



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Tuesday 17 April 2018**

**Session 5**



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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 17 April 2018*

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

## Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Good afternoon and welcome back. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is the Rev Alexander Ritchie, minister of Erskine United Free Church, Burntisland, and a former moderator of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland.

**The Rev Alexander Ritchie (Erskine United Free Church, Burntisland):** I greatly appreciate the opportunity to address Parliament this afternoon.

During a recent trip to California, I attended a National Basketball Association game between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Los Angeles Clippers. Sport has always interested me; part of my ministry involves chaplaincy with East Fife Football Club, which is close to my community of Burntisland. The indoor Staples center was somewhat warmer—and infinitely drier—than Bayview stadium outside on a Saturday afternoon in any month of the year.

Basketball teams are allowed to call timeouts in the course of the game, which lets them discuss their tactics, make a substitution or simply encourage one another. Crucially, during each timeout, the match clock is paused and does not move until the timeout ends.

This brief session is labelled “Time for Reflection”. It creates a space for quiet thought before the clock of parliamentary business starts to tick. Whether you are a person of faith or not, it remains a basic human need to make time for that pause: to think rather than to speak, to look at ourselves rather than at everyone else and for calm stillness rather than frantic activity.

In my tradition, Jesus shared personal truths with others, often getting right to the heart of the person rather than the superficial level of their outward appearance. One wealthy man turned away when he could not face selling his possessions to live a transformed, spiritual existence. A woman at a well found herself with someone who was able to explain all about her lifestyle; her words were:

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did”.

There are no timeouts yet in force in Scottish football, but we certainly need them in the midst of

life’s pressures and stress. In the United Free Church of Scotland, we pray for this chamber and all its members faithfully, asking God for the wisdom and counsel necessary for you to guide our national life. I hope that, in the course of this week and, indeed, this busy day, each of you will take more than just this timeout, with any quiet, yet creative, way to enable you to recharge, reconfigure or reboot—whatever idiom works for you. For me, prayer is vital—a faith aid that is always accessible and never unavailable.

Remember that the game clock pauses while you reflect, so the potential benefits are great, not least because no ground is lost and nothing has changed. You will return to the fray wiser and enriched, and, perhaps, more balanced in perspective and more conciliatory in approach. Thank you.

## Business Motion

14:04

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-11679, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for today.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for Tuesday 17 April—

after

*followed by* Topical Questions

insert

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: NHS Tayside

after

*followed by* Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee Debate: Air Quality in Scotland Inquiry

insert

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Update on BiFab

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.30 pm Decision Time—*[Joe FitzPatrick]*

*Motion agreed to.*

## Topical Question Time

14:04

### Pinneys of Scotland

1. **Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to the workforce of Pinneys in Annan. (S5T-01019)

**The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse):** I know that Oliver Mundell will share my shock and deep concern about the announcement by Young's Seafood that it intends to cease production at its Pinneys of Scotland Annan site. As he is aware, a statutory consultation is now under way, so we should not prejudge the outcome, but we recognise that any such cessation of production would be devastating for the dedicated and highly experienced workforce at that site and that it could have profound implications for the economic and social wellbeing of Annan and the wider community in Annandale and Eskdale.

I make absolutely clear my commitment and that of the Scottish Government to doing all that we can with all the resources that are available to us and our partner agencies in working to seek to maintain production at the Pinneys of Scotland site and to retain as many of the jobs as possible. I have held a number of early discussions, including with the management of Young's Seafood and Unite the union, and I have established an action group with a membership that includes Dumfries and Galloway Council, our enterprise and skills agencies and industry representatives to explore all viable options to protect employment. I repeat my commitment that we will leave no stone unturned to try to find a solution.

I will visit the Pinneys of Scotland plant on Thursday to meet Mr Bill Showalter, who is the chief executive of Young's Seafood, and will convey our concern about the situation and reinforce the message that we are keen to work with Young's Seafood to secure the employment at the site. I will also meet representatives of the workforce and assure them that the Scottish Government and our partners will provide all the support that we can during this difficult time.

**Oliver Mundell:** I thank the minister for the work that he has done to date. It is very important that we have managed to build cross-party consensus around what is the most significant thing to happen in the Dumfriesshire constituency since my election. Does the minister believe that there is a willingness from Young's Seafood to retain production on the site? From the conversations

that he has had so far, can he say what options have been explored with the company?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I echo Oliver Mundell's point: we are very pleased that there is cross-party consensus on the issue. It will help the workforce enormously to know that we are all behind it, and that will help our efforts to secure a positive outcome. I particularly welcome the activities of Mr Mundell, Joan McAlpine, Colin Smyth and other local members in working with the Scottish Government constructively to explore all possible solutions.

On Young's Seafood's willingness to engage with us, we can take it at its word. It has said that it will work closely with us and that it had assumed in taking the original decision that some options were perhaps not available to it. Therefore, it is willing to reopen that discussion.

It is clear that two of the three main contracts—one, unfortunately, in Scotland and the other nearby in Carlisle—have been lost to other businesses. That means that it will be difficult to sustain all the employment in Annan unless we find alternative sources of business for the plant with other retailers or another occupier to come in in the event that the plant is to close.

Obviously, we have to await the outcome of the statutory consultation before we take forward some aspects of the work, but I reassure Oliver Mundell that we are very much focusing on looking at all the options and that we will do everything that we can, working with local members, to provide a viable future for the site.

**Oliver Mundell:** My understanding is that four parties have expressed at least early interest in the site. I seek the minister's reassurance that those potential buyers will be entitled to help and support from the Government's agencies and that any grants or financial incentives that can be put in place will be put in place should those buyers decide to move forward.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I can certainly say to Mr Mundell that we will offer, subject to all the due diligence that would have to be undertaken with any grant application, all financial support that we can within the state aid limits that we have to operate within. I know that he is aware that seafood is, unfortunately, affected by a particularly tight constraint around state aid considerations and a de minimis limit, but other food production has much greater scope for support. We are considering a number of interested parties, not all of which are in seafood, and we will certainly look to see what support we can give. That will be treated with the highest priority to try to provide secure employment for those at the site.

We know how vulnerable the economy of Annandale and Eskdale is. A loss of jobs on such

a scale would be the equivalent of around 25,000 job losses in Edinburgh. It goes without saying that we recognise the significance of the issue to Mr Mundell's constituents.

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** The minister will be aware that Pinneys of Scotland's sole customer for several years under Young's Seafood was Marks and Spencer. I appreciate that groceries regulation is a reserved matter and that exclusivity of supply is not prohibited in the groceries supply code of conduct, but does the minister agree that, although such arrangements might seem beneficial when demand is high, they can have very negative effects when there are other market challenges? What can be done to address that?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I very much agree with that sentiment. We recognise that there are commercial considerations, but I acknowledge the point that Joan McAlpine has made. When a plant is in effect dedicated to one client, if any work is lost through that client, that plant is particularly vulnerable.

We are looking to engage with Marks and Spencer on this particular scenario and we are seeking to meet Marks and Spencer's senior management team this week, if we can, to understand fully its perspective and to get to the bottom of the matter. We have had some initial conversations with Marks and Spencer, but we want to speak to the company on the specific issue of single-company sites. I agree with the member that the risks that are associated with having a single-client site are exposed horribly and illustrated starkly in the case at Annan.

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** When we add agency and seasonal workers to the permanent workforce, we see that, if Pinneys closes, the number of potential job losses is likely to be nearer to 700. As the minister is aware, that would be an economic tsunami for that community, given its size.

The first priority is to use the 45-day consultation to convince Young's Seafood to change its closure decision and, if we are unsuccessful, to find a buyer for the site. Does the minister share the concerns of the local community that one of the reasons why any job losses would be so disastrous is the fact that there are still fundamental weaknesses in the local economy that desperately need to be tackled, such as poor infrastructure, low pay and a lack of alternative large employers?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I absolutely identify with Colin Smyth's latter point. We are taking forward proposals for a south of Scotland enterprise agency, which is part of a medium to long-term

mission to try to transform the economy of the south.

In the immediate period, we have a more severe challenge in Annan. If all 450 permanent jobs—and the seasonal jobs during October to December, which is the peak period of production—were lost, there would be significant consequences for the area. One of the virtues of having established the action group is that, as well as being able to look at the particular impact of the plant closure, we can see whether anything that comes out of that process can help us to strengthen the economy of Annan. As Colin Smyth knows, there are other communities around Annan that are affected, such as Gretna and Lockerbie, where a number of staff who work at the plant live. The vast majority of the staff are concentrated within a 10-mile area, so clearly job losses on that scale will have a huge impact on Annan.

### **Cockenzie Site (Planning Application)**

**2. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason it has called in the planning application for a substation on the site of the former Cockenzie power station. (S5T-01023)

**The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart):** As planning minister, I called in the application as it clearly raises issues of national importance. The Cockenzie power station site is a strategic site in national planning framework 3, which was published in 2014. The framework recognises Cockenzie as an important hub with significant opportunities for renewable energy-related investment and it identifies two national developments relating to the site. The framework states that Cockenzie is part of the high-voltage energy transmission network, which is listed as a national development.

Consent and associated marine licences were granted in 2014 for the Inchcape offshore wind farm and a grid connection agreement is in place to connect it to the Cockenzie site. The planning application is in relation to the electricity substation that is required to make that connection. There is a deadline in quarter 1 of 2019 for a bid for United Kingdom funding for the Inchcape development through the contracts for difference process. To be eligible, all permissions and consents must be in place. Calling in the planning application gives a greater chance of a timely decision ahead of the funding deadline. The reporter will consider local views including the local development plan, and the calling in of the application does not predetermine the outcome of the planning process.

**Iain Gray:** The site is of strategic importance all right; it is the biggest opportunity for economic development and job creation in local living

memory. The proposed substation is right on the waterfront and could jeopardise the potential development of the site as a port. Its future should be decided locally by local councillors who understand that potential and who are accountable to local people. That is what happened in 2014, when planning permission for the same substation, on a different part of the site, was granted by East Lothian Council. A local decision was okay in 2014; why does the minister think that he knows better this time?

**Kevin Stewart:** As I said in my first answer to Mr Gray, there is an issue here of potential national significance. The Government recognises the importance of local decision making and we use call-in powers sparingly. On this occasion, we decided to call in.

The reporter from the planning and environmental appeals division will ensure that the community is given the appropriate time to consider and comment on the application, so that community views are taken into account prior to the reporter making a recommendation to me, as minister.

**Iain Gray:** The other issue here, of course, is that in 2016 this project was bought by Red Rock Power, a company that is owned by the Chinese State Development and Investment Corporation, which the First Minister was meeting last week at the very moment when the planning decision was called in. Can the minister understand that it looks to my constituents as if he is prepared to ride roughshod over their interests and aspirations, to protect the interests and aspirations of a Chinese-backed project that will create not one job in East Lothian? If he wants to convince my constituents otherwise, will he do that now, by returning this decision to East Lothian Council, where it belongs?

**Kevin Stewart:** As Mr Gray is well aware, I made the decision to call in on 4 April, and that was related to East Lothian Council on 9 April, before the First Minister was in China—

**Iain Gray:** The day before!

**Kevin Stewart:** We have been absolutely clear that there was no connection whatever to the First Minister's visit to China.

Consideration of planning cases is focused on the merits of the case. The identity of the applicant is not a planning consideration that is relevant to the assessment of any application.

### **2 Sisters Factory (Closure)**

**3. Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the closure of the 2 Sisters factory in Cambuslang. (S5T-01034)

**The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse):** I am extremely disappointed at the decision by 2 Sisters Food Group to close its facility in Cambuslang.

Clare Haughey and I were in contact on a number of occasions during the consultation phase, so she will be aware that we worked hard to avert the closure. I have been actively involved in discussions with the company and stakeholders, and I have met Jeremy Hudson and written to Mr Ranjit Singh, the 2 Sisters founder, offering every support to retain the site at Cambuslang.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown, has met Unite the union, and the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and South Lanarkshire Council have all worked intensively with the company to explore every possible option to secure a sustainable future for the site and to safeguard jobs in Cambuslang.

Unfortunately, despite all those efforts, the company has made its decision to close the site. I greatly regret that, but I assure Clare Haughey that our partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—team has agreed a programme of support activities with the company, which will provide support for all affected employees as they look for alternative employment. As Ms Haughey might be aware, the team has a tremendous record in helping people who are affected by redundancy.

**Clare Haughey:** Along with many of my constituents, I was extremely concerned by last week's announcement that the factory will close in August. The impact on affected staff and the local community could be devastating. Several members of the same families work in the factory and many of the workforce have been employed there for decades. Small businesses rely not only on the workers who use their services but on the 2 Sisters company for contracts. Can the minister give detail about the support that the Scottish Government will provide to my constituents at this difficult time?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I certainly can. We talked about an action group in the context of the question about the jobs shock in Annan, in Dumfries and Galloway. My proposal is to discuss with South Lanarkshire Council how best to progress collaborative action in supporting the local community that will be affected by those job losses. We will look to discuss with the council whether there might be advantages in establishing a similar action group in response to the job losses at the 2 Sisters factory.

Looking at the issue more widely, we aspire to get pay support into the company. As I alluded in my first answer, a full programme of pay support

activities has been agreed with the management at 2 Sisters. That is not always the case in such situations, so that is a positive in itself. We know that it has a profoundly important impact for individuals who are affected. The Scottish Government has also committed more than £500 million over the next 20 years to the Glasgow city region deal. It will look to support delivery of its programme of investment to stimulate economic growth and create jobs right across the city region, which includes South Lanarkshire, and to see the extent to which such investments can support the economy there.

I seek to work with Clare Haughey and other members from across the chamber who I know have an interest in the matter to ensure that we draw down as much support as we can from Scottish Enterprise and our other enterprise and skills agencies to help local businesses. Ms Haughey is absolutely right in saying that not just the company but the wider supply chain in the area will be affected. We will identify companies that are vulnerable, and we will work with 2 Sisters to identify its suppliers and see what we can do to support them through this.

**Clare Haughey:** I thank the minister for his very detailed reply to my question. However, will he commit to engaging with all relevant agencies, including South Lanarkshire Council, with a view to convening an action group similar to the one that is being organised in Annan? What can the Scottish Government do to support the future use of the site so that jobs can be created and supported in Cambuslang?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** Yes, I commit to Clare Haughey that we will pursue discussion with South Lanarkshire Council to see whether we can convene an action group. I do not want to prejudge that, because the council may have a different view on how we might best work together. We do not always require an action group to deliver an impact. In recent years, there have been several examples in Lanarkshire of our having managed successfully to get work for employees who have been affected by redundancy programmes even before they have lost their jobs.

We will wait to see what comes from that discussion, but the wider interest in the future use of the site, to which Ms Haughey has alluded, is another issue that we can pursue with the council. I would not want to tread on the council's toes regarding its responsibilities on economic development, but—as we are doing with the transfer of jobs at Chivas from Paisley to Dumbarton—we are keen to support the local authority in looking at options for master planning for the site and to see whether the Scottish Government can do anything to make sure that

that valuable site can be used to provide further employment opportunities.

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that Marks and Spencer, the main customer of 2 Sisters, is complicit in the closure plan by supporting the moving of poultry operations to one site in England? Will he give consideration to the reasonable suggestion from Gerard Killen, the local member of Parliament, that a task force involving all parties and relevant agencies be set up to look at solutions for averting the closure?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** On Mr Kelly's latter point, as I said in my response to Clare Haughey, the first thing that I want to do is speak to the local authority—South Lanarkshire Council—and find out what it would like to happen. I take on board the point that Gerard Killen has made—which James Kelly has repeated today—that a task force approach is sometimes valid and can work effectively, as the steel task force did, although in other scenarios an action group can be fletcher of foot and can move more quickly to identify opportunities. That is what we are doing in Hawick and in Annan. We will have a discussion with the council on that point.

As I alluded in my response to the earlier question on the Pinneys plant in Annan and the role of Marks and Spencer there, we are keen to engage with Marks and Spencer. We can certainly discuss with the company the business model that it is deploying and the impact that that is having in situations such as these. However, I want to listen to Marks and Spencer before I draw any conclusions as to how the situation has been arrived at. As Mr Kelly will, I hope, understand, I do not want to shoot first and ask questions later; I would rather listen and hear the views that Marks and Spencer puts forward. Nevertheless, I take Mr Kelly's point on board. We are worried about plants' vulnerability in respect of single clients. When a company loses tens of millions of pounds' worth of work in one go, that will clearly have a massive impact on employment.

## NHS Tayside

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is a statement by Shona Robison on NHS Tayside. The cabinet secretary will take questions after her statement, so I encourage all members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

14:24

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison):** I would like to update the chamber on developments in NHS Tayside over the Easter recess.

On Friday 6 April, I exercised powers under the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 and instructed that Paul Gray, as chief executive of NHS Scotland, take immediate action to strengthen the leadership of NHS Tayside. The decision to exercise those powers was not one that I took lightly, and it was the result of a series of issues that have come to light in relation to the management of NHS Tayside over recent months.

As Parliament will be aware, since 2012-13 NHS Tayside has required brokerage funding from the Scottish Government to balance its annual financial position. The level of brokerage that has been awarded each year has risen, and the amount of brokerage outstanding now totals £45.3 million, excluding the repayment of endowment funds, which will be added this year.

In recognition of the need for action to tackle the rising deficit, NHS Tayside developed a five-year transformation programme, which it launched in 2015-16, with the twin aim of improving patient experience alongside achieving financial sustainability. To support that programme, in May 2016 we put in place arrangements to provide tailored support to NHS Tayside.

By its very nature, the scale of change that was envisaged was not a quick fix, but it was clear by the end of 2016-17 that the year 1 milestones in the board's plan were not going to be delivered and that the board required a further £13.2 million of brokerage. In response, in March 2017 we appointed Professor Sir Lewis Ritchie to chair an assurance and advisory group to review the deliverability of the board's plans and the associated financial projections. On 27 June 2017, the AAG published its staging report, which confirmed that the financial picture that was forecast by the board was unrealistic. The AAG also highlighted issues in relation to the board's vision for the future, its service and workforce planning and its prescribing activities, as well as its leadership and governance processes.

On receipt of those findings, we established a transformation support team led by Caroline Lamb, chief executive of NHS Education for Scotland, to provide support and constructive challenge to the senior management of NHS Tayside. The transformation support team provided intensive input to the executive team from July to December 2017.

The AAG's second progress report was submitted earlier this year and sent to Parliament on 23 February. In that latest report, the expert team recognised that although progress had been made, it was largely transactional as opposed to transformational.

Just days after the publication of the second progress report, an issue to do with how e-health funding had been recorded in the NHS Tayside accounts was uncovered by Scottish Government officials and brought to my attention. We commissioned Grant Thornton UK to carry out an independent investigation into the issue, which has been shared with Parliament. The central problem that it highlighted was that the level of the board's deficit had been understated over a period of years.

NHS Tayside's director of finance subsequently took the decision to retire and immediate steps were taken to strengthen the financial controls of all the organisations involved, including the withdrawal from e-health leads of the ability to make financial decisions and a review of internal controls in NHS National Services Scotland.

