle of sourcing our food locally.

Yesterday, I was pleased to receive "Education, Sustain, Promote: The Industry Vision to Produce a Good Food Nation" via NFU Scotland, which has launched the agriculture industry's vision to produce a good food nation, in conjunction with other industry players, including the Scottish Beef Association, the National Sheep Association Scotland, the British Egg Industry Council and Scottish Quality Crops. The document rightly highlights that, once the UK is no longer a member of the EU, public sector food procurement can do more to source greater volumes of food and drink from within Scotland. It has already been proved that that can be done.

Recent regulations that were enacted in France, which put a requirement on all schools, hospitals, prisons and other state institutions to source at least 40 per cent of their food locally, are expected to shorten food supply chains, stimulate local economies and halve emissions attributed to the agriculture sector, which is an issue close to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's heart. It is perfectly feasible to introduce a similar target in Scotland that applies to all public bodies, which would demonstrate a clear commitment to Scottish produce, as well as having clear positive effects on sustainability.

Brian Whittle: Will the member take an intervention?

Angus MacDonald: I am just about to mention Mr Whittle.

The good food nation bill will give us the opportunity to prioritise public sector procurement of food—we just need to seize the opportunity, and I look forward to the support of Brian Whittle's party when the time comes.

Brian Whittle: Does the member recognise, as I do, the work that councils such as East Ayrshire Council have done? They are already doing what is being proposed; there is no need for any change in EU regulation to be able to procure locally.

Angus MacDonald: Yes, indeed, and I encourage more local authorities to embrace the good work that is going on in certain local authorities.

It is not just the good food nation bill that presents us with the opportunity to improve our procurement practices, because we will also have a circular economy bill to work on in this session of Parliament, which will safeguard Scotland's resources. In order to do that, Scottish Government policy makes increasing the supply and demand for circular products and services a key priority. In addition, the Scottish Government's circular economy strategy recognises the important role of public procurement in supporting a transition to a more circular economy.

To help meet those objectives, Zero Waste Scotland has already developed procurement guidance to support circular economy purchasing decisions and outcomes across the Scottish public sector. Now in circulation, that guidance includes category and commodity guidance across key areas of public sector spend, including catering, construction, electricals, furniture and medical devices. The document sets out the rationale for making purchasing decisions, with product life extension in mind. It is intended to equip procurement professionals, decision makers and budget holders with practical guidance on incorporating the circular economy across the stages of the procurement life cycle. It also provides examples of how other contracting authorities have approached circular procurement, through case study examples.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The member is a regular user of ferry services to his home in the Western Isles. Would he support Labour's call to use the Teckal exemption to directly award contracts to companies such as the David MacBrayne Group?

Angus MacDonald: I think that there is work under way on that issue, so maybe the member should watch this space. There may be an announcement—or there may not be.

There is no doubt that Scotland's public sector procures a huge amount of goods, services and capital items. As we have heard, that total cost is £11 billion per year, so there are potentially enormous gains to be made if that substantial sum could be deployed to purchase products and services with good circular credentials.

Presiding Officer, my committee colleagues and I look forward to both of the bills that I mentioned coming to the ECCLR Committee over the remaining months and years of this session and hope that we can all seize the opportunity to move sustainable procurement in Scotland forward.

I will quickly turn to the NPD schools in Falkirk district and the differences in approach between that method of funding capital investment and the omnishambles that has turned out to be the legacy of Labour's PFI. There is no doubt that the PFI contract in Falkirk was controversial when it was introduced. Five schools were built: Braes high school, Bo'ness academy, Carrongrange special school, Graeme high school and Larbert high school. According to the numbers, the initial capital investment cost of those five schools was in the region of £65 million. However, when we look at the legacy, under PFI those schools are tied into a 26-year contract. The average unitary cost to Falkirk Council each year is £12.05 million, and the total payable over the 26-year period is well in excess of £300 million. It was one of the first PFI deals in Scotland and, frankly, it is one of the worst.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches.

16:37

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I am pleased to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. I put on record my thanks to the organisations that provided helpful briefings for the debate. It does not feel like we have really got much out of the debate, apart from Angus MacDonald leaking the Government's plans on future ferry policy, which is very welcome. However, the debate is extremely important. We have heard that the procurement of goods, services and construction projects by the Scottish Government and the wider public sector is a massive and integral part of our nation's economy. It underpins a huge number of local and national contracts and businesses, which are associated with jobs across our communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

Jamie Halcro Johnston rightly highlighted the absolute importance of some of the key principles that should be woven into our procurement policies. Namely, they should provide value for money for the taxpayer, they should ensure that good employment practices are followed for all employees who undertake contracts and they should have a supply chain that is, wherever possible, anchored in Scotland, that encourages locally sourced products and that provides genuine opportunities for local businesses of all sizes on an open and transparent basis, which will encourage them to apply for contracts in the first

place. On that latter point, I share the expressed concerns that we have seen a decline in recent years in the percentage of local authority procurement spend that goes to smaller and medium-sized enterprises in Scotland. We need to look at that decline and reverse it.

Brian Whittle focused on food procurement, which is an important area. I commend him for the excellent work that he has done since he was elected to the Parliament to highlight local authority and health board food procurement practices. Given Scotland's international reputation for having the highest-quality food and drink in our world-class food sector as well as the highest welfare standards, Brian Whittle was right to question why our public services are spending millions of pounds on imported foods. The Scottish Government has been talking about that for years, but we need to move forward now.

Keith Brown: I understand the point that Miles Briggs is making. He will know that it has been announced today that there are record exports of £6.1 billion-worth of food and drink from Scotland. Is he proposing that the Scottish Government should tell local authorities to do that, or does he have some other process in mind by which it could be achieved?

Miles Briggs: If we are looking towards Scotland being a good food nation, it is important that we use that food here in our nation as well. I welcome those export figures, but it is clear that the supply of food to our public sector has been going backwards under the Government's watch. That needs to be considered in relation to all public procurement contracts.

The number of members who have highlighted problems with projects in their constituencies and regions as a result of that type of contract being negotiated has been striking. Alexander Stewart really brought home the issue in relation to the Scottish Government's record on the procurement of complex IT projects, such as those in the prison service and the NHS, and in administering CAP payments, on which there is a particularly poor record, as everyone across the chamber knows.

We have also heard a number of concerns about NHS projects, such as concerns about the cost of car parking at hospitals across Scotland. Here in my Lothian region, I have repeatedly spoken out about the lack of car parking spaces at the royal infirmary of Edinburgh and the huge waiting list for staff parking permits there, which is hitting staff members incredibly hard. Some junior nurses and doctors have told me that they are even considering applying for jobs elsewhere, as the cost of having to pay for parking at the RIE is eating into their take-home pay. The Scottish Government really needs to look at that, especially here in Edinburgh. Fundamentals such as the

ability of key public servants, such as nurses and doctors, to park at their place of employment without facing unreasonable costs surely need to be embedded in procurement and in the negotiation of contracts.

Another issue that I would like to hear more about from ministers is how we can improve and promote regional procurement, through which, for example, a number of health boards or local authorities pool resources and construct regional centres to provide better value for money. Health ministers have already indicated to me that they expect NHS health boards to work to plan new and future NHS investments regionally, and I support that approach. However, it is clear that we need more progress and clear frameworks for how that will actually be achieved.