On 3 April, the then NHS Tayside chair highlighted to me claims that, on 24 January 2014, a decision was taken by the board of trustees responsible for endowment funds that resulted in a number of projects being retrospectively approved for charitable funding when they had already been approved for funding through core NHS resources. I immediately took action to have the accuracy of those claims independently verified. Following on from its work on e-health funding, Grant Thornton was commissioned to undertake a review of NHS Tayside's financial governance. That work has now been extended to cover the use of endowment funds. Given the significance of those issues, the review will now report to the Scottish Government.

NHS Scotland chief executive Paul Gray wrote to all NHS board chairs on 5 April to seek their explicit assurance, by the end of this month, that all charitable funds have been used appropriately.

The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator recently opened a formal inquiry into the allegations of possible misconduct in the operation of NHS Tayside's endowment fund. Once I have received assurances from all other health boards, I will share them with OSCR, which has agreed to

review them. Should OSCR determine that spending of endowment funds by any board was inappropriate, I expect that to be paid back swiftly and in full.

In responding to such events, the maintenance of public confidence in the health service in Scotland is of paramount importance. The credibility of the board's updated reform plans, as well as public confidence in the board's leadership and in donating funds for the benefit of the health service, have been significantly undermined by these events. The attendance of NHS Tayside's chief executive at the endowment fund meetings in 2014, particularly in January, when decisions were made on the use of charitable funds for retrospective expenditure, raised serious concerns.

Although the chair was not in post at the time of those decisions, the culmination of financial control issues, along with the limited progress highlighted by the AAG, led me to the conclusion that in order to restore public confidence in NHS Tayside real change was going to require a new leadership team with a robust set of skills. That is why I exercised my ministerial powers of intervention and asked Paul Gray, as chief executive of NHS Scotland, to strengthen management at NHS Tayside with immediate effect.

The chair, Professor John Connell, tendered his resignation on 6 April. I thank him for his service to the board over the past two and a half years. Lesley McLay is currently on sick leave and the role of accountable officer has been transferred to the new chief executive, Malcolm Wright. It is not possible to comment further on Ms McLay's employment position at this time.

It is crucial that the new leadership team at NHS Tayside is strong and experienced, which is why I have appointed John Brown CBE as the new chair. Mr Brown already chairs a large health board and is a chartered management accountant, with significant experience in leading change. I have also approved the appointment of Malcolm Wright OBE as chief executive. Mr Wright is a very experienced NHS chief executive and has already been involved in a number of successful board transformations. Mr Brown and Mr Wright have both started as they mean to go on, with productive meetings having already been held with the rest of the board and with the chief executives of all three local authorities in order to underscore the importance of collaborative working in designing and delivering health and care services for the people of Tayside. Another priority has been to ensure that all staff in Tayside are sighted on developments, with an all-staff briefing issued immediately on the new leadership team taking up post.

On the endowment funds issue, an emergency board meeting held last week agreed to a proposal presented by Mr Brown and Mr Wright to repay in full the endowment money that had been retrospectively applied to programmes of work in 2014.

Understandably, stabilising the board will take some time, and I am committed to ensuring that the Scottish Government continues to support NHS Tayside with financial brokerage, with repayment currently suspended for a three-year period to provide breathing space for the board to focus on achieving stability and to plan properly for change. I have also agreed that the brokerage be increased to cover the repayment of the endowment funds that have been inappropriately used. It is crucial that the quality of patient services is protected and maintained throughout this challenging time.

The staff of NHS Tayside have much to be proud of: a reputation for good, safe, person-centred and effective care, with many examples of innovation and good practice recognised across the country. I met the board, alongside its new leadership, on 9 April and it is clear that there remains a real appetite within the board to drive forward positively, underpinned by clinically driven change initiatives. I have been clear with the new leadership that their priorities must be to steady the ship, provide clarity on where the organisation is going and take the public and the staff of NHS Tayside with them throughout that process. I have every confidence that John Brown and Malcolm Wright will deliver that. I look forward to seeing NHS Tayside reach its full potential and become the organisation that the staff and people of Tayside deserve.

Alongside the work that is on-going in NHS Tayside, we will also see the completion of the Grant Thornton review of Tayside's existing financial controls, including the use of endowment funds. OSCR will complete its consideration of the behaviour in early 2014 of the Tayside endowment fund board of trustees along with its oversight of activities elsewhere in NHS Scotland, with any spending considered to be inappropriate being immediately returned to the endowment funds. I will ensure that all reports are made available to Parliament once completed and that all recommendations from those reports are implemented.

I am happy to take questions.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** The public in Tayside and across Scotland have rightly been shocked and angered by the use of charitable funds by NHS Tayside to help to pay for NHS board projects. In her statement, the cabinet secretary referenced the independent review by Grant Thornton on e-health funding between e-

health, NHS National Services Scotland and NHS Tayside between 2012 and 2018, which did indeed raise many very serious issues. However, for some reason, she has not mentioned the repeated failures of oversight within her own department over that period, which were clearly identified in the review.

How will the cabinet secretary ensure that lessons are learned so that, in future, she and her officials will provide the proper level of scrutiny and supervision that must be provided in relation to the use of taxpayers' money? In light of the concerns that other NHS boards may have been using charitable funds in a similar way, does she agree that a broader independent inquiry into the extent of the practice across Scotland is now needed—one that is able to make clear recommendations to prevent that from happening again in the future? Does she agree that that would be the best way to restore public confidence—something that is now vital?

The cabinet secretary says that it is time to "steady the ship". We have been raising these concerns in Parliament for some time and it is quite clear that, for too long, NHS Tayside's leadership has been sinking under the leadership of this Government. Is it not now time to act, and time for the whole Parliament to have a role in supervising the finances of our health boards?

**Shona Robison:** Parliament, of course, does have a role. That is why we have an audit committee, which is looking into these matters—that is quite right and proper. Also, I said at the end of my statement that I will make all the reports available to Parliament so that we can be open and transparent about these matters.

In my statement, I went, in some detail, through all the support that has been given to NHS Tayside, so I do not think it is fair to say that the Scottish Government has not tried, in its endeavours, to support the board. Over the years, we have given it extensive support—I laid that out in some detail in my statement—but after all of that, particularly in light of the e-health and endowment funds issues arising, we reached the conclusion that what was required was a new leadership team at the top of NHS Tayside to take the organisation forward. That is not something that I did lightly, as I said in my statement.

Miles Briggs also talked about a need for independent oversight of the issue of endowment funds. OSCR is independent. That is why we have asked it to look at all the returns that will come from boards. At the moment there is nothing to suggest that the endowment funds of other boards have been used in the way that NHS Tayside used its funds. However, it is important that OSCR looks at all of that. It is independent, and as the charities

regulator it is the organisation that is best placed to oversee that.

I point out that endowment funds are separate from ministers and that ministers have no role in them. It is important to note, therefore, that OSCR is the body that looks at and has oversight of those funds.

Once all of that is completed, we will make sure, as I am sure OSCR will, that all the information is put into the public domain.

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for prior sight of the statement. The cabinet secretary said in her statement that NHS Tayside needs new leadership and that

“their priorities must be to steady the ship, provide clarity ... and take the public and”

NHS

“staff ... with them”.

The leadership of our NHS is the cabinet secretary. She has let down NHS staff, she has failed too many patients and she has breached the trust of the public. This has happened on her watch in her local health board. This is her mismanagement and her failure. The sad reality is that the public have lost confidence in the cabinet secretary and she has lost control of her brief. Will she, therefore, do the decent thing and at the very least withdraw herself from the investigation, if not withdraw herself from the portfolio altogether?

**Shona Robison:** Anas Sarwar failed to mention that he agreed with the decision to remove the leadership team of NHS Tayside and replace them with a new leadership team. He did not mention that fact, but it is important, and I am glad that he supported my decision.

I think that, in all that, there was a question about the investigation. I do not know whether the member listened to my statement or indeed the answer that I gave to Miles Briggs, but I think that I was very clear that OSCR is leading the investigation. If Anas Sarwar is suggesting that, somehow, OSCR is not independent and is not capable of leading the investigation, that is very unfortunate indeed. As the charity regulator, OSCR is the best organisation to look at whether the endowment funds have been used appropriately. That is how the process will be taken forward.

The external audit of boards will also have a look at endowment funds. That will also be taken forward. We will have the returns from boards by the end of this month. By the end of May, OSCR will give us an initial view on those returns and it will take any appropriate action thereafter. By the end of June, the external audits will have taken place with their particular look at endowment

funds. I would have thought that, in anybody's eyes, that is a robust process with the independence of OSCR at its heart.

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the change of senior management must also lead to a cultural change at the top of the organisation, not least to ensure that the financial challenges that have been highlighted do not adversely affect the provision of services to patients in rural settings such as those that I, John Swinney and Mairi Gougeon represent?

**Shona Robison:** I have been absolutely clear that the financial challenges that are facing NHS Tayside must not affect the quality of the services that are being provided to patients. I said that in my statement and I have said it previously, including to those who are in rural settings. That is why I have committed to continuing to provide brokerage to NHS Tayside, and it is why the repayment of brokerage is currently suspended to enable the board to focus on getting back on track. That is important.

The new leadership team has already signalled that the quality of care will remain a key priority for the board. In its words and actions, it has already underlined the importance of a culture of honesty and openness, and of engagement with staff at all levels. It has signalled a new culture and approach, and it should be given time to get on with the job.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** In reply to a constituent of mine, OSCR stated that it did not become aware of the alleged issue about the use of NHS Tayside assets until the media reports appeared on 4 April. During the period 2014 to 2018, did the Scottish Government have any communications with OSCR about the use of NHS Tayside funds, given that one of OSCR's key roles is to review charities' accounts?

**Shona Robison:** Liz Smith raises an important issue. OSCR will look into all this because it is doing a specific investigation into the endowment issue at NHS Tayside, and it is right and proper that it should do so.

I can tell Liz Smith that, in the return from the audit and risk committee of NHS Tayside of 17 June 2014, no significant issues were raised and the board was given a clean audit opinion. The issue was not escalated to the Scottish Government as a matter of concern at the time by either internal or external auditors. There are issues there for the reviews that are under way and they will help us to determine any further controls that are required in light of all this. Liz Smith can be assured that the issue will be taken forward.

I can also tell Liz Smith that OSCR has signalled its intention to review the guidance on the use of endowment funds that it helped us to develop back in 2013. It is concerned about a potential conflict of interest between people who are sitting on the board and sitting as trustees of endowment funds. I assure Liz Smith that that, too, will be taken forward with OSCR.

**Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am concerned about governance on the board at NHS Tayside. In 2014, board members agreed to suspend the constitution to transfer charitable funds to core expenditure, breaking the trust of local people who give so generously.

I welcome the decision to pay back the money but we now need a full review of every board member at NHS Tayside to ensure that they have the requisite skills to prevent a breach like this from ever happening again. Will the cabinet secretary outline a full appraisal and skills review of every board member at NHS Tayside?

**Shona Robison:** I welcome the fact that Jenny Marra welcomes the repayment of those funds. That was an important early decision by the new leadership team.

It is also important to allow OSCR to do a proper investigation—I reiterate that it is doing a full investigation into the endowment fund issue within NHS Tayside. OSCR will look back to 2014, to the decisions that were made by the trustees and the basis for those decisions, so all that will be looked at.

On the wider issue of corporate governance and the skills of board members, it will be for the new chair and chief executive to look at whether they have the right skill set across their board. It is right and proper that they are given the support to do that.

On a general point, John Brown, the new chair of NHS Tayside, is leading a review of corporate governance. Additional support is being given nationally to non-executive members of boards so that they have the confidence to probe and ask the right questions.

All of that will help us to strengthen corporate governance, but I reiterate what I have said in previous answers—if any recommendations come out of all the reviews that are taking place that can further strengthen that governance, Jenny Marra can be assured that those recommendations will be taken forward.

**Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** I completely agree with what the cabinet secretary said, in her statement, about maintenance of public confidence in the health service and in the board's leadership being of paramount importance.

What assurances can the Scottish Government give that the appropriate measures have been taken to install suitably high-calibre leadership in order to restore public confidence and trust in the board of NHS Tayside, and to manage the challenges that it faces?

**Shona Robison:** I am confident that we have in place people with the skills that NHS Tayside needs at this time. As I said in my statement, John Brown is already chair of Scotland's largest health board and is also a qualified accountant. Anybody who knows him knows that he is also very good at leading change, which he will do with NHS Tayside. Malcolm Wright is also an experienced chief executive who has been involved in successful transformational change.

Both have made it clear that quality of care is a priority, as is getting the board back to financial balance. Restoring public confidence and trust is key, and although they have been in place for only a couple of weeks, it is fair to say that they have certainly hit the ground running and have been working very closely with the staff side, as well as with clinicians, in order to begin to rebuild that confidence.

I am also aware that John Brown and Malcolm Wright have offered to meet local MSPs or, if that is not possible, to give them a call. I think that they have been engaged in that over the past few days.

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** It is right that we demand complete transparency regarding the financial decisions that are taken by the board, because such a situation cannot be allowed to happen again. It is also right that a new leadership team takes over.

However, as Audit Scotland pointed out last year, the majority of health boards had to use short-term measures to break even. I would like to understand how the cabinet secretary will address that issue at its root. Will she introduce longer-term planning for our integration joint boards? Will she tackle the significant use of agency staff that has been reported in NHS Tayside?

**Shona Robison:** We are addressing use of agency staff. A lot of work is being done to reduce agency-staff spend. Fiona McQueen, as the chief nursing officer for Scotland, has been leading on that.

Alison Johnstone will be aware that additional funding for our front-line NHS boards will amount to £354 million, which is £208 million in real terms. NHS Tayside will see £13.7 million of increased investment and a share of the transformation money. More money is going into the health service, but more demands are being placed on it. That is why reform also has to take place.

Alison Johnstone has made a good point about integration joint boards; we have been discussing with health boards and local councils how to enter into longer-term financial planning, beyond the one year that was required because of the budget process that we have just gone through. The Scottish Government is developing a financial framework that will look at a five-year horizon. That will enable us to plan funding at national level and to shift the balance of funding, such that that is visible over the next five years. That framework will be published in the next few weeks.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** Professor John Connell was asked to resign in response to a scandal that occurred before his tenure. What exactly did the cabinet secretary expect him to have achieved in terms of resolving the situation to her satisfaction, and what comfort can she extend to other board chairs who are concerned that they, too, might in the future be used as scapegoats to protect the SNP Government? Will she today rule out any suggestion to abolish NHS Tayside and merge it with another board, as has been proposed by senior MSPs from her party.

**Shona Robison:** In my statement I paid tribute to the work that John Connell has done over the past two and a half years, and I acknowledged that he was not in post when the endowment issue arose in 2014. That period spanned the previous health secretary's term of office and mine, but I believe that no health minister could have picked up on something that internal and external auditors did not flag up. The situation requires that we examine why those issues were not flagged up to the Scottish Government by the auditors, because we rely on their processes in order that we can do something about such issues.

Alex Cole-Hamilton asked specifically about the position of John Connell. There was a cumulative set of events. I laid out very clearly in my statement all the issues that led to the escalation to level 5, at which point ministerial intervention was made. We had reached the end of the road, after huge amounts of effort and support had been put into NHS Tayside. The only conclusion that we could reach was that new leadership was required—a new chair and chief executive—to take the organisation forward.

On merging of boards, Alex Cole-Hamilton will be aware that we have been working towards having more regional planning, and towards boards working across boundaries, but form should follow function. The important thing is that people realise the benefits of regional working and working across board boundaries, rather than focusing on organisational change. To be frank, that would take up the efforts and attention of senior leadership teams that need, in Tayside, to

be focused on getting the board back on track and restoring public confidence.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. Six members still wish to get in, so please make questions and answers short.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary recall that intervening in NHS Grampian led to a very successful outcome and to continuous improvement? Does she agree that moving the chief executive from NHS Grampian to Tayside should provide the reassurance that staff and patients need that the serious issue is being taken seriously?

**Shona Robison:** Yes, I do. I met the board on 9 April, along with the new leadership team, and everything that I have seen and heard about the approach that has been taken to date gives me confidence that NHS Tayside will continue to make provision of high-quality services for patients a priority. It is very important that the board does that.

It is also important to say that work has been undertaken to provide assurance in Glasgow and Grampian that there will not, because of John Brown and Malcolm Wright's focus on Tayside, be an impact on work that is on-going in those boards.

**Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):** Regarding the on-going Grant Thornton review of NHS Tayside, will it or a further forensic investigation fully establish who approved the incorrect entries regarding the e-health funds and, most important, who in NHS Tayside and the cabinet secretary's office knew about that window-dressing of the NHS Tayside financial statements for six years?

**Shona Robison:** As I said previously, all the reviews, including the Grant Thornton review, will get to the bottom of all that and make sure that there is full openness and transparency about e-health and endowment moneys. We have brought to bear the external process not least to see whether there are areas that we need to change and tighten up on in order to avoid such a situation happening again. That is, of course, the action that we will take.

**Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP):** Will the independent investigation by OSCR extend to other health boards?

**Shona Robison:** Yes. I mentioned the process by which the returns of boards will come to the Scottish Government. OSCR has written to the chairs of the endowment funds asking for those returns. That will happen by 30 April. We hope that OSCR will be able to indicate by the end of May any further issues that it wishes to consider in

more detail. In addition, external audits will examine endowment funds in particular.

All of that taken as a whole—particularly the role of OSCR, which is entirely independent of the Scottish Government—should give members assurance that the matters will be looked into fully.

**The Presiding Officer:** I apologise to members who still wish to ask a question, but we have run out of time. We have already taken substantial time out of the next debate.

## Air Quality

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-11643, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, on “Air Quality in Scotland Inquiry”.

14:57

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** It is my privilege as convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee to open the debate on our inquiry into air quality in Scotland.

As is now widely accepted, poor air quality is one of the greatest environmental threats to human health. Elevated pollution levels, particularly in urban areas with high volumes of road traffic, are linked with numerous health issues, including heart disease and lung cancer. Air pollution also has damaging effects on the environment.

In light of that, and having carried out an earlier piece of work on such matters, the committee took the health aspects as a given at the start of the inquiry. We focused the inquiry on the actions that the Government is taking to improve the air that we breathe. In particular, the committee homed in on the Government’s strategy “Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future” and asked whether it contains the right policies, support and incentives to adequately tackle air pollution. Having the right strategy is clearly only half the battle. We also need the mechanisms in place, led by local government and national agencies, to implement that strategy.

Before I get into the detail of the committee’s findings, I thank, on behalf of the committee members, everyone who contributed to the inquiry. A committee’s scrutiny is only as good as the evidence that it receives, and we would not have been able to produce what I hope is a comprehensive report without that help.

I acknowledge the part that David Stewart MSP played in shaping the report. He left the committee towards the end of the work that we were doing but his fingerprints are to be found on various aspects of it and, I can tell, he is chomping at the bit to make a contribution to the debate—as, indeed, is Emma Harper who, along with other former members Maurice Golden and Alexander Burnett played her part, too.