One important example for me is the Edinburgh and south-east of Scotland cancer centre at Edinburgh's Western general hospital. I have raised questions on that in Parliament, and £26 million has been allocated to address some of the concerns with the current state of that building. NHS Lothian is developing a business case for a new world-class cancer centre, but we need to see how that will be taken forward on a regional basis. That gets exactly to the point that the cabinet secretary made regarding transparency. It is important that the Scottish Government and health boards move towards a regional approach to planning and funding new developments for our NHS, but we need to be able to see how that is spent and how taxpayer value for money will always be achieved.

One of the best speeches that we have heard today was that from Alex Neil. Brexit hangs over the debate in terms of how we will move forward as a country in the future, and all of us will have to acknowledge that at some point. As Alex Neil said in the chamber yesterday, and as others on the SNP benches may be saying, there could be opportunities from Brexit. I never voted for Brexit, but we must respect the decision taken by voters across the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. I hope that the Scottish Government will eventually come round to recognising that we can deliver a stronger Scotland post-Brexit and will consider how we deliver that but, if it is only Alex Neil, I welcome that.

I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Jamie Halcro Johnston, which rightly highlights the role that good procurement plays in minimising wasteful spending. I welcome the debate and the focus that it has brought to this important subject.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Keith Brown to close for the Government.

16:43

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown): Despite the fact that the debate has been relatively heated and contentious at points, there is actually a substantial degree of consensus between the parties, not least on how procurement can help to deliver the ambitions that we may have for an inclusive society and for benefits from economic prosperity. The Scottish model of procurement, which is recognised internationally, takes into account a balance between cost, quality and sustainability. Jamie Halcro Johnston made the point that it is not possible for procurement to satisfy all those things in equal measure. We have to understand that and continually consider ways in which it can be improved.

Rather than repeat things that have been said before, I will try to address some of the points that have been made. A number of speakers, certainly on the SNP benches, made comments about the absolute hypocrisy with which the Labour Party has approached the debate. The Labour Party is the party of PFI, above all else, and it is the party that failed to take action on blacklisting, although it knew all about it. One of the excuses was that Labour did not understand how significant that issue was. However, Maria Fyfe tried to take a bill on that through the House of Commons in 1988, so Labour knew about the issue then but, despite that, it did not take action during the 13 years that it was in government from 1997 to 2010.

Labour is also the party that is determined to leave employment law to the Conservatives. Labour's submission to the Smith commission said that it was critical that employment law should stay at Westminster, in the hands of Conservatives. That, of course, has consequences.

Jackie Baillie: The cabinet secretary and the Scottish Government are responsible for employing agency workers, which is something that he controls. Will he make a commitment to end the scandal that is the misuse of agency workers in Scottish Government employment now?

Keith Brown: I have different information from Jackie Baillie on that point—we do not use agency workers in core Scottish Government employment. If Jackie Baillie can provide me with details, I am more than willing to look into the matter but, for core Scottish Government employment, we do not use a Swedish derogation that allows that to happen.

I will go back to my point, which Jackie Baillie will be keen to hear. The Labour Party's support for leaving control over such things with the Tories means that, in relation to blacklisting and the living

wage, we cannot take the action that she says she would like us to.

In all fairness, Jackie Baillie says that all people on public sector contracts should be paid the living wage. The point of difference between the SNP and Labour is that we believe that everybody should be on the living wage, not just people on public sector contracts. Despite the fact that Labour wants the Tories to have the power on the issue, I point out that 94 per cent of all people on Scottish Government contracts are paid the living wage and that a higher proportion of people are paid the living wage in Scotland than in any of the other UK countries.

On a point that was made by Angus MacDonald and, I think, Alex Neil, Labour's first brush with going into PFI was the Falkirk deal for five schools, which was the biggest PFI deal in the UK at that time. Not only was it extraordinarily expensive and hugely profitable to the companies involved, but at the end of that contract all five schools will revert back to the private sector. The council will have to build another five schools to replace them. That was Labour's attempt at PFI, and that is why we will not take lectures from Labour on PFI.

Jenny Gilruth made an important point that has not received much attention in the debate, although it should have done, because it was about the extent of the procurement power grab from the UK Government. The implications of that are absolutely extraordinary. I would have thought that Labour would be concerned about those implications, because of the potential for attack on working conditions and the terms and conditions offered by employers for public sector contracts. If the UK Government gets that power, as Labour believes it will, and starts to attack the working conditions of people involved in those contracts, it will be those people who will pay for that. I would have thought that the Labour Party would have a bit more to say about that.

David Stewart: Talking about Labour initiatives, it was Labour that pushed for the Teckal exemption in the direct award of ferry contracts to public sector companies. It was Labour that got the advice from the European Commission. What is the Government view on the Teckal exemption?

Keith Brown: It has already been acknowledged that that work is now being taken forward. If David Stewart is saying that we should have done that right away, why did Labour not do it? Labour looked at it and decided not to do it, so I ask the member please to have a bit of self-awareness.

At least we have had some positive suggestions. One was from Alex Neil, in relation to what he called a national house-building agency.

Johann Lamont: Will the member take an intervention?

Keith Brown: No.

We have had other suggestions. For example, a Scottish national infrastructure company was suggested. I am not saying that we are going to do those things, but they are worth looking at.

Jamie Halcro Johnston asked how we can use the system to try to improve access for SMEs. I agree with that idea. Given the consequences of the collapse of Carillion, many of which we do not have control over, such as those relating to pensions, reporting and company law, it is fair to ask how we can involve SMEs. We have tried to do that on previous occasions. Some of those who criticise the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 voted for that act so, again, there is a lack of self-awareness. If we can improve things, we should do so, and a review is under way to ensure that that happens.

Derek Mackay mentioned the procurement strategy. Under the 2014 act, bodies are required to produce annual reports, which will happen shortly. Those will be used to prepare the Scottish ministers' overview report of procurement activity throughout Scotland, which we aim to publish by the end of the coming financial year.

Miles Briggs: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is in his last minute. Please sit down, Mr Briggs.

Keith Brown: I apologise to Mr Briggs—perhaps next time.

The report of procurement activity that we aim to publish by the end of the coming financial year should allow us to look at the consequences of the procurement strategy and ways in which we can improve things.

We are confident that we have a positive story to tell and we are proud of the progress that we have made in recent years to reform public procurement. To return to Jenny Gilruth's point, that is why the UK Government's shameless attempt, under the guise of Brexit, to grab the power from this Parliament to regulate public procurement should concern everyone in this Parliament. As well as being an affront to the principles of devolution, it threatens to undermine all the positive measures that we have sought to implement in procurement.

In the UK, it is only Scotland that requires a byelaw that any decision to award a contract is based not solely on price but also on quality; it is only Scotland that requires a byelaw that companies that engage in blacklisting should be

excluded from procurement procedures; and it is only Scotland that requires a byelaw that public bodies must consider community benefit requirements in major contracts. The people of Scotland deserve better than to have public procurement returned to Westminster control, so I ask for support for the amendment in the name of Derek Mackay.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have to protect the time for Labour, because this is Labour's debate. I call Lewis Macdonald to close for Labour. You have until 5 o'clock.

16:51

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): We have made the case today for a change in public procurement policy, and contributions from around the chamber, particularly those that focused on the choices that face ministers today, seem to have vindicated Labour's approach. The contributions from Andy Wightman and Willie Rennie were welcome; so, too, was Alex Neil's call for a review of framework agreements. Tom Arthur helpfully read out Labour's objectives for procurement policy and agreed with everything except the need for a review. Perhaps he can explain to John Mason why a supply chain anchored in Scotland is a policy supported by parties throughout the chamber and not an alternative to an open economy.

I am sorry that Angus MacDonald, having started so well, seemed eventually to be uncertain about the future procurement of ferry services. I could almost see his hopes of a Government-inspired question being holed below the waterline before he sat down.

Conservative and SNP members have had different priorities this afternoon, but their amendments have united around one thing. Both parties have said that they will resist Labour's proposals for an urgent review of public procurement policy, employment practices, public sector contracts and the Scottish Futures Trust, although some Tories at least recognised the case for change.

Perhaps our review proposals will have to wait for another day, if Tory and SNP MSPs do indeed unite to vote them down, but the case that we have made will have to be answered sooner or later—for thousands of people working on government contracts in Scotland, the sooner the better. It does not matter much to those workers whether the contract that they are on is designed in Whitehall, on the authority of Tory ministers, or designed by Keith Brown and Derek Mackay in St Andrew's house. What matters is whether the rights and conditions of employment of those workers are protected and whether their jobs are

secure. The continuing prevalence of zero-hours contracts, of employers failing to pay the living wage and of umbrella companies ripping off workers is not acceptable anywhere, least of all on public contracts. Those practices must change. The Government has said that it does not want a comprehensive review and sees no need to do anything urgently. It promises instead to report on its own legislation a year from now—a business-as-usual approach.

Keith Brown made a point about sustainable procurement and the threat that is posed by Brexit. There are, of course, issues that need to be addressed about continuity across the whole range of policy. However, the truth is that for 11 years the SNP has had responsibility for procurement policy. Responsibility for the decisions that the SNP has made lies with the SNP, because it has been in government for that period and cannot, at this stage, put the blame for shortcomings on anyone else.

SNP members—front bench and back bench—have suggested that it is enough to set out guidelines and aspirations, but the truth is that fine words about fair work do not deliver for workers such as those whom we have heard about today. Keith Brown says that 94 per cent of workers are on the living wage; he also has responsibility for the other 6 per cent of workers on Government contracts and he needs to take action on those, too.

Keith Brown: Does Lewis Macdonald at least acknowledge that we could deal with the other 6 per cent if we had the legal powers that Labour wanted to refuse us? Is he willing to correct the record in relation to Jackie Baillie's earlier comment that the new social security agency staff would be agency staff? That is absolutely not the case. The intention is that they will be core Scottish Government staff.

Lewis Macdonald: I hope that Keith Brown's last claim is proven to be true, but the agency worker who was quoted by Jackie Baillie was told directly by her agency that it was recruiting for the new social security agency. Of course, if today's debate has achieved nothing else, if we can bring an end to agency work in Scottish Government departments and agencies, that will be a big step in the right direction.

There have been plenty other examples across a whole range of projects, and many of the issues are exemplified by the largest road construction project in Britain today—the Aberdeen western peripheral route. Of course, it is now more than 15 years since a Labour-led Scottish Government committed to building the AWPR; that is a long time to take to build a road, and it is little wonder that those who hope to travel on it are impatient to see it finished.

However, because of the model that was adopted by the SNP, it will also take a long time to pay for the AWPR, and it will cost a lot of money to do so. The Scottish Government's figures from January make clear that the burden of unitary payment charges will be with us for the next 30 years, working out at nearly £1 million a week for the Scottish taxpayers of the 2040s, many of whom have not been born yet. The cost will reach a total of £1.45 billion over those 30 years, compared with a capital value funded by those unitary charges of £469 million—nearly £1 billion in payments, then, over and above the actual value of what is being built.

Derek Mackay: The wording of the motion does not necessarily match what the Labour Party said at the weekend. Is the Labour Party now saying that it will not support any further revenue finance projects in Scotland and that it will oppose new-build projects and projects that support our community and transport infrastructure?

Lewis Macdonald: The Labour Party is saying clearly to the Government today that the time has come for a root-and-branch review of public procurement. There is an opportunity for Derek Mackay to vote for Labour's motion to allow that to happen and then that root-and-branch review can seriously examine all our options.

The truth is that it is not just the cost of public-private partnerships such as that of the AWPR that we need to focus on. Other issues have been exposed with the AWPR and elsewhere. The collapse of Carillion has exposed many aspects of contracting company culture to public view in a way that has not happened before. Here were company executives changing their own rules so that their bonuses could not be clawed back if the company failed; here was a multimillion pound business where revenues fell so far short of commitments that there was not enough cash left at the end even to pay to put the business into administration.

More than that, we got an insight into a culture among companies where such behaviours were clearly not unique; that is a good reason for the Government to think again about the public sector's relationships with contractor companies and to consider what should be put in place in the future.

Of course, we recognise that there are many good companies in that sector of the economy. There are many companies whose practices are right; there are employers who train apprentices and do it well; and there are employers who employ workers directly rather than through the type of employment agencies that charge workers for collecting their own wages, who pay the rate for the job and always pay the living wage, and who recognise trade unions rather than

blacklisting them. We want to ensure—and the purpose of today’s debate is to ensure—that in the future, the Scottish Government awards public contracts to those types of company and not to businesses that are only interested in short-term profits, whatever the long-term costs. That is why we are calling for an independent review.

To look at some of the immediate opportunities that the Government now has, I turn again to the example of the AWPR. The failure of Carillion has left two other partners in the Aberdeen Roads Consortium—Balfour Beatty and Galliford Try. Galliford Try has acknowledged that the additional funding obligations arising from the contract will force it to raise an additional £150 million. Balfour Beatty has not acknowledged anything of the sort—at least not in public. What it has done instead is to continue to bid, and its bid for the next available roads contract at the Haudagain junction in Aberdeen was announced by Transport Scotland just yesterday. At the same time, the same company is telling local staff in another part of its business that they are to lose their jobs. The electricity sub-station design team at Kintore, which works across the Scottish electricity network, is due for closure, and if that happens, those jobs will be offshored outwith Scotland. A company like that ought to be in a position to sit down with its workforce and their trade union and talk about a way forward.

I was glad last week when the First Minister agreed to talk to Balfour Beatty about the threat to jobs. That conversation needs to be robust. A contractor company that wants to work on public sector contracts on Scotland’s roads network is proposing to offshore jobs in Scotland’s energy network. It is bidding, Carillion-style, for one more contract, to make up for losses on the previous one, while making its directly employed staff redundant. Surely companies cannot be allowed to benefit from Scottish public sector contracts while taking no responsibility for the wider Scottish economy or fair employment practices.

That is one more reason why the time has come for a radical change in Scottish public procurement and a root-and-branch review.

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-10987, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 20 March 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.35pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Wednesday 21 March 2018

1.15 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

1:15 pm Members’ Business

followed by Portfolio Questions: Communities, Social Security and Equalities

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

6.00 pm Decision Time

Thursday 22 March 2018

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister’s Questions

followed by Members’ Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2:30 pm Scottish Government Debate: Building Greater Fairness in the Workplace

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 27 March 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 28 March 2018
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Finance and the Constitution; Economy
 Jobs and Fair Work
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 29 March 2018
 11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

and (b) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on 22 March 2018, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister".—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-10988, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2018 [draft] be approved.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Derek Mackay is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-10962.2, in the name of Derek Mackay, which seeks to amend motion S5M-10962, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on procurement, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

(SNP)

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

Against

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

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 63, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-10962.3, in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston, which seeks to amend motion S5M-10962, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on procurement, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)

Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 33, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-10962, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on procurement, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 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)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 36, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-10988, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: Yes!

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. I am glad that members are in such a happy mood.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2018 [draft] be approved.