I turn to our findings. I will provide an overview of the committee’s work, as well as focusing in on a couple of areas. I am sure that colleagues will develop those areas further and, indeed, highlight other aspects of the committee’s scrutiny.

I start with the cleaner air for Scotland strategy, on which the committee heard mixed views. Although many witnesses were supportive of its high-level aspirations and agreed that it is broadly taking us in the right direction, questions were asked about whether the necessary support and incentives are in place on the ground to get us to where Scotland needs to go. Scotland needs to make improvements. There are European Union air quality targets for 2020 with which the country has to comply. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency was confident that we would meet that deadline, but others were not so sure.

We also heard that the strategy is a living document. However, we found the yearly update on the progress on its 34 actions to be insufficient. Future iterations need to be more transparent so that progress or otherwise can readily be tracked. Despite welcome assurances from ministers, we were concerned that there was a degree of disconnect between national agencies and local authorities in delivering those actions. That is particularly prescient given the current review of planning policies. If new developments take place without public transport or active travel infrastructure, we will simply be increasing the number of cars on our roads, albeit the move towards electric vehicles would mitigate the effect of that.

With regard to tangible actions, one of the main areas that we looked at was low-emission zones. Just after we launched our inquiry, the Government announced that there would be four low-emission zones in Scotland: one in Glasgow, by the end of 2018 and then one each in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh by 2020. We therefore focused our attention on what those zones would look like in practice.

It was immediately clear that we will not have an all-singing, all-dancing LEZ in operation in Glasgow by the end of this year—not that any of us had believed that that would actually be the case. Designing an LEZ and having the technology in place is one thing, but allowing users—from bus companies and delivery firms to private car owners—to update their vehicles to comply with the requirements of an LEZ clearly requires more time. We asked what LEZs would look like, when they would be implemented and how technology would fit in. On what vehicles should be covered by the zones, the committee recommended that, in order to allow LEZs to best contribute to overall improvements in air quality, cars should be included.

It is now clear that emissions from diesel vehicles have a massive impact on the air that we breathe. Dr Scott Hamilton of Ricardo Energy & Environment said to the committee:

“I am 100 per cent sure that most of that problem has arisen from there being too much diesel in the car fleet, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, in the wrong technology.”—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee*, 14 November 2017; c 22.]

The problem with taking action in that regard is that we would be penalising people for making a vehicle choice that they were encouraged by Government to make, when they were told that that choice would benefit the environment—I count myself among that group. However, although that might seem unfair—and, indeed, while it might undermine public trust in environmental messaging—the fact is that we need to take action.

Given the technical and financial resources that are needed to implement LEZs, the committee recommended that the Scottish Government, local authorities and relevant public agencies work jointly to ensure that all available technology is shared to help to ensure a consistent and efficient approach across the country. In evidence, the Government said that good collaboration was already under way between the cities and, when we spoke to officials from Glasgow, they clearly had a real command of the subject and a clear understanding of the issues in their city. Issues vary city by city, though, and each situation will pose different challenges.

Although there are positive indications, the committee asked for an update on all four LEZs by the end of June this year, along with an indication of the dates on which they will come into force.

On active travel, the committee was clear that, no matter how effective LEZs are or how much alternatively fuelled vehicles might reduce emissions, we need to increase the number of journeys that are made by bike to 10 per cent and beyond if we are to meet air quality and wider climate change targets. The Scottish Government’s target of 10 per cent of journeys being made by bike by 2020 was raised repeatedly during the course of the inquiry but, despite positive assurances from Transport Scotland, the committee struggled to find other evidence to back the belief that we are on course to achieve that. Indeed, the latest figures that we had, which were from 2016, showed that the number of journeys that are made by bike had risen by only 0.2 per cent in six years. At that rate of progress, it would take us until 2252 to reach the target.

We do not need to look far to see success in this area. In the Netherlands, which is widely regarded as one of the best countries in Europe for cycling, 27 per cent of all journeys are made by bike, with that figure rising to 36 per cent in Amsterdam. Although Amsterdam is not built around seven hills like Edinburgh is, the difference

is nevertheless stark. Although the committee recognised and welcomed the recent sizeable increase in the active travel transport budget, it considers that segregated cycling infrastructure will be required in order to give people the confidence to get on their bikes.

Although much of the report focused on urban transport, air quality is also a rural issue, and the committee agreed that work needs to take place across the country to combat the problem. We were surprised to find that agricultural pollutants are not included in the cleaner air for Scotland strategy. We heard calls for nitrogen fertilisers to be used more efficiently and were encouraged to learn of innovative techniques that are used in other countries to help limit the amount of pollutants escaping into the atmosphere. Although there are clearly financial costs involved in introducing new farming techniques, the committee recommended that the Scottish Government provide guidance to the agriculture sector on how it might adopt those techniques, as well as consider what incentives might be offered to help accelerate the use of new methods. The strategy should also be updated to reflect how agricultural pollutants might be reduced in the coming years.

To conclude, I thank committee colleagues for their sterling and typically constructive cross-party working on the inquiry, and I welcome the opportunity to air—no pun intended—this hugely important subject in the chamber. I also look forward to perhaps hearing the cabinet secretary's initial thinking on the inquiry report and, beyond today, the Government's full response to our recommendations.

Presiding Officer, I realise that, in opening the debate, I am concluding a little ahead of my allotted time. That is not to curry favour with you—although that is never something to be shied away from—but to allow committee colleagues and others the optimum time to offer their thoughts on the topic.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the findings and recommendations of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's 1st Report, 2018 (Session 5), *Air Quality in Scotland Inquiry* (SP Paper 117).

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Flattery will get you nowhere.

15:05

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** There is mounting evidence of the health and environmental impacts of poor air quality and in that respect the committee's inquiry has been timely. I welcome the opportunity that it

offers to highlight the range of policies and initiatives that the Scottish Government and its partners are implementing to deliver further reductions in air pollution.

Although air quality has improved markedly in recent years—Scottish air quality in particular compares well with that in the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe—hotspots of poorer air quality remain in many of our towns and cities. We all agree that more needs to be done. Poor air quality affects us all, but we know that vulnerable groups in society—the very young, the elderly and those with existing respiratory and cardiovascular conditions—are disproportionately affected. We are therefore determined to build on our achievements to date and drive down pollution levels still further.

Air quality is a cross-cutting issue that is key to a number of other policy areas, notably transport, climate change, land use planning, public and environmental health and energy. Work undertaken across all of those areas has been hugely important in bringing us to where we are today. However, the complexity of effectively co-ordinating interactions between diverse and wide-ranging policies means that, in the past, we have not necessarily always gotten it right. There is no doubt in my mind that opportunities have been missed, and that Governments have not always realised the full potential or have avoided potential inconsistencies. To provide a focus for further action, in November 2015, we published "Cleaner Air for Scotland", our first distinct air quality strategy. I remind members that that means that the strategy is barely two years old.

"Cleaner Air for Scotland" sets out a series of 40 key actions that will help us towards full compliance with EU and domestic air quality legislation, and our vision of Scotland having the best air quality in Europe. Underpinning the strategy is an emphasis on protecting human health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities. In support of that, we have already made significant progress.

We were the first country in Europe to legislate for the World Health Organization guideline value for particulate matter of the class PM<sub>2.5</sub>—a pollutant that is of special concern for human health, because small particles can penetrate deep into the lungs. We are also establishing a PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitoring network to support achievement of that target, which is more than twice as stringent as the equivalent set in EU legislation. We have also created detailed individual air quality models for each of our four biggest cities within the national modelling framework. Those models will greatly assist councils in taking their local air quality action plans to the next level with more targeted policy interventions.

Since the publication of “Cleaner Air for Scotland”, we have increased our level of ambition still further, with a commitment to establish Scotland’s first low-emission zone by the end of 2018, which as we now know will be in Glasgow. That will be followed by further zones in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh by 2020. Subsequent zones will be established in other air quality management areas by 2023, where evidence suggests that such interventions will be effective.

The Scottish Government’s budget, which was recently agreed by Parliament, includes new funding of £10.8 million a year to support low-emission zone work. The budget also confirms a doubling of air quality monitoring funding from £0.5 million to £1 million a year. The overall air quality budget now stands at £4.5 million a year. The intention is to allocate more than 70 per cent of the low-emission zone funding—about £7.8 million—to support our bus industry to prepare for low-emission zones. We believe that such funding would be enough to support the retrofitting of more than 300 buses in Glasgow, which is more than 40 per cent of the city centre fleet. The Minister for Transport and the Islands will say more about that work later, when he will pick up on specific transport-related issues.

Another central pillar of “Cleaner Air for Scotland” is effective communication, which was one of the issues raised in the committee’s report. One of the six overarching objectives in the strategy is:

“A Scotland where all citizens are well informed, engaged, and empowered to improve our air quality”.

Last year, the Scottish Government helped fund and develop a permanent interactive air quality exhibit at the Glasgow Science Centre. Together with SEPA, we are now building on the success of that by developing a mobile version of the exhibit to be taken around the country. It will help to demonstrate the actions that we can all take to improve air quality. We hope to launch the mobile exhibit later in the year in conjunction with the second clean air day, which is to take place on 21 June. I hope that members will look out for that coming into their local areas.

For the inaugural clean air day last summer, I visited Sciennes primary school in Edinburgh, where I was hugely impressed by the knowledge and engagement of the pupils in relation to air quality. During the visit, SEPA conducted a session using the excellent air quality education package that it has developed. That was just one of many events that made the first clean air day such a success. The aim is for this year’s clean air day to be even bigger and better, with planning of the programme well under way. We can all play a part in that, and I strongly encourage members to get involved.

Although the current focus in “Cleaner Air for Scotland” is very much on transport—which was a deliberate decision, as transport continues to be the most important air pollution source in our towns and cities—we must remember that other pollutant sources also impact on health and the environment. As we make progress with implementing transport-related actions, we will begin to focus more attention on those other sources. However, I want to use this opportunity to highlight a couple of the things that we are already doing in relation to issues that the committee has drawn attention to in its report.

Agriculture is one such issue. We are working to establish best practices for slurry application and storage to reduce emissions, while ensuring that it is properly co-ordinated with greenhouse gas reduction efforts. The committee has also rightly drawn attention to the issue of wood burning. Jointly with the other UK Administrations, we are currently undertaking research to look at attitudes and behaviours relating to domestic combustion, and we hope to be in a position to report on that research later this year.

Although we have many reasons to be optimistic that we are now making progress in improving the quality of our air, it must also be acknowledged that new and existing challenges remain. When thinking about new challenges, the issue of the UK’s exit from the EU features highly. As in many other policy areas, legislation established at European level has created a framework within which international co-operation has been a major driver in reducing emissions of air pollutants in Scotland and further afield. That is particularly important in the case of air pollution, which of course is transboundary by its nature. It is essential that we do not lose that following EU exit, and the Scottish Government is absolutely determined to ensure that we maintain our environmental standards in whichever scenario may emerge in the future.

Members will also be aware, as I am, of the recent series of judicial reviews brought by ClientEarth over the UK’s failures to comply with EU air quality targets. We remain committed to securing compliance with EU obligations by 2020.

“Cleaner Air for Scotland” was a commendable collaborative effort involving the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Health Protection Scotland, SEPA, local authorities and many other organisations across the public and private sectors. I expect that partnership working to continue. Successfully delivering the remit of the strategy will be challenging but it is achievable with a concerted effort to continue working together. I thank the committee for its report. I will also write to the committee in more detail in response to its specific recommendations.

15:14

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, and to the fact that I am a non-executive director of Edinburgh Worldwide Investment Trust, which is a company that has investments in electric vehicles, fuel-cell companies and automobiles.

I am delighted to open for the Scottish Conservatives in this important committee debate. However, I must confess that, having been on the ECCLR Committee only since June last year, I have not been party to the full inquiry on air quality, which I regret. Nevertheless, during my time on the committee, I have heard a great deal of evidence—enough to know that this is an issue that requires decisive action.

That was put firmly into context when the committee visited Corstorphine in Edinburgh and heard about the damaging effects on people of poor air quality and unclean air, which brought home to me the sheer misery for communities. It was particularly instructive to speak to school children about their journeys to and from school. If anything should persuade us of the need for action, it is the effects of poor air quality on the next generation.

It is very worrying that areas of Scotland's three largest cities exceed the legal limit of 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per cubic metre, including there being a level of 58 micrograms per cubic metre in Hope Street in Glasgow. To someone who represents the Highlands and Islands region, which has some of the cleanest air in Scotland, it is striking to be presented with such evidence about our major conurbations.

I thank my ECCLR Committee colleagues and convener for the work that everyone has done to reach this point, and I pay tribute to the clerks and staff who work with the committee for putting together the extensive report. The Scottish Conservatives welcome the report's conclusions, and I believe that there is a clear consensus across the chamber that we should take real and ambitious action on our environment, which is welcome. I also welcome the cabinet secretary's acknowledgement that the matter is cross-portfolio; we must think about it across the portfolios.

I will focus on low-emission zones. The Scottish Conservatives broadly support the proposals in principle, and the effects that they seek to achieve. It is abundantly clear from the committee evidence that tackling air pollution in Scotland's towns and cities will have immeasurable benefits for communities, and will help to tackle some of the most prevalent diseases in our society, including lung diseases.

It is encouraging to see leading organisations including the Federation of Small Businesses coming up with solutions so that businesses can begin to adapt to the changes before they come fully into force. The FSB recently suggested that businesses should check the emissions standards of their vehicles, invest in vehicles that comply with Euro 6 and Euro 4 emissions standards and investigate scrappage schemes for old vehicles. We need to continue to raise awareness of the proposals so that Scotland is not just ready for such measures but gets behind them. There is a huge job to do in persuading the public to back the measures; I acknowledge the cabinet secretary's remarks about the importance of communication.

Although we understand the need to make progress, we have concerns that are shared by members across the political spectrum. Until recently, the Government had not provided clear information on technological infrastructure and timescales for implementation. The ECCLR Committee inquiry notes that there are concerns about the tight timescale for the introduction of LEZs and about whether local authorities have the resources to bring the zones fully into operation. We know from London's experience that it can take up to 18 months to implement a similar system. That was despite the fact that London could piggy-back on the existing camera network and back-office system that were used for the congestion charge—which, incidentally, took about two years to implement.

Since the deadline for the Glasgow LEZ of December 2018 was announced, we have expressed concern that there is simply not, over the eight months to the end of this year, enough time to put in place the appropriate infrastructure and back-office systems. Timescales for implementation of LEZs should be clear and realistic in order to allow sufficient time for industry, residents and small businesses to adapt. The Government must also ensure that plans for LEZs in the remaining three cities are properly articulated and communicated and that they are practical and achievable.

Lack of detail about plans and costs will create insecurity. I accept and welcome the recent announcement of £10.8 million, but we were concerned to learn that, in 2016, almost 800,000 privately owned diesel cars were not compliant with Euro 6, and that almost 400,000 privately owned petrol cars were not compliant with Euro 4, which equates to 53.3 per cent of the total private-car stock that is registered in Scotland. Although not all those drivers will be affected by the proposed LEZ areas, it is clear that a significant proportion of the public will be required to comply.

We are also concerned that the current approach that is taken to LEZs may create

unnecessary confusion about high costs for small businesses—in particular, bus and freight operators. That consternation was recognised in the ECCLR Committee. It is worth setting out the concerns of, for example, the FSB, McGill's Bus Services and the Road Haulage Association, which said that it is worried about the "financial burden" that will be placed on businesses.

As I have said, we welcome the recent funding announcements, but further support will be required to give confidence to an industry that is at times sceptical, and a public who are not yet prepared for the LEZs that are coming. Although we have many legitimate concerns, we are in principle supportive of the changes, and we look forward to working with all parties to deliver an LEZ system that works for drivers and the public.

In conclusion, I say that I have scratched the surface of the report and concentrated on LEZs; I hope that other members will talk about active travel. We welcome the report and its recommendations. We are committed to reducing Scotland's carbon footprint, to reducing dependency on fossil fuels, and to tackling the scourge of poor air quality.

The report is one step forward, but we need greater clarity from the Government on how many of its proposals will be met and implemented. Only then will we be able to see, and reap the benefits of, a cleaner Scotland.

15:21

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):**

I warmly thank the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee and its clerks for a comprehensive and insightful report. As members know, I was a member of that committee until early this year. I thank its convener for his very kind words: I enjoyed working with him and the rest of the committee.

The key issue is how we improve air quality in Scotland. We know from Friends of the Earth Scotland that air pollution from particulate matter alone—that is, PM<sub>2.5</sub>—is responsible for 2,000 early deaths in Scotland each year. If we include exposure to nitrogen dioxide, the number is 2,500 early deaths each year. That is more than all the people who die in road accidents.

If we consider the wider issue, we see that deaths from air pollution are in the top two of avoidable deaths worldwide. Air pollution truly is an invisible killer. It causes 670,000 people to be at high risk due to their cardiovascular conditions. More than 65 years after air pollution first hit the headlines in the UK, that is a statistic of which no one can be proud.

Like many other members, I have been a champion of low-emission zones, and I have used many a debate in the chamber to promote them as one of the many solutions that are needed to tackle air pollution and climate change. I was therefore delighted to see the Scottish Government finally put in motion the steps to bring the first low-emission zone to Scotland. As we know, the Scottish Government's 2017-18 programme for government undertook to create an LEZ in one city—which is likely to be Glasgow—by the end of 2018 and to have LEZs in Scotland's four biggest cities by 2020. Will that be delivered according to plan?

In its written evidence, SEPA stressed the importance of not letting timescales slip because of operational reasons including procurement, financing, staffing and legal considerations. Donald Cameron mentioned the evidence from McGill's Bus Services. The committee's report said that McGill's Bus Services is

"concerned it would be 'bankrupt' as a result of a 'last minute LEZ scheme' when planning and communication 'should have taken place 5 years ago'. It also highlighted the additional costs of running retrofitted vehicles which would result in 'fares going up to meet these additional costs.'"

Donald Cameron also touched on the fact that enforcement of LEZs is vital. I have always been a big enthusiast for what has been done in London. Use of automatic number-plate recognition is absolutely key. The minister may mention in winding up whether that will be fully adopted for Glasgow.

Will there be a lead-in time to allow bus fleets to be upgraded? The report says that the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK said:

"Otherwise ... buses might not be available in those areas and therefore 'you could have the perverse situation in which you introduce an LEZ and it encourages car use.'"

Although low-emission zones will not alone solve air pollution, they have the capacity to be one piece of the puzzle that could make a real difference to the health of people who live in our cities and towns.

Active travel is also crucial. Using low-emission zones to reduce traffic pollution in towns and cities is just one step on the path to cleaner air. The aim is that LEZs will also help to encourage modal shift to more active travel, as well as to increase use of public transport. However, that will not happen overnight. We need better investment in cycle paths, pedestrian walkways and clear signage, and traveller safety is needed, as is winning the hearts and minds of the public for increased active and public transport. It is all well and good to talk about active travel, but what if it is not safe to walk or cycle in our local neighbourhoods, for example?

The Scottish Government's target is for 10 per cent of everyday journeys to be undertaken by bike by 2020. At current progress, that looks to be a hard target, but it is an important one. Labour wants to bring into being municipal bus services through bus regulation, which would also encourage a step change away from private car use. Proper regulation of buses would allow services to be run in the public interest rather than by private shareholders, which would allow them to be cheaper and more effective, as well as allowing for more investment to make them greener.

Of course, a great many health conditions are linked to living and working in air-polluted areas—heart conditions, lung problems, asthma, cancer and even dementia. Those conditions are felt all too often by the most vulnerable people in society, including older people, small children, people who already have chronic health problems and people who live in our most deprived areas. We need a step change and a modal shift to active travel in order to meet best practice in Europe. In Amsterdam, for example, 70 per cent of all journeys are made by bike.

It seems that we can have no debate in the chamber without mention of Brexit—the ghost at every feast. Many of the laws that currently put pressure on the UK and Scottish Governments regarding air quality come from EU law. For example, the recent breach of the European ambient air quality directive led to legal action against the UK Government by ClientEarth. It is therefore vital that, before we leave the EU, we pass legislation that maintains commitments to better air quality. That is why I support the British Heart Foundation's calls for new clean air acts from the devolved Administrations.

Will European Court of Justice rulings apply to UK environmental breaches in the future? The jury is out, but the UK Government has made it clear that it is leaving Euratom because of ECJ jurisdiction. Is not there a case for a Scottish environmental court to replace the ECJ if we have to leave? Who will guard the guards? Although everyone in the country should be fully committed to improving air quality for the health of the nation, that added pressure of enforcement from the EU has added the incentive for setting ambitious targets and strategies, which we are not meeting currently. Any loss of pressure could have devastating consequences.

Air pollution is a public health emergency. It is also a continuing health inequality, which hits hardest the old, the young, the poor and the disadvantaged. The report is excellent and I congratulate the ECCLR Committee. I hope that the Scottish Government accepts the recommendations in full.

15:27

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife (Green)):** I believe that this is Holyrood's first air quality inquiry, which provides an excellent starting point for further scrutiny across Parliament, in much the same way as the first inquiry into climate change did, more than a decade ago.

The figure of 2,500 deaths every year related to air pollution should be our strongest call to action. The urgency to tackle this public health crisis is reflected in the EU's targets on nitrous oxide, which we have so far failed to meet in Scotland, which has undoubtedly cost lives. The problem is not just in the big cities: the number of air-quality management areas that are triggered by dangerous levels of particulates and nitrous oxide in towns continues to rise, not fall.

The Government's "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" strategy has the right approach, but it must be strengthened with the right actions and the budget to meet EU targets in less than two years. As Dave Stewart does, I doubt whether the European Court of Justice will still be able to take infraction proceedings if we fail to meet the targets, but establishing a successor body to hold Governments to account on the health of our environment will be critical post-Brexit.

Many recommendations in the report should refocus the Government's strategy. The announcement in the programme for government that the number of LEZs is to be increased from a single pilot to four was welcome. However, it became clear during the inquiry that cutting pollution from the bus fleet will be the foundation for every successful LEZ, with the inclusion of cars, taxis and heavy goods vehicles taking as early as possible the path of the buses.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport told the inquiry that the CAFS strategy has so far "failed to deliver", with no review of the bus investment fund, the operators grant or guidance, and no updated legislation, which it was promised would be in place by 2016.

As I highlighted in the recent Green Party debate on buses, confusion around funding has hampered the early planning of a more ambitious Glasgow LEZ. I was encouraged that, the day after that debate, the transport minister announced that 70 per cent of the £10.8 million fund for LEZ delivery this year can be used for bus retrofits. That means that in Glasgow about three quarters of the fleet could be running clean by next year.

However, there is still no sign of the further £10 million of loan funds that was agreed as part of this year's budget, which could be used to accelerate delivery of engine and exhaust retrofit work in the other three cities, thereby giving them

a head start on wider LEZ roll-out. I acknowledge that plans change and evolve, but the situation emphasises the importance of an annual report on the CAF strategy that can make it clear to Parliament where the effort will be going, and where and why programmes need revision ahead of the annual budget process.

In my remaining time, I will mention a couple more of the many themes that the committee looked at. When we talk about air quality, we talk mostly about communities and how they work. Our trip to Corstorphine to talk to residents underlined just how complex the situation is. How parking is enforced, how traffic lights are phased, how the school run works and how planning decisions are made all impact on air quality. It is obvious that if we create an urban environment that is easy to get around on foot or by bike—where vehicle speeds are safer and where there is good infrastructure for walking and cycling—we will make our towns and cities healthier and more attractive places in which to spend time and money.

The planning process is critical. Both the cabinet secretary and the transport minister highlighted to the inquiry the need for air quality to be a bigger consideration. I ask whether the promised discussions with the planning minister about planning reform have been held. We need to be making healthy places, rather than locking in pollution and ill health for generations to come.

Finally, I highlight the role of agriculture in adding to background levels of nitrogen pollution. It is yet another area—alongside climate change and water quality—in which a nitrogen budget for Scotland could make a big difference. We need our Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity finally to grasp that proportionate regulation to deal with nitrogen pollution can only bring cost savings to farmers, while protecting our soils, rivers, climate and air.

The inquiry is an important milestone on our journey to a Scotland in which deaths from air pollution are consigned to the history books, alongside deaths from cholera and tuberculosis. Renewed focus by the Government will be needed if we are to make that a reality.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Liam McArthur to open for the Liberal Democrats. You can have five minutes or thereabouts, as there is a little time in hand for everyone.

15:32

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I thank Graeme Dey and his committee colleagues for their inquiry and detailed work on air quality, and I congratulate them on their report,

which, for the reasons that Mark Ruskell set out, provides a useful platform from which to take forward the Parliament's work in the area and attempt to make the cleaner air for Scotland strategy deliver on its ambitions.

I am the member of the Scottish Parliament for Orkney, Presiding Officer, and in the coffee lounge earlier you and I were reflecting that, although a lack of clean air might not be a problem in my part of the world, the speed at which the air moves certainly is.

Air quality is a shared interest of all members, as it relates to our concerns about climate change, the environment and our health objectives. As Katherine Byrne, of Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland, reminded us, air pollution should be treated as a health emergency. That is a clarion call for action.

In the time that is available to me, I will touch on three issues that are addressed in the report: policy cohesion, low-emission zones and cars.

This is an area that clearly needs a joined-up approach across Government. As the cabinet secretary rightly acknowledged in her speech, air quality touches on policy areas such as the environment, transport, health, agriculture, local government and education. It cannot simply be a matter for one minister or one department.

The committee rightly asks that air quality be a key component in reviews of the national planning framework and national planning policy. If air quality is not embedded in planning and place making, it is difficult to see how we can achieve the objectives of the CAFS strategy.

That points to the joined-up approach that is needed between national Government and local government. The committee's report seems to imply that there are conflicting interests across local authorities. There is no doubt that council budgets are under pressure, and it might be difficult for some councils to make investments when they are making difficult decisions about funding other areas, but we need to find mechanisms, including funding, to ensure that at national and local levels there is complementary—and certainly not contradictory—action.

LEZs have been something of a poster child for the Scottish Government's clean air strategy. They are very welcome indeed, and I congratulate Glasgow on being the first taxi off the rank in having one. We need to recognise that that LEZ will set the tone. If it is ambitious, it will encourage others to raise their game, too; if it is too timid, it will run the risk of providing cover and an excuse for others to follow suit. It is good to see the ECCLR Committee supporting a strong stance on that. For the reasons that David Stewart touched on, it is right that, in order to make a meaningful

contribution, such zones must include, at the very least, private vehicles.

Friends of the Earth has pointed out that, since the publication of the committee's report, we have seen Glasgow City Council produce less-than-ambitious proposals. There have been attempts to beef those proposals up, but they still seem to fall far short of the commitments that were made by the Government. More importantly, they run the risk of leaving the levels of air pollution still illegal by 2020. Last month, we also saw Environment LINK resign from the cleaner air for Scotland governance group. All of that sets a mood and a tone. The cabinet secretary has pointed to the subsequent clarifications around the budget, which is helpful and will, I hope, allow Glasgow to be, shall I say, miles bolder.

Finally, I welcome the commitment that the Government has set out in relation to the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2032, which is an achievable timeframe. As Gina Hanrahan of WWF Scotland has made clear:

"Decarbonising our transport sector in fifteen years will create new jobs, cut emissions and clean up our polluted air."

That is a win-win-win situation. She also pointed to the fact that that will have an effect in accelerating the shift to electric vehicles that will set us up to lead in the development of the technologies of the future. The transport minister will not need to be reminded that I represent a part of the world that is leading the way when it comes to electric vehicle ownership. However, it is important that we see that cascade more widely across the country in the years ahead.

The committee calls for the Scottish Government to set out a timeline for reaching that goal, so that we can see the milestones along the way, including the legislative and non-legislative measures and incentives that are needed. As I have pointed out on many occasions, the charging infrastructure is absolutely key. However, it needs to be not only extensive but reliable. Charging points need to be factored into new house builds, including tenements, and the use of financial incentives such as reduced parking charges, exemption from tolls and the like should be considered.

As Graeme Dey reminded us in opening the debate, the response to the Government's clean air strategy has been a bit mixed. However, there is an opportunity to respond to that. Air pollution is the greatest environmental challenge to public health that we face, so the Government needs to match its rhetoric with the necessary mix of ambition and urgency. The CAFS strategy remains the best means of achieving that, and I hope that the ECCLR Committee and this Parliament will

continue to play their role in ensuring that that happens.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. For the avoidance of doubt, speeches should still be of five minutes, with just a few minutes in hand for interventions.

15:38

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** My sole contribution to the committee's report was to join the committee in time to get my name and photograph in it. Otherwise, my contribution to the report was entirely nil. I therefore thank all those who preceded me on the committee for the hard work that they have done. They missed a typo in paragraph 50, which has been cut and pasted into the executive summary, but let us not worry too much about that. Donald Cameron does not need to worry about his late arrival on the committee, either: I came to it much later.

As an asthmatic, I will focus on health issues for people who have problems of one sort or another with their lungs. I particularly welcome the report's focus on diesel cars as being contributors to poor air quality. I now have a petrol car after many years of having diesel cars. I admit that my reasons for getting one were quite separate from pollution, but at least it means that I am slightly ahead of the game.

The Government's "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" strategy was published in November 2015, so the strategy is about halfway through its five-year term. As others have, I will focus on particulate matter. PM<sub>2.5</sub> relates to particles of less than 2.5 micrometres in size. Such particles are so small that they cannot be seen using an ordinary microscope; they can be seen only using an electron microscope. Because of their small size, they have a disproportionate effect. In its report on the subject, the Government highlights that the Scottish objectives in relation to PM<sub>2.5</sub> are similar to what is laid out in the World Health Organization guidelines, which is welcome.

However, I want to highlight where the WHO is going. Through the research that it is co-ordinating and reporting on, it is becoming more aware of the impacts of PM<sub>2.5</sub>. We are talking about tiny particles, and the smaller a particle is, the greater the ratio is between the surface area and the content—in other words, there is a lot of surface area and not much content. That means that such particles are much more likely to stick to human flesh, particularly in the lungs. So small are they that they will go right down to the bottom of the lungs, to the bronchial tubes and beyond, and they are much less likely than larger particles to be

expelled. That is partly why PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles are so important.

The WHO's "Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution", which is a technical report, is a very meaty document of well over 300 pages. It brings to light a lot of interesting research that goes right the way back, including research from across Europe and North America, on the effects of PM<sub>2.5</sub>. It mentions that

"A systematic review reported significant associations between exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> and birth outcomes, including low birth weight, preterm birth and small for gestational age births"—

and that is aside from any effects that are directly associated with lungs.

More recent research has been done that shows that exposure to such small particles even for a single hour has measurable effects on lung function that are associated with a higher rate of mortality and morbidity. The evidence on larger particles is less clear, but the issue is an extremely serious one that we need to be very careful about. Even healthy people are affected, and people who already have cardiac or lung issues are affected disproportionately badly.

Limited research has been done on the interaction between electrostatic charge and very small particles, and the WHO report lists eight areas in which further research is required. Rural areas are better. When my wife puts the washing out in Banffshire, it smells beautiful and there is no smut. If it has been out in West Lothian, it comes in black and smelly. Therefore, I say to members: live in the country and live longer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Jamie Greene. Have you spilled your water?

15:43

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** Yes, my speech is wet, but I will get through it. I will try not to touch anything electrical for the next few minutes.

I agree with Stewart Stevenson that we should live in the countryside. Unfortunately, not all of us can or do. It is interesting that the league table of our most polluted cities shows that our most polluted streets are in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee.

I will focus less on the science and more on the policy. It is no great surprise that, according to today's headline in *The Scotsman*, air pollution levels in Scotland are now a "medical emergency". Nevertheless, that might surprise many people, given the extent to which Scotland's economy and industry have changed over recent years and the fact that the heavy industries of Edinburgh and

Glasgow that were deemed to pollute those cities have largely been replaced by service industries.

There is still a general lack of understanding among the public as to why air pollution levels are so high, what is causing that and what is being done about it. It is one of those issues that we do not think about until it affects us personally. It affects me personally, as my mother has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and she, like many people with asthma or similar conditions, knows the obvious and direct effect that air quality has on her day-to-day life. Thankfully, she lives in a part of the country that benefits from more than its fair share of fresh sea air, but a day trip to Glasgow or Edinburgh can be difficult for her and occasionally impossible. Hope Street in Glasgow is the most polluted street in Scotland, and the six most polluted streets in Scotland are in the three aforementioned cities.

In Scotland, over 2,500 deaths per year are associated with air pollution. Worldwide, air pollution causes 25 per cent of strokes, 23 per cent of heart disease and 14 per cent of lung cancers. Given that Scotland already has the highest age-standardised premature death rates for cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and strokes, it is vital that we address one of the key contributing factors.

The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants, which is a United Kingdom body, suggests that particulate matter pollution, as it is known, is attributable to an average life loss of around three to four months in Scotland and accounts for around 5 per cent of deaths in Edinburgh and Glasgow, which is not an insignificant number. Reducing that level by even just 10 micrograms per cubic metre is expected to have a greater impact on human life than eliminating passive smoking.

It is not just healthcare that is affected by air pollution, though. It also affects our economy—specifically our rural economy. Poor air quality hurts crop yields to the tune of around £183 million a year. Given that over 60 per cent of the land in Scotland is used for agriculture—for grazing and growing crops—surely there is also an economic argument for improving air quality.

In the short time that I have left, I will touch on some transport issues, because transport has a key role to play in the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. That is why I welcome the LEZs. However, as Donald Cameron said, there are genuine concerns about the roll-out of LEZs. For example, the roll-out in Glasgow will take place in eight months' time, which is not far away, and I am not convinced that the public fully understand what is coming to them, especially those who have already made spending decisions or who are locked into leases or contracts for small vans or

vehicles. Do they know where or when they will be able to enter LEZs? Do they know the repercussions of doing so? Communication on that issue is vital, but I am not convinced that we are there yet.

The Government is doing some good work—there is no point in denying that. The introduction of electrification on our train network is welcome, given that the class 385s will see the replacement of diesel engines. It is also welcome that some new Caledonian MacBrayne hybrid ferries are coming through the system, although there are 28 routes in operation. Yes, minibuses are cleaner and greener in our cities, but that is not the case everywhere; and, yes, many new aircraft are lighter and use less fuel. However, as has been mentioned, at the current rate of progress it will take Scotland 239 years to reach its target of 10 per cent of journeys being taken by bike—a fact that the committee noted.

Promoting active travel helps our health and economy, but it also helps us to meet our climate change targets. Improving transport options can go hand in hand with achieving our environmental ambitions. No single policy instrument will fix the problems that we face with air pollution, but it is vital that the Scottish Government is entirely focused on improving air quality and that it does so in a deliverable and reasonable way. If it does that, it will have my support and the support of the Conservatives.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Gillian Martin, to be followed by Colin Smyth. Is Mr Smyth in the chamber?

**David Stewart:** He has just gone out, but he will be back.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will not call him, then. I call Gillian Martin, to be followed by Finlay Carson.

15:49

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** I am not a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, but I followed its inquiry with interest as the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. I wanted to take part in the debate mainly to commend the committee's work but also to praise the efforts of local groups in my constituency that are helping to improve air quality, often with Government assistance, as part of a wider effort to tackle climate change.

Keep Scotland Beautiful manages the climate challenge fund, which grants money, with contributions from the European regional development fund, to local projects such as the

Beaton hall community climate action project in Methlick and the Garioch sports centre goes green project in Inverurie. Those projects will improve the energy efficiency of local amenities, and they provide home efficiency advice and fuel-efficient driver training to the public. Aberdeenshire East also includes Fetterangus—a small village that has its own wind turbine and community energy scheme. Such projects, with financial support provided by public money, can cumulatively help to improve air quality throughout Scotland and, just as important, get communities engaged in playing their part.

I also highlight local efforts that encourage others to get involved and make their own contributions. Small actions all mount up, and community and school initiatives encourage behaviour change and the buy-in that will promote the mindset change that we need if we are to meet our targets and protect the environment for our children's futures.

As a judge in the "Dragons' Den" part of the girls in energy event, I was struck by the fact that all the initiatives and presentations that the girls brought forward were to do with renewable energy and reducing pollution. Not one talked about a carbon-based initiative. That goes to show that young people are already grasping the fact that this is the future of energy.

Of course, the larger initiatives that are coming to fruition have an immediate impact. The installation of the world's most powerful single wind turbine off the coast of Balmedie in my constituency is an example of that. Just one rotation of its blades is enough to power a household for an entire day. It is one of 11 turbines that will form the European offshore wind deployment centre, and it is expected to displace about 135,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually and remove the equivalent of about 740,000 cars from UK roads during its lifetime.

I welcome the promised low-emission zone in Aberdeen city centre and the strategic work that is being done to keep traffic away from the centre of the city. That is long overdue not just for environmental reasons but for safety reasons.

I welcome the investment in local rail infrastructure, too. The doubling of rail track between Aberdeen and Inverurie should lead to a massive reduction in the number of commuters on the roads and a consequent reduction in emissions.

I also highlight the Scottish Government's decision to double to £80 million the investment in a range of measures to support active travel. Many members have mentioned that investment. By creating safe, segregated walking and cycling infrastructure in our towns and cities, we can make

them friendlier and safer spaces for pedestrians and cyclists and encourage a reduction in car use.

The committee's report mentions that there should be more focus on the impact of agriculture on air quality. I note that NFU Scotland accepts that, post-Brexit, new environmental measures should address air quality. I am also aware that the practice—which is mentioned in the report—of spreading manure into rather than on to soil in order to limit the volume of pollutants that are lost to the atmosphere is already followed in my constituency.