Incinerators, Public Health and Planning

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-10364, in the name of Monica Lennon, on incinerators, public health and planning in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the important role of the planning system in making decisions about future developments and the use of land in communities; believes that planning decisions should always strive to enhance communities and create high-quality, sustainable places that support the health and wellbeing of current and future generations; understands that planning applications for incineration and energy-from-waste proposals are attracting high levels of opposition from the public and that concerns over public health, traffic, safety and impact on residential amenity are commonly raised as grounds for objection by residents in Lanarkshire, as well as other parts of Scotland; agrees that increasing community engagement in the planning process is important and is concerned that the public does not feel adequately informed or reassured when presented with incineration and energy-from-waste proposals; understands that, at a local and regional level, there is apparent widespread public and political opposition to incineration and energy-from-waste planning applications, leading to concerns that Scottish Planning Policy and the statutory planning process is not affording sufficient protection to communities, and notes the calls, as a matter of public interest, on the Scottish Government to update the Parliament on the latest public health information and research that is available on incineration and energy-from-waste technologies, including the impacts on human health and how this informs the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan and the expectations of everyone involved in the planning process.

17:07

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the members who have signed my motion, and I remind members in the chamber that I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, as is listed in my entry in the register of members' interests. I also say hello to the visitors in the public gallery.

Planning decisions about the use of land and buildings can make or break a community. There is huge potential for the planning system to enhance communities by creating high-quality sustainable places that will support the health and wellbeing of current and future generations. However, the potential to protect and transform places cannot be realised without communities. Communities should be active participants in the planning process rather than passive consumers, and things should be done by and for them rather than to them. In too many cases, our planning system continues to fail on that front.

The best example that I can give of the importance of community in planning comes from my experience in Whitehill, which is a neighbourhood in Hamilton that I previously represented as a councillor and that I am proud to represent as an MSP for Central Scotland. Whitehill is a place where people look out for each other. The residents value green space, and they have fought hard for resources to reduce health inequalities. The community has also faced adversity—it recently lost its library as a result of austerity, and it is certainly in no mood to gain an incinerator.

A proposal for an energy-from-waste incinerator at Whitehill first emerged in 2013. I worked with other local councillors to ensure that people were aware of the proposal and of how they could have their say. Working under the banner of HERAG—the Hamilton energy recovery action group—residents in Whitehill and Burnbank, along with residents from nearby Bothwell and Uddingston and, more recently, from Blantyre, joined forces to campaign, giving up many Saturday mornings and week nights in the process. In May 2014, South Lanarkshire Council's planning committee refused the application. The campaigners were jubilant, but the developer was defiant and submitted an appeal to the Scottish Government in August 2014. Twelve months later, the Scottish Government released its decision, confirming that the incinerator would be allowed to go ahead on the basis of national need. My constituents played by the rules of a plan-led system, but the Scottish Government decided that it knew better. Boosted by the appeal victory, the developer did not stop there. A second planning application was submitted, this time for a bigger and bolder form of incinerator, and the council is still looking at it.

In many ways, the experience with the Whitehill incinerator is a story about the power imbalance that exists at the heart of the planning system. The incinerator proposal was pursued by an applicant who was based in the Isle of Man. It did not comply with the development plan, it did not have support from local residents or from a single local councillor of any party and it did not comply with the Scottish Government's own guidelines for incinerators. According to Scottish planning policy, incinerators should be at least 250m away from homes and other sensitive buildings. This one will be almost cheek by jowl with homes along Whistleberry Crescent and a site for Travelling people.

I will be clear: the approved proposal and the new proposal breach both the development plan and Scottish planning policy. That surely makes a mockery of the plan-led system, which we have had in Scotland for a long time, and undermines the participation of local residents who engaged in the process in good faith. The process has

become a battle, similar to the process for the incinerator that was proposed by Shore Energy in the Carnbroe and Shawhead area, which Elaine Smith has fiercely campaigned against for years alongside campaigners from the MRAPP—Monklands residents against pyrolysis plant—group. Fulton MacGregor, as the constituency member, is also actively campaigning against that proposal.

Across Scotland, local decisions on incinerators are being overturned on appeal, despite the fact that genuine issues in relation to particles, air quality, health impacts, traffic volume and the compatibility of incinerators with residential areas have been inadequately addressed by the Scottish Government and its agencies. If a 250m buffer zone is not really necessary, and if the Minister for Local Government and Housing is prepared to allow incinerators to be built a matter of metres from people's homes and residential caravans, why has the Scottish Government not updated Scottish planning policy to reflect that? Alternatively, if the minister stands by the current Scottish planning policy, will he explain, in winding up the debate, why the Scottish Government is prepared to compromise the safety and amenity of my constituents? I believe that they deserve to know.

Last year, a *Sunday Herald* investigative report by journalist Rob Edwards, which ran under the headline "Ash-heap nation", examined fears about the proliferation of super-incinerators across Scotland. In the report, Dr Richard Dixon of Friends of the Earth Scotland warned the Scottish Government to

"stop this rush to incineration before it is too late."

If the Government is to push ahead with super-incinerators to meet national targets on waste, it must be clearer with communities about the health risks that incineration poses. Such a push cannot come at the expense of the health and wellbeing of those in some of our most deprived communities. If the Government is to continue with the current policy framework, it must publish updated guidance that identifies the impact of incineration with regard to pollution and human health. In addition, more consideration must be given to the location of development sites.

The decision to allow the Whitehill incinerator to go ahead came down to an interpretation that placed national priority ahead of local need and local circumstance. The remedy for the communities that are affected by the proposed incinerator lies in the hands of the Minister for Local Government and Housing, who could right a wrong instead of sticking to the position of his predecessor. He could, at the stroke of a pen, use the powers that are available to the Scottish Government to withdraw planning permission for

the Whitehill incinerator. To do so would be to respect the views of four-year-old Lilygrace McGhee, whose handwritten objection letter voiced her concerns for the wildlife that lives on the site and for her friends who use Backmuir woods. Like me, she is worried that the incinerator will harm the health of the community.

Planning should drive up standards in place making and improve the public health of the nation. Incinerators that are situated in built-up areas and that violate development plans put that at risk. My plea to the Scottish Government is this: please do not turn us into an ash-heap nation.

17:15

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing this important issue to the chamber. It is of significant relevance to my Uddingston and Bellshill constituency, and I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate.

The motion in Monica Lennon's name mentions Scotland's zero waste plan, and I will begin my remarks on that subject. It is right that we recognise the importance of the strategy and the leadership that it offers on waste management. Our excellent former Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment, in his ministerial foreword to the plan, rightly recognised that, under the Scottish Government, there had been a dramatic cut in the amount of waste that we throw away in landfill sites and that recycling rates had soared. With vigour, the Scottish Government has supported local authorities in their efforts to increase recycling rates.

Moving on from our record on waste management and recycling, I wish to focus on what is at the heart of the motion: incinerators as a form of waste management and their impact on public health in Scotland. As many members will be aware, my constituency currently faces the prospect of being hemmed in by incinerators on both sides, from the Whistleberry site in Whitehill, which is in my constituency, to the Carnbroe plans in the neighbouring Coatbridge and Chryston constituency, which I am sure Fulton MacGregor will mention.

The question is, what does that mean for my constituents? The answer is quite clear: it means a proposal for a flue stack of between 90m and 95m high at the Whistleberry site, which would dominate the local skyline. As has been mentioned, the site is very close to houses in Whitehill and Hamilton. Fly ash poses a very real risk to ground water, and it will potentially have an impact on public health by association through harmful by-products and emissions. The situation

reminds my constituents of the Stealers Wheel song, but instead of

"Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right",

it is incinerators to the left of them, incinerators to the right. It is utterly unacceptable, and I, along with my constituents, will oppose the proposals.