We must recognise that improvements in air quality can be achieved as a by-product of increasing internet access. The committee does not really mention that issue, but it is significant. By increasing Scotland's connectivity, we can increase the potential for people to work from home instead of commuting to work. That is particularly important in my constituency, where Aberdeen city seems to be a Mecca for all the work that happens. I would like the work to be spread more widely throughout the constituency. Therefore, I welcome the fact that the Scottish Government is taking a lead on the issue, going further and faster than the UK Government and committing to ensuring that 100 per cent of premises have access to superfast broadband.

As members know, I am passionate about flexible working and encouraging new business start-ups. Part of that is about allowing more people to forgo commuting in favour of working closer to where they live, whether that involves accessing remote working or setting up in business.

We all have to play our individual parts, and I am playing mine. I am six months into a four-year lease on the most ecologically friendly hybrid car on the market, with a view to going fully electric in four years' time at a point when we have the infrastructure in my constituency to support that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Finlay Carson, to be followed by Emma Harper and then Colin Smyth. I am keeping an appropriate political order.

15:54

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate on air quality as a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee. Although I represent a very rural constituency, and Scotland's most beautiful—Galloway and West Dumfries—I am acutely aware of the challenges that urban communities face daily when many streets still break the EU air quality directives. However, there are serious questions to ask about rural air quality, so I will

use my speech today to highlight how the rural region that I represent is facing some challenges from air pollution.

Earlier this year at the Scottish Parliament, I held a positive meeting with those behind the Border and regions airway training hub—BREATH—project, which is a cross-border partnership involving the University of the West of Scotland, Queen's University Belfast and Dundalk Institute of Technology in Ireland. The project, which is backed by more than €7 million of funding, is designed to look at lung disease in the west of Scotland and Ireland.

I live in a region that I imagine members will all be shocked to hear has the highest level of COPD not just in Scotland, the UK or Europe: south-west Scotland and Ireland have the highest levels of COPD in the world, with a particular hotspot at Stranraer. I therefore disagree with Mr Stevenson when he says that it is always good to live in the countryside.

Last week, I facilitated a stakeholders' meeting, and we are committed to progressing this and other projects that will allow world-class researchers who are working directly in Dumfries and Galloway to identify and address the causes, treatment and prevention of COPD. It might not all be down to air quality, but it certainly plays a significant part and we need to identify what that part is. The Government could assist in that process by installing air quality monitors in Cairnryan, which is home to two of our busiest ferry terminals, particularly as shipping is now recognised as a major contributor to air pollution.

We heard from Maureen Watt, the former Minister for Public Health, that there is a possible link between air pollution and Alzheimer's. As deputy convener of the cross-party group on dementia, I am keen to highlight the fact that there is a higher rate of people living with dementia in Dumfries and Galloway than the Scottish average. Resources are already stretched across rural communities but, as well as supporting our local health services, we must ensure that urgent action is taken to implement a fit-for-purpose air policy that covers rural areas.

We are all keen to promote active lifestyles, and that can be delivered hand-in-hand with reducing air pollution. The benefits of walking and cycling can be realised only if we have the resources to deliver modal shift by making active travel the easy option every day. Dumfries and Galloway Council's ambitious active travel plans are already delivering results. More than a quarter of journeys in Dumfries and Galloway are made on foot, which is higher than the 23 per cent figure across the country. Furthermore, 38.9 per cent of residents in Dumfries and Galloway have access to bicycles

compared with the national average of 34.9 per cent.

Of course, we need to look at ways of reducing emissions while still travelling by car, which is all but essential in rural constituencies such as mine. We need to accelerate the installation of electric charging points for vehicles in rural areas with an ambition to phase out petrol and diesel cars, but we really should consider giving rural communities incentives to own electric cars. I recognise the major challenge that faces our cities when it comes to emissions, but our rural communities cannot be left at a disadvantage.

I hope that the committee's inquiry has highlighted to the Scottish Government that there is still a lot of work to be done in a number of areas of Scotland if it is to get serious about air quality. There are serious doubts about who will deliver the policies, when they will be implemented and whether the resources are there to do it. It is a serious concern for our urban and rural communities.

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's report is an important step forward in challenging what has been done to tackle air quality, and I am pleased to have been part of the inquiry. We will continue to monitor the steps that the Government is taking to meet the European directives that it has missed for far too long. I hope that our next inquiry will be able to report significant improvements.

15:59

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in this afternoon's debate on the air quality in Scotland inquiry. I thank the committee members, clerks and witnesses for the work that they have done in producing the report. As a former member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee who helped to suggest the issue of air quality, I wanted to contribute today.

I am sure that many members will agree that recognising and tackling poor air quality is vital if we are going to support healthier people, a healthier society and ultimately a healthier planet.

The cabinet secretary mentioned the cross-portfolio responsibility for air quality, and the report recommends that discussions continue with the Minister for Local Government and Housing

"to ensure the planning and placemaking ambitions set out"

in the CAFS strategy are fully realised. The report also recommends that

"Air quality must be a key component in the reviews of the national planning framework and national planning policy."

I am reminded of a statement last year from the First Minister, who suggested that

"There may well be a merit in having individual cabinet secretaries reporting on the action within their own portfolio"

to tackle climate change. Of course, air quality is part of that.

This report on air quality covers evidence for implementing the low-emission zones in Scotland, which is extremely important. However, I would like to focus my comments on the four pages of the report that relate to other causes of air pollution. The first cause is agricultural emissions and the second is wood-burning stoves and biomass.

The eight paragraphs that are dedicated to agriculture may be a reflection on the limited information on agriculture in the CAFS strategy, so I agree with the committee's recommendation that the strategy be updated in relation to agriculture.

As part of my work in the South Scotland region, I am aware that there are processes and products available to help to reduce agricultural emissions. We know that pH testing of soil is now pretty much widely accepted by farmers in order to increase efficiency, reduce costs and reduce greenhouse gases such as nitrogen oxide from fertiliser spread. That is good.

I know that there are biological products such as yeast for ruminants and now products that are used in the management of slurry to maintain a liquid consistency so that machinery does not block during spreading. Those slurry products provide a natural biological agitator. The biological agitator is added to the slurry stores and does not cost a lot compared with a tractor engine that is idling for multiple hours, which causes pollution, and has a mechanical agitator attached. The biological agitator saves farmers time and money and reduces diesel emissions.

Anaerobic digesters are also utilised to process slurry and harness the more potent polluter methane to generate electricity rather than allowing it to escape to the atmosphere. Incidentally, anaerobic digesters can be used on a smaller scale for waste such as dog poo in public parks to power the lights. That may encourage folk to pick up after their poopy pooch and I would encourage that.

I realise that there are cross-portfolio aspects to managing agricultural emissions between the environment and rural portfolios. As parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, I am happy to engage at any point to help support this work.

There is good news for agriculture and I echo the report's suggestion that the Government

should provide guidance to the sector on how to adopt such scientific techniques to help to improve air quality and reduce emissions from our farms.

My second point relates to wood-burning stoves. As convener of the cross-party group on lung health and as a nurse, I have a keen interest in looking at what we can do to highlight issues such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The report notes that research needs to be undertaken to look at

“the extent of pollutants emanating from wood burning stoves and biomass boilers ... so that informed decisions can be made”

on what is required to mitigate any harmful effects. I welcome that. There is already good evidence out there that particulate matter leads to lung problems. Stewart Stevenson has already talked about PM<sub>2.5</sub>. This is a problem especially for children and other vulnerable people such as folk with asthma.

The COPD issue in the south-west of Scotland has been highlighted and expertly discussed by Finlay Carson. I am glad that he mentioned it, because I was able to help support the launch of the BREATH project last year.

I have one last point to make on active travel—on walking and cycling. I know that there is not a lot of time, but I would support the creation of a national cycle route in the south-west of Scotland so that we can have safe, segregated cycling infrastructure.

I thank the committee members and the clerks for the air quality report and I welcome the Government's response on the action that will be taken on the report's recommendations.

16:04

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** I commend members of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee for their work on this inquiry. The final report is a comprehensive and insightful examination of the Government's cleaner air for Scotland strategy and it will play an important role in informing future work on the matter.

As a substitute member of the committee, I have followed progress in the inquiry closely. Of course, many of the issues that are covered by the report cut across the work of other committees, highlighting the need for a cross-Government approach to tackling the problem of air pollution.

As a member of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, which deals with transport, and as convener of the cross-party group on heart disease and stroke, I particularly want to focus my comments on the negative

impact of air pollution on our health, and the important role that our transport choices play in minimising that impact.

The link between poor air quality and ill health is well documented. It is estimated that air pollution contributes to as many as 40,000 premature deaths each year across the UK. It has been linked with heart disease and stroke, as well as cancer, asthma, diabetes and many other health conditions.

The British Heart Foundation Scotland describes air pollution as the invisible problem—we cannot see it, but it is all around us. The foundation has funded research in Scotland that shows the devastating effect that air pollution has on our hearts: it makes existing conditions worse and increases the risk of developing others, and there is a clear link between air pollution levels and heart attacks.

Even short-term exposure to large amounts of air pollution has been linked with a higher risk of developing angina, as was highlighted by Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland in its submission to the Health and Sport Committee ahead of that committee's evidence session today. Studies have shown that air pollution can trigger atrial fibrillation—a common type of abnormal heartbeat that significantly increases the risk of stroke.

Air pollution has a disproportionate effect on the health of children and older adults, and it contributes to Scotland's shameful health inequalities, with deprived urban communities often experiencing particularly high levels of air pollution. Reducing air pollution is, therefore, not only an environmental necessity but a health and equalities one. As Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland said in its evidence to the Health and Sport Committee:

“Air pollution should be treated as a health emergency and not constrained by the current slow pace of negotiation and action.”

Key to tackling this health emergency are the transport choices that we make, and I welcome the committee's strong focus on that. A recent report by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs found that, in instances where legal air quality limits were being broken, transport was responsible for 80 per cent of roadside pollution.

We will not tackle air pollution without a drastic change in our transport habits—in particular, promoting alternative forms of transport to the car is crucial. The percentage of journeys made by bike increased by just 0.2 per cent between 2010 and 2016, and bus usage in Scotland continues to plummet. I therefore welcome the Government's plans to increase spending on active travel, but it is important to ensure that the benefits of that

investment are widely shared. Disadvantaged communities and rural areas must not be left behind when it comes to investment in active travel, but that is all too often the case at present.

Similarly, there must be an effort to remove the barriers that face certain groups. Roger Geffen, the policy director of Cycling UK, noted that UK cycling conditions

“disproportionately deter young people, older people, women and people with disabilities from cycling”,

and similar challenges prevent people within those groups from walking. Just last weekend, I took part in an initiative by a local charity, Buddies, which is promoting accessible cycling in partnership with the cycling Dumfries campaign. Its bikers buddies scheme, which includes specially adapted bikes for disabled people, is breaking down the barriers to cycling for many within the local community.

Such locally driven projects allow for innovative thinking and are able to respond to the specific needs and challenges of their communities. When I chaired Dumfries and Galloway Council’s economy, environment and infrastructure committee—I am sure that Finlay Carson will be delighted to know that that was when we agreed the active travel plan that he commended earlier—I had the privilege of being involved in a fantastic initiative called beat the street, which many members will have seen in their communities. It prompted a significant increase in cycling and walking in towns across the region. I strongly recommend the roll-out of such an initiative across the whole country, not just as a one-off, which is what often happens in communities, but permanently.

However, despite the increase in active travel funding, on-going cuts to local authority budgets pose a serious threat to many of the local initiatives on active travel. Stopping and reversing cuts in local government is vital in order to promote active travel, but also to help reverse the decline in bus usage, providing the necessary support to maintain services and, hopefully soon, as David Stewart said, a more regulated bus sector.

In its submission to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, Lothian Buses highlighted the fact that one bus represents 75 vehicles being removed from the road. The scope for buses to reduce congestion and air pollution is huge, but that requires buses to be made more convenient, accessible, affordable and properly regulated. By delivering a step change in our transport choices, through better active travel and increased bus usage, we can play a huge role in tackling the health crisis that air pollution is inflicting on far too many of our communities.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** We are tight for time, so I ask members to tighten up on hitting the five-minute mark.

16:10

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** Air quality does not receive enough attention but has a profound effect not only on our health but on Scotland’s green credentials.

As most of us are aware, numerous policies and strategies at local, national and international levels—from the WHO and European guidelines through to local development plans—feed into the criteria for air quality. In 2015, the Scottish Government published its cleaner air for Scotland strategy, which, it should be noted, adopted the WHO guideline value for fine particulate matter rather than the less stringent European value. That is important, as the potential cost of air pollution on health is great in the long and short term.

Research on the cardiovascular effects of air pollution dates back to the 1950s and the major smog that occurred in London in 1952. A comparison of the data for 1951 and 1952 shows that an estimated 4,000 extra premature deaths can be attributed to respiratory and cardiovascular disease during the three weeks following the beginning of the smog.

Many studies since then have built upon that link. Research that was funded by the British Heart Foundation in 2013 found a link between

“increased hospitalisation rates and poor short-term air quality in those with heart failure.”

In 2014, the European study of cohorts for air pollution effects found that long-term exposure to particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres—PM<sub>2.5</sub>—is strongly linked to heart attacks and angina.

It was reported last week that researchers studying PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels in Utah concluded that even short-term increases in air pollution can be linked to a higher risk of developing viral chest infections, which have the potential to turn into conditions such as bronchitis. The researchers found that, in some cases, the infections proved deadly: 26 children and 81 adults died within a month of diagnosis during the 1999 to 2016 period that was studied. That can be seen in the context of the global burden of disease study 2012, which stated that outdoor air pollution was the ninth leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. In addition, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states that urban air pollution is set to become the top environmental cause of mortality worldwide by 2050, ahead of dirty water and lack of sanitation.

The situation in the UK has been exacerbated by the substantial increase in the number of cars on the roads, which rose from 19 million in 1980 to 34.5 million in 2012, and the ill-judged promotion of diesel cars, which have lower carbon dioxide emissions but higher, and toxic, nitrogen dioxide emissions. The Scottish Government's proposal to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 is a sensible and proactive step that will bring huge benefits, even as we move away from the current state of affairs over the next 14 years. There will clearly need to be investment in alternative modes of transport. To that end, the promised extension of the electric charging infrastructure is to be welcomed warmly.

I accept that the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee has questions about the implementation of low-emission zones. It is right to question that. It is to be hoped that the Scottish Government's strengthening of its cleaner air for Scotland governance group will provide reassurance on its commitment to that cause. In appointing the British Heart Foundation and Professor Campbell Gemmell—an expert in science, policy and regulation—to the group, the Government is reinforcing its aim of having the cleanest air in Europe.

That announcement, which was made at the end of March, also set out further details of the financial support available for low-emission zones. More than 70 per cent of this year's £10.8 million funding is going to support the retrofitting of more than 300 Glasgow buses—over 40 per cent of the city centre fleet.

My constituency has seen its share of air quality issues. Musselburgh High Street—the main thoroughfare in the town—has historically exceeded the annual NO<sub>2</sub> mean objective. A detailed assessment in 2008 was followed in 2013 by an official council designation of the area from the Newbigging junction to the Bridge Street junction as an air quality management area. A subsequent assessment in 2014 found that road traffic was a principal source of the excess NO<sub>2</sub>. Given the importance of the High Street to the Musselburgh economy, and in light of the health issues that we know that air pollution can cause, it was clear that action had to be taken to improve the air quality in the area.

The 2014 assessment included a source apportionment exercise. That process assesses the sources of pollutants, confirms whether excesses of NO<sub>2</sub> are due to road traffic, determines the extent to which different vehicle types are responsible for the emissions contributions, and quantifies what proportion of omissions is due to background or local emissions from busy roads in the local area. At one particular point in Musselburgh High Street, it was found that

the highest proportion of emissions could be attributed to buses, which accounted for 38 per cent of emissions measured. In contrast, queueing traffic contributed the largest actual average proportion of emissions in all locations bar one, accounting for an average of 34 per cent.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please come to a close.

**Colin Beattie:** Clearly, air quality is one area in which all branches of Government must work together to ensure the health of Scotland's citizens. Between the funding that is provided by the Government at a macro level and local authority action at the micro level, we can ensure that the people of Scotland can live free from air pollution as soon as possible.

16:15

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank the committee for the important work that it has done in this area. I confess that the policy issue of air quality is not one that I have followed closely. However, in preparation for the debate, I considered the fact that air pollution is responsible for up to 2,500 deaths in Scotland, and noted that the front page of today's *Scotsman* says that medical charities are saying that the issue counts as a "medical emergency". I also noted that, last year, the WHO said that Glasgow—the region that I represent—has worse pollution than London. From those few examples, it is clear that there are major issues in this policy area.

I will address a local example and then relate that to some of the general issues that the committee has raised. I stay in Cambuslang, which is part of the Glasgow region. In 2016, Main Street in Cambuslang was cited as one of the most polluted streets in Scotland, with 45 micrograms of NO<sub>2</sub> per cubic metre. The reasons for that are obvious. It is an area with intense traffic. It is near the motorway, which is important for connectivity with regard to the economy but which obviously increases traffic through Main Street.

In addition, a lot of vehicles use Main Street due to inadequate bus services. Recently, a constituent approached me with an issue about bus travel to Hairmyres hospital, which is about 4 miles away from Cambuslang. A lot of people travel to hospital by bus, and the constituent described to me the journey that he has to take to get there, which involves walking for a quarter of a mile, taking a bus to East Kilbride and then taking a further bus to the hospital—a journey that takes about an hour and a quarter in total. Such a journey is a challenge for people who do not have cars, and there is a general transport issue here. If we are trying to encourage people to use public

transport instead of cars, it is important that we ensure that there are appropriate bus routes to destinations such as hospitals. I know that Cambuslang community council has campaigned strongly on the issue. It has demanded greater enforcement, and has said that the area should be a priority for the establishment of a low-emission zone—there is a strong case for that.

With regard to the issues that the committee's report has identified, there is clearly a frustration around the timescales that the Government has set and concern about whether there is sufficient funding and infrastructure for the four low-emission zones that will be set up. The resignation of the Scottish Environment LINK representative from the Government's strategy group indicates that not all is well in this area.

There remain challenges for local government funding. I do not want to rerun the budget debate, but it is clear that the Government has not prioritised council funding over a number of years. If we want local government to be part of the effort to meet the policy challenge of reducing emissions and ensuring better air quality, councils need to be properly funded.

A number of members have pointed out the challenges around active travel. In 2016, 42 per cent of adults drove every day, so promoting active travel is still a major task. As others have said, there are great benefits in getting people to walk or cycle to their destination. As well as reducing emissions, it can make people fitter and healthier. There also remains the challenge of getting people out of petrol and diesel vehicles and into low-emission vehicles. As has been pointed out, there needs to be greater awareness of and information about low-emission vehicles.

Greater leadership from the Government is needed to overcome the technical, funding and political challenges presented by the issue of air quality.

16:20

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in the debate, not just because I am a member of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee but because my constituency plays host to Scotland's largest petrochemical and refinery industries. Air quality is an issue that I take considerable interest in, as do many of my constituents.