I am always heartened by the strength of the response from people in our communities that are affected by incinerators. As has been said, they have mobilised and formed action groups, including MRAPP and HERAG. I am delighted to work with HERAG to inform local people of the impact that Whitehill and other areas face as a result of the proposals. All those who are involved in those organisations have freely given their time and resources to campaign passionately, not only to inform the public but to share important information that often goes unnoticed. Their work is testament to the power of local people to campaign on issues that are important to them, and I pay tribute to them all for their work.

Monica Lennon made her point quite forcefully, and I am happy to join her in asking the Government—as I have done over the past year or so—to look at the proposal that has been submitted for a site in my constituency. It is too near Whitehill and must be opposed. I join Monica Lennon in asking the minister to look closely at the proposal and exercise his pen, and I look forward to hearing the speeches from other members.

17:18

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing the debate to the chamber. Although I recognise that the motion highlights specific local issues, we need to set out the general context of incineration in order that we can properly review what is happening at Whitehill.

First, we must establish why we should not incinerate waste. It is widely established that the best way to deal with our waste—as it is commonly termed—is, first, to prevent it; secondly, to prepare it for reuse; thirdly, to recycle it; and, finally, depending on which waste hierarchy we use, to either incinerate it or send it to landfill. There is an argument that it is better to send waste to landfill than to incinerate it, because that at least potentially allows for the recovery of those valuable resources at some point in the future. If any incineration is going on, it should always, as a bare minimum, be combined with heat and electricity production.

One reason for that is that we do not want to continue digging up resources and transporting them halfway round the world to be put together, often under some of the worst and most horrendous labour conditions on the planet, after

which products are shipped back to Europe, including Scotland and the United Kingdom, where they are used for a very short time, or sometimes not at all, and are then tossed in the trash and—ludicrously—burned after so much time has been spent on designing them.

Another reason is more practical. Local authorities often sign up to a contract with a waste company for up to 25 years in order to burn waste. The Scottish Government knows that it has set targets for those same local authorities to recycle waste. It is clear that we cannot both recycle and burn the same product, but some local authorities think that that is possible; I would like to hear their feedback on that. There is a risk that we will not meet our targets.

The state of play in Scotland is increasingly worrying. The Scottish Government has planned a twelfold increase in incineration over the next five years. Since 2011, incineration has increased by two thirds, which is very worrying for us all. I urge a moratorium—I know that the Greens support us in this—on the building of new incineration facilities. That would stop the development of the incinerator to which Monica Lennon’s motion refers, but other incinerators have passed the point of no return, and we will need to live with the consequences.

My colleagues in Europe told me that they have one piece of advice for Scotland: do not build these plants. They have an overcapacity in that regard. If local authorities or others really want to burn stuff, they can duly export it to Europe, where people will happily burn it for them. The answer is not to do that in Scotland. I welcome Monica Lennon’s motion, and I hope that the Government will take a proper look at ending the use of incinerators once and for all.

17:23

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I first became aware of issues around incineration—which involves pyrolysis and the production of energy from waste—in 2009, when an application was submitted for a pyrolysis plant at a site at Carnbroe, as Monica Lennon mentioned. The communities of Carnbroe, Sikeside and Shawhead were, understandably, extremely worried about the proposed development, and they organised the MRAPP campaign. They are still campaigning against the incinerator, and I am pleased that Fulton MacGregor is supporting them, too.

I attended the first public meeting on the proposed development in order to hear the concerns, and I subsequently spoke at numerous public events in support of my constituents. Local

families felt strongly that the construction and operation of a pyrolysis incinerator as a private business venture would have a negative impact on the quality of life of the many families who live in the large residential areas adjacent to the site and the families throughout the wider area. The waste reduction facilities in the Coatbridge area are more than sufficient, and the area has also suffered over the years as a result of landfill sites.

At the time of the original application, I stated that I was not prepared

“to stand by and allow my”

area

“to become the waste capital of Scotland”

and a

“dumping ground for everyone else’s waste.”—[*Official Report*, 12 May 2010; c 26082.]

The council refused planning permission for the development, and that should have been the end of the matter. As Monica Lennon said, the MRAPP campaigners were pleased about that. Over the years, ministers have been keen to tell us that planning decisions should be taken at a local level. However, the case went to Scottish Government reporters, who held an initial meeting in 2010, when snow prevented local people from being able to attend—so much for local involvement. I presented on behalf of the community at a hearing over several days, which was a fun way to spend my February recess. The outcome of that process should have been a decision against the development, but that was not the case. Unusually, the council took the matter to court but, unfortunately, it did not win. Indeed, the Scottish Government refused to use its powers to step in and stop the development. That was unfortunate, given that the Government’s answer to my many questions on that particular facility over the years had always been that decisions should be taken locally. Indeed—I think that they should.

At the time, Maggie Proctor, who was a leading campaigner, said:

“We cannot, and will not, accept that this incinerator is necessary for Monklands.”

She went on to say of the company:

“Their only risk is financial, they are asking us to risk so much more.”

Maggie Proctor was, and is, deeply concerned about the health implications of this type of incineration, and rightly so. Someone who is living in Lanarkshire is far more likely than the UK average to be admitted to hospital with chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder. Pollutants are known to aggravate respiratory conditions, including asthma. The reporters stated that there would be no significant impacts on human health

but, given that these incinerators involve emerging technology, I fail to see how they could have been sure. Pyrolysis systems have not been around long enough to allow people to testify to their safety, and no plant can be failsafe. No one in the local area wanted to take that risk, given that schools and nurseries lay within a short distance of the site and hundreds of family homes were right next to it. An accident at a plant in Germany led to the pyrolysis gas leaking into the atmosphere, and residents had to be evacuated and taken to hospital for checks.

Friends of the Earth criticises the plants because it is difficult to know what exactly will be emitted, given that that information comes from the companies themselves. I suggest that it would be better for the environment if we focused on recycling and other forms of waste prevention, given that—as Maurice Golden pointed out—any type of incineration can undermine recycling efforts. After all, incinerators require a continuous supply of waste in order to make money.

In any Government waste strategy, environmental justice must be paramount. Worryingly, research has shown that more deprived communities bear a disproportionate burden of negative environmental impacts such as industrial pollution. Like Monica Lennon, I ask that the Government update its public health information on these technologies as soon as possible.

The biggest problem with the process is the lack of democratic accountability for decisions, especially when council decisions are overturned by the Government. Increasing community engagement in the planning process is of paramount importance; listening to the real concerns of local people, especially regarding incinerator proposals, must be a priority; and stopping the apparent presumption in favour of big business over communities is vital. Once again, I thank Monica Lennon.

17:27

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I will highlight an example of an incinerator proposal in my region, on the site of a former open-cast coal mine at Westfield, near Kinglassie in Fife. Westfield is a vast site that has lain empty since the last coal was extracted, in 1998. The land has gone to seed and the pits have filled up with toxic water. It is no surprise that the local community was initially enthusiastic to hear, in 2016, that plans had been lodged to redevelop the site into a renewable energy and recycling park. The master plan for redevelopment includes solar farms, glasshouses for horticulture, business units, a recycling centre

and public access works. However, at the heart of the plan is a 20MW energy recovery facility—or, as the general public would more commonly understand it, an incinerator. The plans for the incinerator, which are buried in a 156-page planning statement, include provision for burning around 200,000 tonnes of waste per year, with an estimated 64 lorries a day visiting the site along narrow rural roads.