We all rely on the quality of Scotland's air to be as good as it can be. It is therefore vital that we all work together to ensure that we are taking the right, ambitious steps, at the right pace, to safeguard the quality of our air now and for the future.

The Scottish Government's CAFS strategy is indeed ambitious. However, as the convener alluded to, the committee agreed that the strategy should remain under review to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose. It is fair to say that "complex" is the simplest description of the changing nature of environmental legislation and advice. Therefore, it is only right therefore that any strategy has enough room to manoeuvre in the face of significant and rapid change.

There is, however, a responsibility on all of us to ensure that we work together to provide the opportunities to realise the ambitions in CAFS. We should ensure that there is always cohesion between national and local policy decisions regarding their impact on air quality and the measures to mitigate that impact. The committee recommended that ministers should consider what more can be done to achieve cohesion and resolve any issues that may be seen as a barrier to that.

In undertaking that approach, there is a strong and important role for the cleaner air for Scotland governance group. I was extremely disappointed about the resignation of Scottish Environment LINK from the governance group. While I can understand, to a degree, Scottish Environment LINK's frustration and the reasoning behind the resignation, the way forward is to collaborate, not to shout at the Scottish Government from the sidelines. I hope that Scottish Environment LINK has a change of heart and resumes its constructive role in the governance group in the near future.

The easiest way to change things is to change them from within. Now is the time for stakeholders not to walk away from the table but to come together to implement workable and effective solutions. Despite the action of Scottish Environment LINK, I was pleased to hear that the governance group was strengthened recently by specialists in health, environmental science and regulation with, as Colin Beattie referred to, the addition of the British Heart Foundation and the appointment of Professor Campbell Gemmill. That is progress.

I am glad to be able to highlight that in my constituency, and indeed across Falkirk district, measures to improve air quality are already being put in place and achieving results. Of the 39 automatic air quality monitoring sites across Scotland, 12 are in the Falkirk Council area. While there have undoubtedly been air quality issues in Falkirk district in the past, monitoring results for last year confirm that the national air quality standard objectives for NO<sub>2</sub> were met at all seven NO<sub>2</sub> monitoring sites in Falkirk Council's automatic network. Long-term NO<sub>2</sub> monitoring data also indicates a downward trend in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations

in the Falkirk area, at both background and roadside sites, so progress is being made.

The six automatic sulphur dioxide monitors in the Falkirk network met all three—15-minute, hourly and daily—NAQS objectives in 2016. The 2016 results continue the objective compliance recorded in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Long-term SO<sub>2</sub> trend analysis at the Grangemouth automatic urban and rural network site shows a decline in SO<sub>2</sub> concentrations since the commissioning of the tail gas treatment unit at Ineos Grangemouth—now Petroineos—in 2013.

I know that the mere mention of Ineos can trigger Pavlovian-type reactions from diehard environmentalists, but credit has to be given when it is due. Following significant exceedances and breaches of SO<sub>2</sub> limits in the past, Ineos invested £32 million in the tail gas unit—or the sulphur recovery unit, as it is known locally—which became operational in 2013. However, it is worth noting for the record that the UK has a 15-minute air quality objective for SO<sub>2</sub>, which is additional to the EU requirements, so although there were breaches of the UK limits in Grangemouth, the refinery was within the European limits. That aside, the breaches led to the refinery investing £32 million in a tail gas treatment unit five years ahead of the future industrial emissions directive requirement to upgrade by this year, 2018.

That is just one example of how local industry is working hard to improve air quality, and credit is due to Ineos for doing that. There is sustained, long-term progress in reducing Scottish emissions and ensuring improvements to air quality countrywide. It is not all doom and gloom, but of course there is much more to do, both locally and nationally. While domestic and European air quality targets are being met across much of Scotland, poor air quality remains an issue in a number of our towns and cities, and as the ECCLR Committee report states, effective change is needed now so that all of us can breathe clean air and lead healthy lives in the future, but a joint effort is needed to make sure that that happens.

16:26

**Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** Air is something that we cannot ignore. It is the very thing that is keeping us alive, which makes the quality of our air all the more important. I am grateful to see members on all sides of the chamber taking the debate so seriously.

I was pleased to see in the committee report that some progress has been made through efforts to improve air quality, but I share the concerns of my fellow Scottish Conservatives about the Scottish Government's long-term approach and implementation. I represent the rural constituency

of Aberdeenshire West. I know that we probably take air quality for granted there, given the abundance of lichen on trees, which is—for those who are unaware of it—a useful indicator of air quality, but we still need to do our bit to assist Scotland, the United Kingdom and our planet.

One step that we can take is to improve public transport. However, constituents of mine increasingly find that bus routes are being shortened and that services are being reduced or even cancelled. If we are to bring about a society that is aiming to reduce our carbon emissions, we need to work with our communities and with transport companies to ensure that we provide to residents services that they will use. With bus-fleet numbers having fallen by 11 per cent over the past five years, and passenger numbers having fallen by 16 per cent from a peak in 2007-08, I fear that we are not achieving that.

To add to that, the bus industry has concerns about the introduction of low-emission zones. If they are introduced without sufficient lead-in times, firms will be forced to withdraw services or dramatically to increase fares in order to get their fleets to achieve standards and maintain current service levels. Although rural areas are unlikely be registered as LEZs, I have no doubt that rural residents will pay to cover costs indirectly through increased bus fares.

Members will be aware that both the UK Government and the Scottish Government have a commitment to phasing out petrol and diesel cars, which is very much to be welcomed. With a move to electric vehicles coming into force, there is the much bigger issue of considering the national grid's ability to support the surge in electricity use. I have met various energy stakeholders over my two years as an MSP, and although all of them are very much on board with the switch to cleaner energy consumption, there is a big concern about how we can facilitate that use purely through renewable energy. I therefore encourage the cabinet secretary to ensure that the Government works with energy suppliers in Scotland and the UK, so that we can achieve a national grid that is able to withstand the demands that will be placed on it.

It will be counterproductive for us to push for a move to electric vehicles if it means our having to rely on oil and gas to facilitate their use. There is a delicate and complex balance to be struck, but it is one that I know we can achieve through proper consultation of stakeholders. The move to electric vehicles does not require just people trading in their vehicles for cleaner modes of transport; we also need to build our infrastructure.

In our 2017 policy paper, "Global Challenge, Local Leadership", the Scottish Conservatives outlined the need to establish funds to expand

electric-vehicle charging points in small towns, rural areas and train stations; for electric-vehicle sharing schemes in major cities, whereby users can pick up and drop off cars at charging stations; for a requirement on all public bodies to conduct a cost benefit analysis of replacing their existing vehicle fleets with electric vehicles; and for mandating consideration of electric vehicles in their future procurement plans.

I am sure that all members will accept that, in order to sustain a cleaner transport system, proper infrastructure is required. Our policies are bold and require long-term investment, but if we do not act we will not be able to improve our air quality for future generations. We all know that action is required now.

I look forward to the Scottish Government considering our proposals and working with the whole Parliament to achieve a cleaner and greener system that will improve not only our air quality, but our environment.

16:30

**Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** Scotland has much to be proud of in its role as a leader on the issue. With more stringent air quality targets than elsewhere in the UK, and with domestic and European targets across much of Scotland being met, we are making progress.

“Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future”, which was Scotland’s first national air quality strategy, was published in 2015. It set out intended action until 2020, which has been backed up by practical and financial support to local authorities from the Scottish National Party Government. Measures to tackle local air-pollution hotspots, including £3 million in annual funding, coupled with transport initiatives, have delivered 1,200 electric-vehicle charging bays and more than £16 million of funding via the green bus fund to introduce more than 360 low-emission buses to the Scottish fleet.

I will linger on transport policy, because it is an area of interest. I will ask a question in the chamber later this week about utilisation and, which is more important, normalisation of electric cars as we move into the future. For example, if we are serious about tackling air pollution from vehicles, then house builders and, by extension, local authorities need to ensure that they consider inclusion of car-charging points at properties and developments.

Vehicle manufacturers also need to play their part. That includes accurate reporting on their vehicles’ emissions, rather than the misreporting practices that we have seen in recent years. Better integration of infrastructure and building will help us to work towards a greener future with less

polluted air. We must get ready for tomorrow today.

On that notion, I will reflect on the ECCLR Committee’s work in pursuit of its inquiry. As other members have said, the committee actively engaged with local communities during the inquiry, including a visit to Corstorphine in Edinburgh. An area’s having poor air quality due to pollution will naturally be of concern to the people who live there. However, monitoring being undertaken in the first place should allow for targeted action to be taken, which is why I believe that we must do more to support active monitoring and addressing of air quality throughout Scotland.

For national strategies to be fully implemented and their bold ambitions to be achieved, there needs to be alignment at all levels—from the Scottish Government and partner agencies to local authorities, right across the country. Although the committee was heartened by what it heard about co-operation at different levels of Government, as well as between organisations and professions, it also noted that there was not universality in the positive approaches that are being taken. That said, the Scottish Government works with SEPA, Transport Scotland, Health Protection Scotland and others to reduce air pollution further and to deliver benefits for human and environmental health.

Local authorities that have air quality management areas in place have produced action plans, and the Scottish Government is working closely with them to help them to implement the plans and to deliver air quality improvements. I hope to play my part by supporting plans locally in Lanarkshire to raise awareness of the issue of air quality and the development of our own local strategies.

It is clear that the Scottish Government is making progress in its aim to have the cleanest air in Europe. Examples that have already been cited and, indeed, the recent announcement of the appointment of additional members to the cleaner air for Scotland governance group, which oversees delivery of Scotland’s strategy for cutting air pollution and reducing its impact on health—that is important—illustrate that point.

As we all work together to improve air quality and to deliver an active nation, let us commit ourselves to redoubling our efforts to promote the many ways in which we can all contribute across our communities to making Scotland an even more fresh and beautiful place in which to live and work.

16:35

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I congratulate all the members of the Environment,

Climate Change and Land Reform Committee on the excellent work on the report, and I congratulate my colleague David Stewart, who was a member of the committee when that work was being done.

A number of members have said that we should not lose sight of the committee's key recommendations and that we should ensure that the Government takes them on board. As committee convener Graeme Dey said, it is worth restating that the committee said:

"The Committee considers that, as highlighted in evidence, the Scottish Government's yearly progress report is insufficiently clear to allow an accurate assessment of progress against the 34 original actions laid out in"

the cleaner air for Scotland strategy. That must be a key concern for Parliament, given the detail that we received from Friends of the Earth Scotland. It stated:

"Air pollution is still killing off around 2,500 people a year in Scotland and we are not on track to meet the Scottish Government's target of clean air by 2020."

That is quite an incredible statistic, which I had to check, because I thought that it could not be right.

The report that we are debating is crucial to the future wellbeing of the people of Scotland. The issue impacts on people here and now. As James Kelly said, *The Scotsman* highlighted that on its front page today.

The report says:

"the Committee recommends that a more transparent progress report is provided in future updates to show the status of the delivery against each individual action."

We need to expect that to happen.

The report also focuses on the planning system. The Planning (Scotland) Bill is making its way through Parliament, so there is the opportunity in our legislative framework to ensure that we take a joined-up approach to the cleaner air for Scotland strategy—certainly, when it comes to planning.

I note that the committee has asked for further information on funding for local authorities to deliver the cleaner air for Scotland strategy outcomes around behavioural change. I look forward to the Government providing that information.

The report makes a number of recommendations with regard to LEZs. Friends of the Earth Scotland stated:

"For Scotland's Low Emission Zones to be a success, emissions from buses, vans, lorries, cars, and taxis must all be cleaned up in urban centres as quickly as possible. In Glasgow, this means that within a year, all buses running through the city centre"

should be able to meet the latest emissions standards,

"and other vehicles should be included in the zone as soon as possible thereafter."

I think that there is consensus that, if we are going to do that, we should get it right. That means addressing what Friends of the Earth Scotland referred to as the current "lacklustre" proposal that is on the table from Glasgow City Council.

I am pleased that the report picks up on the stated commitment from the current Scottish Government to phase out sales of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032. The committee made the point that we now need to see the detail of what that will involve, what the timelines are, and what measures will need to be taken to make it happen.

It is easy to look to the future and to make big commitments on the environment, but Governments and companies must be held to account now, which means setting out clearly how commitments will be met and how progress towards targets will be measured.

The report on air quality that we have debated today, and which we are being asked to note, contains very robust recommendations on ensuring that progress in delivery of the cleaner air for Scotland strategy is monitored and put on track to deliver what it says is its intention.

Although the cabinet secretary has responded to the report in Parliament today, I look forward to the Government publishing its response, because I hope that we can generate a wider debate across Scotland. The British Heart Foundation Scotland has said that air pollution is the largest environmental risk factor that is linked to deaths in the UK. It argues—I agree—that air quality monitoring information should be improved so that it reaches down to community level and is more easily accessible to the public as a whole. Given the statistics that we have received on the impact of air quality in our towns and cities, we have to raise public awareness. The more information we can make available, the better.

16:40

**Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con):** We need to tackle air pollution and it is clear from the contributions today that that mood is felt throughout the chamber. Air pollution is a major problem in Scotland. It is damaging public health and resulting in 2,500 deaths per year according to Friends of the Earth. It contributes to cancer and respiratory diseases. Jamie Greene highlighted how his mother has been affected by poor air quality and suggested that 5 per cent of deaths could be attributed in some way to poor air quality. Finlay Carson flagged up that his constituency has the highest incidence of COPD in the world.

That is why I welcome the SNP's promise to take action, with new petrol and diesel cars being phased out by 2032 and transport emissions being cut by 37 per cent. The introduction of low-emission zones is a positive step, and the first will be introduced in Glasgow by the end of 2018. Moreover, 10 per cent of journeys are to be made by bike by 2020.

By December 2010, air quality in Scotland was meant to achieve only 18 micrograms per cubic metre of particulate matter—or less—but that target was missed. The annual EU ambient air quality directive standard has been broken since 2010 and, as the five-year EU extension has now expired, Glasgow, Edinburgh, central Scotland and north-east Scotland are all non-compliant for nitrogen dioxide levels, which was a point well made by Donald Cameron.

I congratulate Graeme Dey on his leadership of the ECCLR Committee's inquiry on air quality in Scotland. I also flag up his comments about there being a "degree of disconnect" between the national bodies and local authorities. I welcome, as he did on behalf of the committee, the aspiration of the cleaner air for Scotland strategy. Moreover, I agree with the cabinet secretary who said in her opening remarks that more needed to be done. Angus MacDonald followed and said:

"It is not all doom and gloom",

but that we need a joint effort today to deal with the problem. Richard Lyle flagged up that we need a better interagency approach to improve air quality and he spoke about redoubling our efforts; I associate myself with those comments.

We need to improve monitoring. Scottish regulations do not oblige councils to act. Scottish councils must monitor pollution, but they do not need to achieve compliance with standards. That is why the inquiry by the ECCLR Committee recommends an urgent review of monitoring regulations so that we can identify and rectify problems. We must make air quality monitors available to every school. Last year, SEPA had just 10 monitors to loan to schools, five of which were broken. It is clear that we need to do more.

We must tackle transport emissions. Cars, vans and HGVs account for around 69 per cent of our transport emissions, which is why more progress is required on electric cars. The electric vehicle loan scheme has been used only 500 times since 2011, with just 214 loan applications being made over the past year. We need more detailed timelines, measures and incentives, as well as milestones, so that we can check on progress.

Liam McArthur said that Orkney is leading the way in electric vehicle ownership. More needs to be done so that the rest of Scotland can catch up. The introduction of charging bays in all new

developments would be a positive approach. We must encourage electric vehicle ownership by expanding charging points.

We must also invest in active travel and in the provision of segregated cycle routes in each city. Alexander Burnett made those points adeptly.

In a typically well-informed speech, Mark Ruskell talked about the introduction of low-emission zones. We are broadly supportive of the concept but we have concerns about the timescale for the introduction of LEZs. It took about two years to implement the London LEZ, and London has congestion charge infrastructure that Glasgow, of course, does not have. As Donald Cameron said, the implementation of low-emission zones must be practical and achievable.

Urban consolidation hubs can work hand in hand with low-emission zones.

Numerous members talked about bus services. We must not rush into low-emission zones in a way that pushes up fares or reduces routes. In Renfrewshire, the number 19 route was recently lost. David Stewart highlighted that issue and said that automatic number plate recognition is a prerequisite for a low-emission zone. James Kelly talked about inadequate bus services to key locations such as hospitals.

We must improve the monitoring of air quality, introduce low-emission zones in a timely fashion and encourage the movement towards ownership of electric vehicles.

16:46

**The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf):** This has been a good debate. I welcome the committee's report and thank the people who gave evidence to the committee. I will try to rifle through some of the key themes. I will focus on transport, as many members have done, although I will touch on one or two other issues if time allows.

As I think all members said, progress has been made on air quality in Scotland, although there is no doubt that we still have challenging hot spots. I found Jamie Greene's account of his personal experience and that of his mother to be interesting and insightful; he reminded us that there is a human element to air quality, beyond the statistics that we often talk about.

It is worth mentioning the progress that has been made. Monitoring data shows that air pollution in Scotland is on a clear downward trend. The number of exceeding sites went down from 14 in 2013 to six in 2017 for nitrogen dioxide and from 17 in 2013 to six in 2017 for particulate matter. Good progress is being made.

Notwithstanding that, there remain challenges. We are bringing forward radical transport measures, a few of which were mentioned in the debate.

On low-emission zones, it is probably worth highlighting the relationship between national and local Government. National Government is looking to set a national framework in that regard—hence our consultation—and we are collaborating closely with local government. That is why we have the four cities steering group, which should give confidence to members who have asked us to take a joined-up approach. However, it is up to local authorities to come forward with the detail of what a low-emission zone would look like in their city or local authority area. That is the right approach, because local authorities know their areas and are able to have conversations at local level.

**Graeme Dey:** Does the minister recognise, as the committee does, the obvious expertise that exists in Glasgow City Council on the development of low-emission zones, and does he see an opportunity for that expertise to be shared with other cities?

**Humza Yousaf:** Yes, and the four cities steering group will help with that shared learning and practice.

There is sometimes confusion about the introduction of low-emission zones. The timescale for Glasgow is the end of 2018; if I remember correctly, Glasgow's paper said it would be 23:59 on 31 December, so we are talking about the very end of 2018.

It is worth saying that there is a difference between the introduction of that low-emission zone and its lead-in time and phasing in, which are completely different concepts. On lead-in time, for example, we know that Glasgow will have a particular number or percentage of buses that it wishes to have in Euro 6 by the introduction of the low-emission zone, and the ambition progressively to increase that every year right the way through until—if my memory serves me correctly—2022, with cars dovetailing in at the end of that.

I will give way to David Stewart.

**David Stewart:** I remind the minister of the Japanese island development act, which I know is a favourite of his.

One of the key points about low-emission zones is enforcement. I have looked very carefully at the London model. As has already been mentioned, vehicle recognition technology is vital. I know that the Scottish Government is in partnership with Glasgow, but it is very expensive to do that. There is no point in having an LEZ if it cannot be enforced. Does the minister share my view that we

have to use the technology, and that it is not enough to use it just for bus lanes? It is very expensive to get it in place to do 360 degrees around Glasgow.

**Humza Yousaf:** David Stewart's suggestion is a very good one. Number plate recognition cameras and technologies absolutely have a place when it comes to low-emission zones, but I would not impose them on local authorities, who have to make the right decision on the technology that is best for them. That might be ANPR or another technology. It might also make sense for that technology to be in place for cars but, for buses, to have another monitoring regime that the council might wish to roll out. We should allow that level of flexibility.

I see that time is escaping me. I take the points that were made around funding and I hope that we have been able to give reassurances. I take Mark Ruskell's point about having more detail on the financial transaction and how that money can be used. I say to him that its absence is not through lack of trying: it is simply that we have to work through some of the state aid issues and discuss with the bus industry how it might best be used. However, as soon as I have an update on that, I promise to ensure that Mark Ruskell is kept up to date.

I should say that our conversation with the bus industry on low-emission zones has been very positive. Retrofitting has been mentioned, but I caution members against putting all their eggs in that basket. While retrofitting might work for some bus operators, others—perhaps because of the age of their fleets—are much more likely to look at, for example, grants to help them to purchase Euro 6 or, indeed, electric buses, and that is important.

Again, because time is escaping me, I will not go into detail on legal mechanisms other than to say that the Transport (Scotland) Bill offers us an opportunity to ensure that we have the best legislative framework possible for low-emission zones.

A number of members mentioned active travel and I agree that that should be a priority for Government—hence the doubling of the active travel budget. A significant proportion of that will go towards cycling infrastructure, as Emma Harper and a few other members mentioned. Out-of-the-box thinking will be necessary, too. For example, I am very keen for us to explore how we can get more people to use electric bikes. Electric vehicles were also mentioned by a number of members—I know that Liam McArthur has a particular interest in that. I will update Parliament once we have the milestones on how we seek to reach our very ambitious target by 2032.

In conclusion, there has been a good amount of consensus around the chamber—and so there should be. If we get things right, we will create a cleaner, greener planet—not just for future generations but for the here and now.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call John Scott to close the debate on behalf of the committee. Take us up to five o'clock, please, Mr Scott.

16:53

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I begin by declaring an interest as a farmer, albeit one who seeks to keep damage to our air quality to a minimum.

The mortality burden in the UK from exposure to outdoor air pollution is equivalent to 40,000 deaths every year, and Scotland's share of that death toll is 2,500 deaths per year. Mark Ruskell, Finlay Carson, Emma Harper and Colin Beattie all referred to that. In addition, recently published research suggests a link between air pollution and Alzheimer's disease, as well as the well-established links to cancers and respiratory diseases. That is a huge cost in human life and health to our health service. Our environment bears a huge cost, too, with noxious gases being released—mostly from vehicles, although some are from agriculture, too—further adding to the unwelcome mix of gases that threaten the future of our planet as well as our health.

The Government was right in developing a cleaner air for Scotland strategy, with 34 key actions, which it published in 2015, almost three years ago. However, our committee's report, while acknowledging the Scottish Government's good intentions, poses more questions than answers. Specifically, the committee considers that the Scottish Government's yearly progress report

"is insufficiently clear to allow an accurate assessment of progress against the 34 ... actions laid out in CAFS",

and it believes that a more transparent and detailed approach is required

"to show the status of the delivery against each individual action".

Graeme Dey, Roseanna Cunningham and Alex Rowley all referred to that.

In the committee's view, the solution to those failings is that the various cabinet secretaries and ministers who are responsible for the multifaceted approach that is required to deliver better air quality must work together in a more integrated and collaborative way than they have previously done to enhance national planning policy and deliver a better planning framework, as well as resolve the apparent disconnect between national agencies and local authorities, which Liam McArthur, Colin Smyth and Maurice Golden mentioned. In addition, from the evidence that the

committee heard, it is far from clear that local authorities have been given sufficient resource by Government to meet the national outcomes that are expected of them, as Donald Cameron and James Kelly said.

That is why the committee seeks an update on the progress that is being made on the introduction of the four LEZs by the end of June 2018, because there is a lack of clarity—particularly in Glasgow—on the detail of how the zones will be implemented by Christmas of this year, as Graeme Dey, Donald Cameron and David Stewart all highlighted.

The committee also received evidence on the use of congestion charging and workplace car park charging as a way of improving air quality in city centres, but I am concerned that LEZs and charging will displace parking away from city centres, thereby turning suburban streets on the periphery of the zones into the new workplace car parks for city centre workers.

From a practical perspective, the deadline of 2032 is only 17 years away, yet no legislative or regulatory timeline has been proposed on how diesel cars and vans are to be phased out by then, nor has detail been provided on the national and local infrastructure that will be required for alternative vehicles to replace the 53 per cent of Scottish private car stock that is currently non-compliant with Euro 4 or Euro 6 standards. Alexander Burnett raised that issue.

Given that LEZs are to be introduced in four of our major cities by 2020, that more than 50 per cent of the cars that are currently in use in Scotland are non-compliant with EU emission standards and that bus passenger numbers are falling, the case for modal shift has been transformed from an ambition into a necessity, as Jamie Greene said.

However, although I understand and support the enthusiasm of Mark Ruskell and others for active travel as a solution to the problem, the evidence of enthusiasm on the part of the Scottish public for walking and cycling to make up 10 per cent of their journeys is not there. Indeed, between 2010 and 2016, the number of journeys by bicycle increased by only 0.2 per cent, and I cannot see any sign of a significant change in the mindset of the people of Scotland that is likely to result in the 10 per cent target being met by 2020, given that fewer than 2 per cent of everyday journeys are made by bike.

Even if the infrastructure could be put in place, it is important to understand that, essentially, Scotland endures a 200-day winter every year. Bearing in mind the winter that we have just come through and the fact that it has rained almost non-stop in the west of Scotland since July of last year, why would commuters, parents of children who

need to get to and from school or pensioners who need to get to hospital willingly give up the comfort of their cars to make the journey by bike or on foot? Colin Smyth and James Kelly understood that.

Regrettably, climate change is making active travel even less likely. In my view, the only real opportunity for modal shift lies in moving people on to our bus networks. We should, of course, continue to develop cycling and walking routes within cities, but perhaps we need to have more realistic expectations of what can be achieved at a latitude of 55° north, here in the central belt of Scotland.

Of course our bus fleet will need to be invested in, either by modifying existing non-compliant engines or by adding significantly to the new bus fleet. That is where the Scottish Government should be concentrating its investment in order to deliver the maximum impact. I welcome the cabinet secretary's comment that £7.8 million is to be given to that—David Stewart referred to that in his speech.

Solving the air pollution problem in Scotland will not happen as a result of any one measure alone, although increased bus usage is the major opportunity. Better air quality will be achieved by carrying out many of the tasks identified in CAFS and in our report, but we must be careful how we go about that. Future planning of transport needs must not drive those currently shopping in city and town centres into out-of-town retail parks or on to the internet, thus reducing still further town centre retailing opportunities. Future planning and legislation must work for the needs of families and parents with young children trying to juggle the priorities of a school run, shopping, carrying shopping bags and driving in rush-hour traffic. In short, future planning must not reduce our quality of life or damage the Scottish economy.

There is much to be considered by the Government, as shown by all the contributions made to the debate, which I welcome. Human health and wellbeing are at stake, as well as the environment and the economy of Scotland. The time for talking is over and there is now a need for action. We all look forward to progress being made, and we will support the Government in that regard.

## Burntisland Fabrications

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a statement by Keith Brown, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, on an update on Burntisland Fabrications. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions. I call Keith Brown. Take up to 10 minutes, please, cabinet secretary.

17:02

**The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown):** Thank you, Presiding Officer—and thank you for the opportunity to make the statement.

Parliament will recall that I gave a statement on 22 November 2017 on the circumstances surrounding the future of Burntisland Fabrications—or BiFab, as it is known. Several months have passed since then, and I take this opportunity to return to the chamber to provide an update on the progress that we have made on the commitment that the Government gave to supporting the company in order to fulfil the Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Ltd contract and to try to identify a long-term future for the BiFab yards.

Operating over three sites across Scotland—Burntisland and Methil in Fife, and Arnish on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, BiFab had in November last year a permanent workforce of about 250 staff, with 1,100 more being employed via agencies to support specific contracts. However, as members will recall, in November the company filed a notice of intention to appoint administrators, which triggered a period of intense discussion. Further urgent discussions led to a number of financial commitments being made that gave BiFab the comfort that it needed in order to delay a decision to place the company in administration immediately, and to continue towards completion of the contract that it held for Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Ltd, or BOWL.

All those who have been involved in the discussions—SSE plc, the partners in the BOWL project, Siemens, Seaway Heavy Lifting, BiFab and the trade unions, specifically Unite the Union and GMB Scotland—should be given credit for having taken a very proactive attitude to achieving a solution. As an added security, the Scottish Government committed to make available, if necessary, a commercial loan to BiFab. That collective approach not only provided an opportunity for the continuation of the BOWL contract, but created space for ongoing work to secure third-party investment.

At the time, the First Minister and I both made it clear that we would do everything that we could do to identify a way of bringing in new investment, of giving BiFab the best possible chance of winning new orders and of securing a long-term future for the company. I am delighted to say that that goal has been achieved. Earlier today, one of Canada's largest independently owned construction companies—JV Driver—acquired BiFab through its subsidiary, DF Barnes.

In a deal that was brokered by the Scottish Government, DF Barnes will combine its financial backing and project expertise with the international profile and skilled workforce of BiFab to secure fabrication and construction contracts in the offshore renewables, marine and wider energy sectors. DF Barnes has been a consistent employer in the oil and gas, fabrication and marine industries for more than 80 years. It has expressed an interest in global expansion and recognises the opportunities that exist in the Scottish market.

As part of the agreement, the Scottish Government will expand the loan facility that was made available to BiFab for completion of the BOWL contract, and will convert that loan to a minority equity stake in the new company. That loan facility has been made on a fully commercial basis. The extent of the shareholding will be determined by the extent to which the loan facility is utilised in completing the BOWL contract. The shareholding will not exceed 38 per cent. Although, by their nature, elements of the agreement are commercially confidential, in the interests of transparency we have shared the details of the loan facility with the Finance and Constitution Committee, and I will be happy to provide it with any further information that it requires.

I pay tribute to the workforce on all three sites—Burntisland, Methil and Arnish. Our focus has been, and remains, on the workers, their families and the surrounding communities. We acknowledge that the past few months have been an anxious time for them, their families and the communities that are involved. I appreciate their support throughout the process, and the contribution that the trade unions—the GMB and Unite—have made to securing the agreement. The First Minister and I met the new owners, the existing management and the unions earlier today at Methil, and everybody there is committed to building a successful future for the yards.

Although we are positive about today's announcement, the work cannot stop here. Offshore renewable energy and the offshore energy industry in general represent a key strategic opportunity for Scotland's economy. Renewable energy is already providing significant

levels of skilled employment, often in relatively rural or remote areas. However, we all want the supply chain to develop and to grow further.

If we look at Scotland's oil and gas supply chain, we can see that the sector's success was not immediate. It took time to build the supply chain, but it is now globally renowned. It employs more than 100,000 people in Scotland, and it exports its expertise to countries all round the world. We now want to create as rapidly as possible a similar success story for offshore renewable energy. That is why we are investing in infrastructure, supporting ambitious companies, promoting research and development, and ensuring that people have the right skills. We want Scotland's renewable resources to provide skilled employment, as well as sustainable energy, for communities across the country.

There are some real opportunities for the Scottish supply chain, including BiFab, from a number of consented wind projects—for example, Kincardine, Moray east, Inch Cape, Neart na Gaoithe, which was discussed in Parliament earlier, and Seagreen. There are also opportunities further south, for example at Hornsea 2, East Anglia 3 and Dogger Bank. Of course, those are commercial decisions for the developers, but our aim is to secure for Scotland as much work as possible on as many projects as possible. To help to achieve that, we will combine our efforts and those of our enterprise and skills agencies with pressure on the UK Government to recognise the sector, as it develops its industrial strategy.

Scotland has the competitive advantage and the building blocks that are critical to more expansion in the renewables sector via the skills of the Scottish workforce. Indeed, that was one of the main drivers for DF Barnes becoming involved in the first place. Our existing ports infrastructure and locations, and our innovative academic community add to that competitive advantage. With such a relatively new industry, things will not always be straightforward and we will not, of course, win every contract. However, as today's announcement shows, perseverance can achieve results.

Today's agreement gives the workforce, the company and the Government the best possible chance of securing a vibrant future for the yards. The Scottish Government believes that BiFab can be a thriving business that supports Scotland's offshore renewables and oil and gas industry as well as competing internationally for work, and we will continue to work with the company to achieve that success. Another key attractor for the company in coming to the decision was the involvement of the Government.

As the current BOWL contract comes to an end, and while efforts go into winning new work, there will continue to be difficult times for the yards and the workforce, but I am confident that the agreement, which will see the Scottish Government become a minority shareholder in the company, will deliver for BiFab's future in Fife and the Western Isles.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** We have just over 20 minutes for questions.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the minister for his statement and for advance sight of it. It is good news for BiFab, the workforce and the wider economies of Fife and Lewis. For months, a dark cloud has hung over the company and the areas affected, so the announcement of the acquisition by DF Barnes today will be warmly welcomed.

I associate myself and my party with the cabinet secretary's remarks about the workforce and the contribution that has been made by the trade unions in helping to secure the future of the company. Along with a number of my Conservative colleagues, I was happy to join workers and trade union representatives at their recent rally outside Parliament. I also give our support to the Scottish Government's ambitions for offshore renewable energy and its on-going support for the oil and gas sector.

I have two specific questions arising from the cabinet secretary's statement. First, what assurances have been given about the number of jobs that will be secured at the three sites of Burntisland, Methil and Arnish, including the permanent workforce of 260 and the additional 1,100 men and women who were previously employed through agencies?

Secondly, although I acknowledge what the cabinet secretary said about the need for commercial confidentiality, can he outline to members the total value of the Scottish Government's support for the new purchaser?

**Keith Brown:** I thank Murdo Fraser for his initial remarks. He referred to a dark cloud hanging over BiFab. That has certainly been true for each individual employee. That is the human element to the situation, and it is important.

Regarding the work, assurances come only through winning contracts. We have made that clear all the way through the process. We want to grow the workforce, but many of the contract employees that Murdo Fraser refers to no longer work there because their contracts have been wound down.

It was pointed out today that BiFab has in the past had more than 2,000 employees. The determination among all those at today's

announcement to make sure that we grow as many jobs as possible was evident. The fact that that determination is shared by the trade unions, the new owners, the existing management and the general workforce is an encouraging sign. However, jobs will come with winning work and contracts, so we are doing as much as we can within the constraints of the procurement process to help with that.

Unfortunately I cannot give more details about the quantum of money involved; that is commercially confidential. As I have said already, I will share as much information as possible with the Finance and Constitution Committee. I realise that there is an interest in the matter, but the information is commercially confidential.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of his statement, and I very much welcome the news about BiFab. I believe that everyone in the chamber wants the deal to work and we salute the efforts of the workers and their trade unions in their unstinting campaign.

The cabinet secretary knows that we believe that too many renewables jobs go abroad, so the deal is a welcome respite. However, redundancy notices still hang over a number of the core workers at BiFab. Can the cabinet secretary confirm whether the new owners will move to lift the threat and retain that skilled labour? Will he ensure that there is a continuing role for the trade unions through recognition agreements and in sitting around the table and helping to secure the future of the yard?

I believe that the Government provided loan funding of £15 million in November 2017 and a further £4 million in March 2018, and will now provide a welcome additional £10 million for restructuring. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the original £19 million loan is the equity stake in the company? What happens when that is repaid? Will the Government's interest cease? Over what timeframe is that envisaged?

**Keith Brown:** There were a number of questions in there. The quantum of money that the Government eventually provides will depend on the extent to which it is drawn down as required by the company.

The discussion that we had at BiFab today involved the trade unions, the management and the new owners. It was the first time that the trade unions had formally met the new owners and we left them discussing some of the issues that Jackie Baillie raised. It is for the new owners to take forward those propositions but they have no intention of shedding further staff. They, along with the trade unions and others, are committed to

growing the number of staff, but that is a decision for the new owners.

DF Barnes, the company that has taken over BiFab, pointed out that it believes that it has had productive relationships with trade unions in Canada. It seeks to continue that productive relationship with the trade unions here, and that sentiment was reciprocated by the trade unions. There is no question but that there is a good basis for collaboration with the trade unions going forward, and there is no intention to de-recognise or get rid of them. There has been a productive start to that relationship.

On Jackie Baillie's final point, we have said to the company that the Government wants to stay in for the long term—that is one of the reasons why the company was as keen as it was to get involved with BiFab. On the equity stake, we will have to wait to see how things develop, which will depend on a number of different factors. However, we have said that we want to make sure that we do as much as we can, not just for BiFab but for the renewables sector in Scotland.

The company is quite used to working with Governments and is keen to work with this Government. That is one of the reasons why we managed to reach the successful conclusion that we reached had today.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** I am delighted with today's announcement, which secures the future of BiFab and the jobs of many of my constituents. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the deal provides long-term assurances for the company, with opportunities for future growth?

**Keith Brown:** I agree with David Torrance. However, in the short term, the deal secures the work that is there—the company will be able to finish the BOWL contract, which is yet to be finished. It also allows the company to try to secure further work, as David Torrance mentioned, with the backing of an experienced set of new owners—and the financial clout that they bring—and with the knowledge that the Government is invested, quite literally at many different levels. That presents a positive potential future for BiFab.

The crucial point, of course, will be to win those contracts. There are two contracts coming up fairly shortly that BiFab will have an opportunity to win, but there is also other work that we can identify. We can work with the company to try to ensure that it has the best possible chance—again, working within the procurement regulations.

I agree with David Torrance that his constituents, many of whom work at the location, will be hugely relieved by today's announcement.

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I welcome today's substantial developments for the workforce and for the company. The Scottish Government believes that BiFab can be a thriving business, supporting Scotland's offshore renewables and oil and gas industry.

In the cabinet secretary's statement, he indicated that the loan facility would be expanded and converted into a shareholding. Is that a short-term, medium-term or long-term arrangement, and what is the timescale for the disposal of that shareholding to be realised?

**Keith Brown:** As I said in my statement, the loan is on commercial terms and our commitment in terms of that investment and our support for the new owners will be for as long as is required in order to win jobs and work for the company.

It is important at this point that I refer Alexander Stewart back to his previous question on the matter, when he accused me and the First Minister of having said, in December, that we had saved the company. We have never said that, and my statement today does not say that either. We have made sure that the company continues to exist right through to the completion of the BOWL contract. We have helped to facilitate new investment by very credible new owners in that contract. That gives the company the best possible opportunities for the future.