Constituents approached me just a few weeks before Fife Council was due to consider the master plan, and many of them had only just realised that the plans included an incinerator. I heard of community council meetings at which the developer presented plans for redeveloped lochs, local business opportunities and thousands of jobs, with not one single mention of the incinerator that was at the heart of the plan. People have told me that they feel duped and let down by the planning process. There has been no honest or open discussion about the need for an incinerator, only confusing language and green-washed promises.

The planning application for the development uses the failure to meet recycling targets as justification for building further incineration facilities. It states:

“Not only was the 2013 target missed by some margin, the rate of increase has effectively stagnated ... Whilst the Zero Waste recycling targets are laudable, and remain the Scottish Government’s stated position, the reality is that they are very unlikely to be achieved.”

The application goes on to extrapolate how much waste will need to be incinerated in Scotland once a landfill ban is in place and if we reach a recycling rate of only 50 per cent. We must bear in mind that the application was approved in principle by Fife Council in October last year. Is the Scottish Government really happy with the interpretation of our struggle to meet recycling targets as a need to burn more waste rather than improve recycling rates?

I also have concerns about a glaring loophole in the regulations, which are covered by the “Thermal Treatment of Waste Guidelines 2014”. Those guidelines specify an exemption for

“Material with no prospect of being recycled due to severe and/or prolonged market downturn/collapse.”

That material could then be incinerated. Given that, at the start of this year, China stopped taking 24 different kinds of materials, including many plastics, it is only a matter of time before that vague exemption is enacted. It is clear that developers are relying on such regulatory loopholes to make the case for their applications to planning authorities.

Increasingly, it seems that such planning decisions are taken not by Government policy but

by the speculative projections of private developers who are looking to cash in. If planning policy is to be truly effective and give local communities a fair say in developments, it must be led by robust, evidence-led Government policy that is free from loopholes that could lead to our best zero waste intentions going up in smoke.

17:31

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing the debate to the chamber. As the site is less than a mile outside my constituency, I will centre my speech on my long-standing opposition to the proposed Whitehill incinerator, which is to be situated just over the border in Richard Lyle's Uddingston and Bellshill constituency. The site may well be in another member's constituency, but harmful emissions and pollution do not respect boundaries, nor will the associated health risks be confined to one single constituency. It is therefore entirely understandable, and indeed welcome, that politicians from different political parties and across various constituencies have united with local communities to oppose the facility in Whitehill.

I put on record my appreciation for the grass-roots work that has been undertaken by Blantyre and Halfway community councils, in my constituency, both of which have been instrumental in the campaign against the incinerator. As I highlighted in a parliamentary motion last August, Blantyre community council alone amassed more than 3,400 letters of objection as well as a 2,200-signature petition against the proposal after conducting an extensive campaign in the area over the summer. All of that was achieved, I am told, with representatives from the community council chapping the door of almost every home in Blantyre, and I was pleased to have been able to assist with their efforts.

Given the projected impact radius of the potentially harmful emissions, which is estimated at six miles, Halfway community council objected to the proposal, too. Its members embarked on a similar exercise to that of their Blantyre counterparts. Members of Halfway community council visited the vast majority of homes in the Cambuslang East ward, which is no mean feat, and they secured a further 600 objections.

In total, with the work of other community organisations and the Hamilton energy recovery action group, more than 6,000 objections have been lodged with South Lanarkshire Council.

Maurice Golden: I respect the work that the member has carried out in Blantyre. I wonder whether the member thinks that any of the proposed facilities should be built in Scotland.

Clare Haughey: I certainly do not want them built in Scotland, if Mr Golden is asking for my opinion. I think I have been quite clear about that in my speech.

Without the actions of the community, the developer, Clean Power Properties, would not have faced anywhere near the level of opposition that it has faced over the past few years, so everyone involved must be congratulated on their drive and commitment.

In my response to the application, I raised 12 separate points of objection. My objections included the proximity of the proposed facility to residential dwellings, which Monica Lennon has mentioned. The development would be situated approximately 50m from a residential site that is home to local showpeople—not Travelling people, but showpeople. There are several food and drink manufacturers and producers near the proposed facility, that may be adversely affected by emissions—in particular, Dunns, on Glasgow Road in Blantyre, in my constituency.

Regarding the specific technologies that the plant would utilise, the Whitehill incinerator is proposed to use pyrolysis and gasification, which, according to Friends of the Earth, would rely on a feedstock rich in paper and kitchen and garden waste. However, those materials are widely recycled by local authorities already, which begs the question why the incinerator is needed in Whitehill at all.

My constituents should be in no doubt: I am fully opposed to the proposal and, indeed, to a similar one in Monklands, on which I also lodged an objection earlier this month. I wish those who are campaigning against that development well. Our planning system plays a crucial role in the outcome of future developments and in ensuring that communities are properly engaged in the process. Given the sizeable number of objections to the Monklands and Whitehill incinerators, it is clear that local people are engaged in the process in this instance.

I agree with what many members have previously said. In my opinion, the Whitehill incinerator and similar proposals are not the answer when it comes to reducing landfill or to waste management. Richard Lyle's constituents do not want it, Fulton MacGregor's constituents do not want it and my constituents certainly do not want it. South Lanarkshire Council's planning committee is set to rule on the application in due course, and I sincerely hope that the hard work of the Halfway and Blantyre community councils, and that of the other community campaigns, pays off.

17:36

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I, too, thank Monica Lennon for securing this very important debate.

Apart from dealing with Brexit, I have done little else but think about planning recently. Monica Lennon and I sit on the Local Government and Communities Committee, which is dealing with the Planning (Scotland) Bill—which I have to say is seriously flawed.

This debate raises a number of important matters that are part of our considerations. First, there is the role of planning, about which the bill says nothing. Readers are left with no idea of what planning is for. It should be about creating and protecting great places—places that enhance the health and wellbeing of their residents. Last week, I held a members' business debate on the importance of the green belt, which dealt with that very issue. I need not go over that ground again, but those who know me are aware of my passion for protecting Scotland's environment.

The second issue is that people feel remote from the decision-making process. There is no doubt that communities feel excluded from the planning system. The local issue that Monica Lennon brought up in her speech highlights that.

Clean Power Properties was met with opposition to its original plans for an incinerator on the site of the former Craighead school back in 2013, and a campaign was launched against those proposals. As members have heard, South Lanarkshire Council refused the application, but a decision was taken by the Scottish Government reporter in 2015 to overturn that. The Scottish Government thought that it knew best.

Clean Power Properties then came back with a revised application for something even bigger. It has yet to be considered, but I am on the side of the community, just like those who have already spoken in the debate.

That brings me on to the next issue: where the power to make decisions should lie. That is a huge issue at the heart of the Planning (Scotland) Bill. Is it right that a democratic decision taken locally can be overturned? Is it right that ministers can call in applications and overturn decisions?

I asked about that at the Local Government and Communities Committee last week, and a witness told me that ministers were "democratically accountable" and that they only called in major applications. That is not true. There is little trust in the system. We are considering how better to front load the Planning (Scotland) Bill, but it fails on that front.

The final issue is how we deal with waste, about which Maurice Golden is more of an expert than I

am. We have called for a moratorium on new incinerators, and I am glad to hear Clare Haughey back that. However, we need to deal with our waste somehow, and we cannot go on dumping it willy-nilly in landfill sites, which are also controversial. Some time ago, as you may recall, Presiding Officer, I played a part in getting Glasgow's massive landfill site on the edge of East Kilbride shut down to further waste. It sat in what was green-belt land and, in my view, was responsible for polluting a local wildlife reserve. It should never have been there but, if memory serves me right, planning permission for it was granted on appeal. Local politicians were overruled—there is a pattern here.

From South Lanarkshire to North Lanarkshire, we have plans for incinerators. What we do not want is for the area that we represent to become incinerator central. We need to trust the local politicians.

17:40

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Monica Lennon on securing the debate. I thank her for her excellent speech, which reflected her first-class knowledge of planning and, of course, her local community.

Discussions about town planning can often be framed in the negative. We usually hear about a planning decision because someone somewhere disagrees with it. For those seeking to obtain permission for an application and for those wishing to object to an application, the complex process can be long and confusing.

Of course, town and country planning plays a crucial role in the flourishing of our communities. The system allows, or should allow, for serious thought as to how land can be used in the long-term interest of Scottish citizens. Planning decisions therefore have the power to impact intimately on individuals' lives. The stakes are high and the pressure is great.

Our aspirations for town planning are also high. We want it to deliver more sustainable places that can encourage economic growth, but without damaging the environment. We want it to deliver places that enhance and embrace Scotland's beautiful natural assets, but which also connect us better than ever before.

It is from that point that the motion turns to the issue of waste facilities or waste incinerators. Billed as a method of supporting a circular economy—at least on the face of it—the proposal to use our waste as a valuable energy source might seem positive, but it is not news to anyone in the chamber that, historically, we have largely taken a careless approach to waste. Growing momentum for recycling and re-use initiatives

stems from a modern awareness of the damage that is being done to our planet and the dangers of climate change. There is a consensus that we need to be responsible users of our natural resources. That means efficiently reducing our waste output where possible. However, the opposition to the development of waste incineration suggests that there is more to the story.

From an environmental perspective, energy-from-waste facilities are promoted as sources of energy that can reduce our need for energy that is generated from fossil fuels. However, the extent to which such energy sources should carry the “renewable” tag is debateable. Current rules require that any recycling is first sifted, but those rules are useful only if robust enforcement is possible. Even if there are guarantees that waste will be separated in advance, the messaging is key. We cannot allow public enthusiasm for recycling to wane by appearing to present incineration as an alternative.

The emissions from facilities are a key sticking point for local communities. Evidence may suggest that the potential health effects for local residents are small, but a number of factors are at play, many of which are key considerations in planning applications. We have heard about those factors already in the debate—they include distance from local homes. A planning process that is incomprehensible and difficult to access will give residents little confidence that their health fears are being adequately considered.

It is worth noting that current assurances rely on the European pollution prevention regulations and the European Union's waste incinerator directive. With Brexit looming ever closer on the horizon, it is imperative that those strict environmental controls for energy-from-waste facilities are not eroded.

Environmental initiatives are not there just to tick a box. Our efforts to improve the way in which we treat our environment are made because we want to protect our natural assets and improve the wellbeing of Scottish citizens in the future. We should not lose sight of that.

With such a contentious subject, the Scottish Government must continually ensure that incineration is as efficient as expected and remains justified on balance. It is necessary for decision making on energy-from-waste facilities to be as well informed as possible.

Difficult decisions are sometimes required, but it is crucial that communities are involved and listened to throughout the planning process. On issues such as this, we need to remember our goal. If the planning system is intended to serve the communities of Scotland as we want it to do, it is not sufficient for the “environmentally friendly”

label to be used unquestioningly as an excuse to run roughshod over communities' genuine concerns.

I again thank Monica Lennon for her initiative, and I fully support her motion and her campaign on this issue.

17:45

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I thank Monica Lennon for securing the debate.

It will come as no surprise that I will focus my comments on a situation with which I have had much involvement: the incinerator, pyrolysis plant or energy-to-waste unit—whatever members want to call it—at Carnbroe in Coatbridge, which has been mentioned already.

The historical facts of the case are what they are—Elaine Smith outlined them. Suffice to say that North Lanarkshire Council rejected the original proposal, but its decision was overturned on appeal by the reporter. Money was subsequently spent by North Lanarkshire Council on taking the matter to court; unfortunately, that was in vain, too.

Despite that, another fact holds true: there is no incinerator yet. There are a variety of reasons for that, but it is in no small part down to the efforts and dedication of the campaign group, Monklands residents against pyrolysis plant, ably led by Maggie Proctor—Elaine Smith mentioned her, too. When Maggie speaks to people, one of her key messages is to remind us that the areas that will be affected by such a development are not just the Coatbridge areas of Carnbroe, Sikeside and Shawhead, but many others for miles around.

That leads me to thank all political parties and politicians across North Lanarkshire for joining me in placing objections with the council. I include the MSPs for the neighbouring areas, Alex Neil, Richard Lyle and Clare Haughey; Neil Gray MP; and the Labour and Conservative list MSPs for Central Scotland. It would be remiss of me not to give a special mention to Elaine Smith, who, as my predecessor in the Coatbridge and Chryston constituency, fought the proposal for a long time.

When I was elected, the situation was well known to me. I had family and friends in Carnbroe and Shawhead, and I knew about the 6,000-strong petition, but I felt that I had a duty to test the matter. Last summer, I undertook a survey, over a very short space of time, in the area most affected. Nearly 500 households responded—I am keen to stress that that number of households responded. Their survey returns showed that many of those households contained two, three or four family members—members can do the maths. Almost all

those people said that they had serious concerns about the building of the plant.

Following that, a community meeting was called with the developers, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the campaign group so that people could raise their concerns. Hundreds packed into Carnbroe primary school. I do not think that anyone could have left the meeting in any doubt about what people in the local area thought of the new proposals: they felt the same as they had always felt.

Having that information allows me to come to forums such as this in my role as MSP and say with full confidence that the people of my constituency do not want the proposal to proceed.

There are a variety of reasons why people do not want it, of which health inequality is by far the most prominent. Coatbridge already has a high level of health problems, including asthma, COPD and lung disease. I am delighted that the Scottish Government has targeted Coatbridge as one of the first low-emission zones after the major cities, especially as the road running through Whifflet, which is not much more than a stone's throw from the proposed development, regularly exceeds the recommended emissions level.

People are worried that the chemicals involved will affect their health and that of their children. They are also concerned that the area could be made less attractive in terms of housing and being a place where people bring up their families. It could put people off the area. This all comes after I sought assurances from the Government that the new road networks around the M8 would bring economic benefit to the local area. What a shame if the only tangible thing that is brought is waste, feeding down the A8 and coming off at the Carnbroe junction.

On the history of the area, a recycling plant had to be closed down by SEPA at Shawhead—again, just a stone's throw from the proposed plant. At this point, I should mention community campaigners such as Keirsten Smith, who helped to bring about that closure.

The group of which Elaine Smith was a member will be set up again, following the public meeting that I mentioned—although perhaps that has been overtaken by events. There is an application in place, for which objections had to be in by the start of the month. Hundreds of objections have come in, including from the MSPs I mentioned. The application, which will go before councillors, is an amendment to a previous application that had to be withdrawn. Questions were raised about whether that should have been allowed, as the proposal is clearly for a major new development, and therefore should have been subject to sections 35A and 35B of the Planning (Scotland)

Act 1997. I have asked the Government a question on that matter, and I await a response.

The environmentalist in me leads me to take a particular view of the need for and usefulness of incineration but, despite that, I accept that a wider argument may be required. How many of them do we need? Where should they go if they are required? How should local communities be involved in the planning process? Those are all questions that we must answer.

I know that the proposed site is not the right place. The plant should not be in a heavily built-up and populated area with high levels of poverty and health inequality. It should not be in an area that many of us are actively trying to regenerate and where we are trying to encourage expansion—including the exciting plans for the Monklands hospital. It should not be in Coatbridge. The people do not want it, and they have spoken time and time again.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close.

Fulton MacGregor: For the good of the nation, the Government has taken on fracking, it has taken on the whisky companies and it is currently fighting a Brexit power grab. Carnbroe does not want an incinerator and, if we all stick together in our efforts to prevent it, we can succeed.

I am fully aware that the situation is with North Lanarkshire Council—it has nothing at all to do with the minister.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close.

Fulton MacGregor: I think that this is important, Presiding Officer.

However—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It may well be important, but please close.

Fulton MacGregor: Okay—thank you.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You blew it with that last comment, Mr MacGregor.

Margaret Mitchell is the final speaker in the debate. One of the reasons why I have to be so quick is that we have run out of time. To allow Margaret Mitchell to speak and the minister respond, I am minded to accept a motion, under rule 8.14.3, that we extend the debate.

Motion moved,

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

Motion agreed to.

17:51

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in today's members' business debate about incinerators, public health and planning. I thank Monica Lennon for raising this important topic for debate.

The Hamilton constituency office, which I share with my colleague Alison Harris, is located just along from the former site of Craighead school, on Whistleberry Road. Over the past few years, as we have heard, the land has been the subject of a planning application for development of an energy recovery centre. They are, as Mark Ruskell said, commonly known as incinerators.

The first application was lodged by the developer, Clean Power Properties, in 2013. It triggered universal opposition from the local community and the local authority, South Lanarkshire Council, which rejected the planning application in 2014. Thereafter, the application was referred to the Scottish Government reporter, who found in favour of the developer in 2015.

As a consequence, the local community and the thousands of individuals who had recorded their opposition to the incinerator, including councillors and MSPs from all parties, felt that their justifiable concerns had been swept aside. Rather than the decision being taken locally by people who were well placed to assess the issues of concern, the decision making was centralised.

In 2017, the community was dealt another blow when Clean Power Properties returned with plans for an even bigger facility. As part of the planning application, the developer has applied for permission to build a 95m-high emissions stack. For those who are unfamiliar with Hamilton, that stack would tower over the 60m-high County buildings, which can be seen from miles around. For the local community, that simply means the bigger the plans, the greater the risks.

As yet, the local authority has not taken a decision on the latest application. In the meantime, the local community's campaign of opposition continues, with the support of organisations such as the Hamilton energy recovery action group, the Bothwell Road action group, Hamilton Academical Football Club and the *Hamilton Advertiser*.

Elsewhere in Lanarkshire, the community faces a similar battle, and the Monklands residents against pyrolysis plant group has been battling incinerator planning applications in Carnbroe since 2009.

Pyrolysis and gasification is a new and developing technology, which divides opinion. What is certain is that there is little proof to corroborate the claims that have been made on

performance, safety, the potential environmental effects and sustainability. It is a fact, however, that the incineration process, in whichever form, produces acid gases, particulates, dioxins, airborne heavy metals and ash residues.

For all the reasons that have been listed, including those concerning the health and wellbeing of future generations, the local communities' opposition to the new incinerators must be heard and acted upon. It is essential that we, as elected members, continue to work together on a cross-party basis to support the local communities and the tremendous effort that they have put into campaigns to reject the incinerators as new technology whose effects have not been tested and remain unknown.

17:55

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): I congratulate Monica Lennon on securing today's debate, and I thank everyone for their contributions.

As everyone in the chamber is aware, it is not appropriate for ministers to comment on the merits of any individual application, because that might prejudice the outcome of the decision-making process. My response today will therefore focus on planning policy and the improvements that we are making to planning in Scotland, including through the Planning (Scotland) Bill, which is currently before Parliament. I will also touch on some of the waste policies that we have.

Scotland needs new development and infrastructure to support a low-carbon economy, and we need to work with communities so that that happens in a sustainable way. Our approach to waste and resource management focuses on development of a more circular economy, which means reducing leakage of valuable materials from the economy. We need to consume less, reuse more, repair more and recycle more in order to keep those materials in circulation for as long as possible.

That is why the waste hierarchy is at the heart of our waste legislation and policy. The hierarchy states, first, that we should use or consume as little as possible. If we absolutely must consume a product, we should try to reuse it. An example of that is our proposed deposit return scheme for drinks containers. If we cannot reuse something, we should repair it. If we cannot repair it, we should recycle the component parts of the product.

Maurice Golden: I wonder whether we could focus on whether the twelvefold increase in incineration is compatible with the circular economy that the minister has so adeptly articulated.

Kevin Stewart: In 2015, mixed municipal waste—residual waste—that was generated in Scotland came to 1,982,396 tonnes. Less than 6 per cent of that was put to incineration, and that incineration was all done at two existing plants, in Dundee and Shetland.

We have done a lot of work with local authorities to try to make it easier for people to separate their waste properly, so that more can be recycled. Twenty-six councils have now signed up to the household recycling charter.

What we all put in our residual waste bags—the general waste that we do not put in our recycling bins—is collected and then sorted in order to try to remove anything that can be recycled. Sometimes, however, it is simply not possible to recycle materials, as folk are well aware. That might be due to very high contamination levels or to the poor condition of the materials, or it might be because there are not currently processors that are capable of recycling that material. What is left, which inevitably includes some biodegradable material, currently goes to landfill, in the main.

That will change in January 2021, when a statutory ban on biodegradable waste going to landfill is introduced. Therefore, that waste will move up to the next step on the waste hierarchy, which is energy from waste. That means that we will need some additional capacity. National planning policies require planning authorities to prioritise development in line with the waste hierarchy, and state that strategic and local development plans should allocate sites for future waste facilities.

Graham Simpson: The minister talks about extra capacity. Does that mean more incinerators?

Kevin Stewart: Extra capacity does not necessarily mean more incinerators. I am not going to get drawn on individual applications, as I have said, because that would prejudice me in any future decision making. I have stated that we already have two incinerators in operation, in Dundee and Shetland.

As I have said, national planning policies require planning authorities to prioritise development. Planning and regulation are needed to ensure that communities and the environment are protected from the impacts of developments. We have a clear regulatory framework that extends beyond planning to ensure that decisions on waste facilities are made on the basis of good evidence as well as community views.

Monica Lennon: Will the minister take an intervention?

Kevin Stewart: It will have to be very brief. I am taking the intervention only because Ms Lennon lodged the motion.

Members: Aw!

Monica Lennon: I am flattered.

I know that the minister has to steer away from talking about individual applications, and I understand that he is setting out an evidence-based approach. Given that the minister is privy to a lot of advice from officials and so on, could he allay the fears of our constituents? Would he like to live within 100m or so of an incinerator? That is what is facing the people whom we represent.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can allow you a wee bit of extra time, minister. You have been generous with interventions.

Kevin Stewart: If I give an opinion about incinerators, that might prejudice any future decision that I have to make. I apologise to Ms Lennon, but I am not going to rise to that bait. I have to be very fair in all that I do. Members of the public would expect me to do that. As folk are well aware, the ministerial code has a special section for the planning minister, and I do not want to fall foul of the ministerial code.

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

Kevin Stewart: I am sorry, but I really cannot. I realise that we are now over time.

I have been very clear that planning should be done with people, not to people. Within our Planning (Scotland) Bill, which is currently being scrutinised, we have opportunities to ensure that people become more involved right at the beginning of the planning process, in order to avoid conflict at the end. That is what I want to happen. I hope that Parliament will scrutinise and pass the bill so that we get to that position.

I encourage many more folk to become involved in the planning system than there are currently, and I hope that we get to that point.

Thank you very much for allowing me the additional time, Presiding Officer.

Meeting closed at 18:03.

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