We will stay in it for the long term but we should all be clear—the workforce, the trade unions and everyone else who was there today is clear about this—that there is still a great deal more work to be done. However, the company now has the opportunity to achieve those new contracts and to further grow the workforce.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I very much welcome the positive news about the future of BiFab. I believe that the workforce has shown determination, dignity and a huge commitment to their yards and their communities. Today, they should be proud of what they have achieved.

The cabinet secretary is right to recognise that the work does not stop here. It is now crucial for BiFab to secure new contracts. With the Government now having a minority equity stake in the company of up to 38 per cent, how involved can or will the Government be in supporting the company to secure future contracts, which the cabinet secretary recognises is crucial to the company's future?

**Keith Brown:** I thank Claire Baker and rest of the group of MSPs who have been involved with the matter as we have gone through the previous months. Those MSPs took an extremely responsible attitude as they went about their

business, which has been helpful to the Government and to BiFab in getting to the stage that we are now at. It is true to say that the support that we have had and the fact that it has been united support has also been very helpful to us, both with BiFab and in relation to the substantive point that Claire Baker raises about further opportunities.

I know that the work of that group of MSPs has been mirrored within the Government. The First Minister, Paul Wheelhouse and I have been involved in making sure that we do the work that is required on potential future contract opportunities to make sure that the company is as well placed as possible. We are doing that work within—as I keep saying, and as I have to keep saying—the procurement regulations. However, it has been hugely important that we have been able to have that united front and to talk about some of the potential opportunities with the backing of a substantial company, with financial reserves and experience in the field. To me, that is very encouraging.

However, as Claire Baker rightly said, we know that this is just the next stage. The very important stage that follows is to make sure that BiFab wins that work, and a great deal of effort is going into that.

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** I join colleagues from across Fife in welcoming the news and congratulating all who are involved. What opportunities does the cabinet secretary think that there are now for BiFab as the renewables industry continues to expand, particularly in the context of the wider Fife economy?

**Keith Brown:** I mentioned the opportunities that we are aware of, but other opportunities will, of course, come along. I thank Jenny Gilruth, who is one of the MSPs whose support for BiFab and the Government's actions over the previous months I referred to. Even as recently as this morning, new opportunities were being discussed with the company that had not been fully explored up to this point. That tells me that the company is very hungry for the work. It is interested in not just renewables work, which it is very interested in—that is the main reason why DF Barnes came here in the first place, as well as the excellence of the workforce and its expertise—but oil and gas, which is a very important sector in this country, and a number of other engineering projects. The work may not all be in renewables, but even in renewables the opportunities that I have mentioned already are not an exhaustive list. There is plenty of opportunity out there, and our job now is to make sure that BiFab takes opportunities when they arise.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Today is certainly a great day of hope for the communities in Fife and the Western Isles who fought so hard to protect their livelihoods in recent months, but it is clear that we are going to need investment to turn this day of hope into a secure future for those communities. When will Scottish Enterprise be able to finalise its investment plans for the yards, to make sure that we have a competitive supply chain and competitive yards? Also, what work is the cabinet secretary doing with Baroness Brown to ensure that a sector deal for offshore wind comes from the United Kingdom Government?

**Keith Brown:** As part of today's statement, although I cannot go into too much detail, I can say that investment is being made already by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to make sure that the deal moves forward and that the new owners of the company are able to take best advantage of the opportunities. The Government has made substantial investment, the investment by Scottish Enterprise and HIE adds to that and we will, of course, look at what else it is possible to do. However, we have a purpose in trying to get a company such as DF Barnes involved. It has the expertise and knows exactly what equipment and facilities it needs to win the work. It has the experts and is the owner of the company, and we will work with it.

Mark Ruskell may be aware of our frustrations in relation to the consultation and collaboration with the UK Government on the sector deals. However, the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee has the chance to question Greg Clark on Thursday when he appears before it. I imagine that Mark Ruskell will want to take up that question with the UK Government. For our part, we are very keen to engage with that important sector. I add that Mark Ruskell was one of the MSPs who provided support, and I am grateful to him for that.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement. He is right to be measured about today's progress. It is, indeed, good news for BiFab workers in Lewis and Fife, but, as he said in his statement, there will continue to be difficult times ahead. Can the minister set out in a wee bit more detail some of the pressure points and milestones—the order gaps that he is predicting—and how the company and the Government intend to address those?

**Keith Brown:** I thank Willie Rennie for his question and acknowledge the role that he, too, has played in the support from that group of MSPs who have been most involved. The company is well aware of some of the pressure points. Willie Rennie is right to say that it is a very encouraging and positive statement, and if he wants any

confirmation of that he can check with the shop stewards and employees. The First Minister met employees across the site this afternoon, and the relief and positivity among them was palpable.

One of the pressure points is the need to make sure that the BOWL contract is finished. That is crucial if we are to move on. Two other immediate pressure points—if I can call them that—are the two contracts that I have mentioned, which we are obviously very keen to see BiFab succeed with. Beyond that, other opportunities will come up that are perhaps not pressure points. Those three things are landmark events for the company. Making sure that the BOWL contract is completed will help with the reputation building that we will have to do to win further contracts, and there are the two immediate contracts that are in front of the company.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** The cabinet secretary mentioned oil and gas in his statement and in his answer to Jenny Gilruth. What opportunities to expand into that sector has he discussed with BiFab? It would only be a positive thing for BiFab to bring its knowledge of the renewables sector into the oil and gas sector. I see opportunities for the oil and gas sector to learn from the expertise in BiFab as the sector expands into renewables, too. Will the cabinet secretary give me a little more information on what support BiFab will get to access those markets?

**Keith Brown:** BiFab will get every support that it is possible for us to provide in addition to the financial and other support that we have already provided.

Gillian Martin makes a good point about some of the opportunities. If DF Barnes met her, the company would tell her that it is keen not just to conserve some of the contracts that I mentioned but to export the expertise that BiFab has built up over a number of years. As I said, it has global ambitions.

Those things have to be worked through and the work must be won, but the potential exists for DF Barnes to take BiFab to an even greater level than it previously reached not only in the renewables industry but in oil and gas. The oil and gas sector is important in Canada as well as in Scotland. There is no harm at all—in fact, there is a great deal of benefit—in a company with that background coming into the oil and gas supply chain. There are major opportunities.

DF Barnes has been a consistent employer in the oil and gas, fabrication and marine industries for more than 80 years. It is a positive investment that will ensure that BiFab can build on its reputation in both of the sectors.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The cabinet secretary rightly said that the enterprise

and skills agencies are extremely important in the development of industrial strategy. Will he include universities and colleges in that strategy, given their increasing importance in innovation and the training of a dedicated, skilled and flexible workforce?

**Keith Brown:** Our universities and colleges are fundamentally involved in the skills strategy that we have produced, but we want that expertise to be deployed for the particular area that we are discussing. It will be the responsibility of the enterprise agencies and the skills agencies to ensure that that support exists. If the situation develops as we all want it to and there is an increasing workforce, the demand for those skills will increase over time. It is important that we anticipate that and provide every support possible to facilitate it.

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** The cabinet secretary referred to the potential opportunities that are presented to BiFab by consented offshore wind farm developments in the North Sea, including the Inch Cape development, which is off the coast of my constituency. For those opportunities to be fully realised, the developments will require a contract for difference and most do not have that at present. Will the cabinet secretary join me in encouraging the UK Government to play its part in supporting the Inch Cape development and others—and, potentially, BiFab—by providing that contract for difference backing?

**Keith Brown:** I repeat that we are confident that BiFab has a bright future. It is currently tendering for a number of contracts that will need to be secured in a competitive process. It is not within the Scottish Government's gift to award such contracts, but I am confident that the expertise of the workforce across the three yards and the knowledge, skill and track record that DF Barnes brings will ensure that any bid that BiFab makes in the future is competitive.

The group of MSPs that has been referred to—as well as many others, including the Scottish Government—have made representations to the UK Government in that respect. It is in the UK Government's interest for the industry to thrive, and I hope that positive support for that will continue. I also hope that the UK Government will be receptive to some of the requests that MSPs and others—including the company and trade unions—have made to ensure that we have the best possible situation for BiFab going forward.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Jobs in the offshore industry matter in Fife, in Lewis and throughout Scotland. For example, the world's largest wind turbine is about to be commissioned in Aberdeen bay. Does the cabinet secretary expect DF Barnes to be interested in

fabrication or decommissioning—or both—in the oil and gas sector? Will he tell us whether a minority shareholding will in any way involve the Government in decisions about where the company will bid and for what across the energy sectors?

**Keith Brown:** On the first part of Lewis Macdonald's question, I think that DF Barnes will want to look across a range of activities and take advantage of opportunities when it finds them. I have mentioned that its background is in oil and gas application, and it will, of course, be interested in decommissioning if that fits its skill set.

It is not for the Government to place any limits or strictures on what DF Barnes wants to compete for—that is a decision for the company. The same applies to the issue of the Government's becoming too involved. We are not the experts; we are not seeking to run the company. We recognise that somebody from the private sector, with the background that DF Barnes has, is best placed to do that—the decisions are its to make. That does not mean that the Government is going to be a disinterested party. Obviously we are not, as we have shown by what we have done up to this point. However, the company that is taking over BiFab is best placed to take advantage of the opportunities.

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** As a member of the Scottish skills task force, whose work contributed to the successful purchase by Liberty Steel of the Clydebridge and Dalzell mills, I know that the dedication and the collaboration of all who have been involved—the workforce, the unions, the Government, local government and the community—will have contributed to the successful result that we have heard about today. I wish everyone well in that regard.

What investment is the Government making now to ensure that manufacturing in all of the sectors that have been mentioned this afternoon will have a viable and competitive future?

**Keith Brown:** As Clare Adamson knows, we have developed and implemented a wide range of policies with our industrial and economic ambitions at the core. Those include city deals, phase 2 of the enterprise and skills review, the manufacturing action plan and the "Scotland CAN DO: Boosting Scotland's Innovation Performance" innovation action plan. In particular, we have recognised Scotland's strengths in manufacturing, not least in relation to the examples that Clare Adamson has given. That is why we and our partners have delivered £65 million for the national manufacturing institute for Scotland, which will be located in Renfrewshire. It is also why the strategic board for enterprise and skills has been tasked with focusing billions of pounds of investment in

key sectors and harnessing the knowledge of our universities and colleges. Further, it is why the Scottish Government has shown a commitment to getting to the position that we are in today.

This is a good day for Fife and the Western Isles, and it is a very good day for employees of BiFab.

## Decision Time

17:32

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** There is only one question to be put as a result of today's business. The question is, that motion S5M-11643, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, on "Air Quality in Scotland Inquiry", be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the findings and recommendations of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's 1st Report, 2018 (Session 5), *Air Quality in Scotland Inquiry* (SP Paper 117).

## Aberdeen Trades Union Council

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-10859, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, on the 150th anniversary of Aberdeen Trades Union Council. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

17:33

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** It is an honour to mark the 150th anniversary of Aberdeen Trades Union Council today, just as it is a personal honour to be designated as a consultative member of the ATUC.

I am grateful to members from across the chamber who have signed my motion, and to all those who will speak in the debate. I am also delighted that Donna Clark and Laura McDonald from the executive committee of the ATUC are here with us today. The ATUC president, Kathleen Kennedy, and other colleagues would have been here too, were it not for the fact that this debate coincides with the annual gathering of the Scottish Trades Union Congress in Aviemore, which they could not miss. My party leader is there, too, otherwise he would no doubt have hoped to take part in this debate.

I know that Richard Leonard would want me to offer his congratulations on this important milestone, so highly does he value the contribution of all our trades councils to the wider labour and trade union movement. That movement had its origins in local societies of skilled crafts workers, bringing together members of a single craft in a town or city to protect wages, conditions and access to work. Such local societies made common cause with others in the same trade in other parts of the country, forming first federations and then amalgamated societies: the first national trade unions.

At the same time as those were being formed, an equally important development was taking place. Whereas trade unions were formed from the coming together of members of a single trade in different places, trades councils were formed by workers joining hands across different trades and industries in a single area. That joining of hands is symbolised in the badge of Aberdeen TUC. The trade union movement that we know today combines both those kinds of solidarity—industrial and geographic. Aberdeen Trades Council played a vital role in making that happen in the latter part of the 19th century. Even before then, Aberdeen was at the forefront of the workers movement. Local craft unions were active back in the 1700s;

non-craft seafarers were combining to take industrial action as early as 1792; and an Aberdeen female operatives union led a five-week strike of textile factory workers in 1834.

Aberdeen trade unionists were among the first to organise across trades and among less skilled workers. In an industrial city many miles from other industrial areas, local solidarity was as important as national unions, and it was from that recognition that Aberdeen Trades Council was born. To this day, that matters for trade unionism in Aberdeen. The offshore co-ordinating group in the oil and gas industry, for example, brings together unions of crafts and catering workers, seafarers and helicopter crews, entirely in line with that long-established culture of working together across sectors.

The creation of a single trades council in 1868 was the culmination of years of effort in that direction. Aberdeen Trades Council soon had 50 delegates from more than 20 trades in such industries as construction, granite working and shipbuilding, as well as from a society of general labourers. It was thanks to the leadership of the trades council that non-crafts workers were able to join together in general and industrial unions earlier in Aberdeen than almost anywhere else. By the 1880s, when similar organisations were just getting started in other places, dock labourers, seafarers, gas stokers and farm servants were all organised and affiliated through local societies to Aberdeen Trades Council.

The Trades Union Congress representing trade unions and trades councils across Great Britain and Ireland met in Aberdeen in 1884, with the president of Aberdeen Trades Council presiding.

It was Aberdeen Trades Council that called a conference in 1895 to address the issue of solidarity across different trades in Scotland—an initiative that led to the creation of the STUC. It is therefore fitting that we debate the anniversary of Aberdeen Trades Council in the week of the STUC gathering, because the two have been closely linked from the outset. Not only that, but the STUC continues to represent local trades councils in a way that the TUC does not. Aberdeen Trades Union Council has three delegates at this week's Scottish congress, who will be voting on the same basis as national trade unions. Jimmy Milne, who led Aberdeen Trades Council in the post-war years, went on to lead the STUC.

The distinctive character of the STUC, and of trade unionism in Scotland, owes a great deal to the history and character of trade union organisation and action in Aberdeen. The unique circumstances of the granite city and the need for local solidarity in the face of geographic disadvantage have been writ large, not just in Aberdeen but in a Scottish trade union movement

that sustains the same principles of diversity and solidarity at both national and regional level.

So, too, with political action. The Rev CC MacDonald, the Gaelic-speaking minister of St Clement's parish church in Fittie, told the TUC at its Aberdeen congress in 1884:

"It is not enough for you to exercise the franchise ... You must represent yourselves".

Aberdeen Trades Council was one of the first in Britain to put forward independent working-class candidates for school boards, for the local council and for Parliament.

That tradition, too, remains strong. Leading lights in Aberdeen Trades Council in recent years, such as Ronnie Webster and Jurgen Thomaneck, have also been leading lights in the local Labour Party and local government—trade unionists working across trades; seeking political change; and looking beyond their own members, too.

Aberdeen trade unionists backed the recent action by local bus drivers in defence of their terms and conditions, just as the trades council came together to back the stonemasons in 1868 and to organise the general strike in 1926, but that solidarity is not with local trade union members alone. Just as Aberdeen Trades Council took action in support of the victims of Highland clearances in the 1890s, so the ATUC championed the cause of democracy in Chile and in South Africa in the 1980s, and it supports Syrian refugees in North East Scotland today.

Aberdeen trade unionists will mark international workers memorial day at the memorial garden a week on Saturday, we will march together for May day and we will come together to mark St Andrew's day with a demonstration against racism and fascism. The vitality, solidarity and strength of Aberdeen trade unionism have played a major part in Scotland's story for 150 years and more. I am certain that that will continue to be the case for many years to come.

17:41

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I congratulate Lewis Macdonald on giving us the opportunity to celebrate an important milestone not only for Aberdeen Trades Union Council, but for the whole of north-east Scotland.

It is as well to remember what the world looked like in 1868. It was the year of the first Trade Union Congress meeting in Manchester, it was the last year in which penal transportation to Australia took place, and it was the last year in which there was a public hanging. Across the water, in the United States, the 14th amendment to the American constitution was passed, which gave freed slaves citizenship. It was a very different

world from the one in which we live today, but the fact that the trades council continues to operate after 150 years shows that it is still relevant. It continues to promote and improve the economic and social conditions of working people.

Although it has witnessed a few name changes through the years, the council has remained active in campaigns for dignity, equality, and diversity in the workplace and beyond. Let us focus on the word “beyond” and what that means for the council’s campaigning. The name of the council might suggest that it is focused only on the working class of north-east Scotland, but the council is actually very much more than that.

On Saturday 7 April, the ATUC held a protest in St Nicholas Square to show solidarity with the people of Gaza after atrocities were committed against them on land day 2018. Even while celebrating its illustrious anniversary, the council found time to promote the dignity, equality and diversity of people outside Scotland.

The council’s involvement in foreign affairs goes back even further, as is evidenced by various memorabilia in its Adelphi office. There is, for example, a Spanish flag that was wrapped around the bodies of two Aberdonians who died fighting during the Spanish civil war.

The council was initially created, as is stated in its objects, to advance and protect the rights of labour and the wellbeing of the working class. To do that, the council took active roles, as Lewis Macdonald mentioned, in trade and municipal matters in Aberdeen, at a time when there were quite limited opportunities for ordinary folk to participate in the democratic process. Beyond Aberdeen, the council was a key player in the development of the trade union movement across Scotland, and helped to found the Scottish Trades Union Congress in 1897. The STUC is still very active today, as we have just heard, and Jimmy Milne and others have been senior officials.

Reference has been made to the May day rally, which has been occurring annually since 1890. It is known as international workers day, and people around the globe take to the streets in celebration of labourers and the working class. That solidarity has been demonstrated for many, many years.

As the council moves forward, the challenges that it faces change only slightly. As joint president Tyrinne Rutherford said at the Aberdeen City Council civic reception in March that

“their goal hasn’t changed ... their tactics have. They still want to pay us peanuts to maximise profit”

and they will do that to any they see fit to do it to. Victorian men who showed up to the factory with no guarantee of work or pay are not much different

from the workers at Deliveroo who race one another to get people’s food orders.

Moving forward, I hope that the ATUC will continue to act as a catalyst for change and to support people in their time of need. It has been an important figurehead and a practical source of trade union organisation and representation in Aberdeen and the north-east.

17:45

**Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con):** I remind members that I am a councillor on Aberdeen City Council and a citizen of Aberdeen.

I congratulate Aberdeen Trades Union Council on its 150th anniversary. It is fair to say that, as a Conservative, I do not always agree with the positions that the council has taken, but I am certainly willing to celebrate it, in particular because it has been part of the history and heritage of Aberdeen for the past 150 years. The politics and influences coming out of Adelphi—the street where the council is based—have been prominent over the years and have shaped many of the organisations and structures that we now have in Aberdeen. I was indirectly associated with the council via membership of the Educational Institute of Scotland for 20 years. Although I never quite thought that the union was on my side, I did have other interests that kept me as a member.

I find some elements of ATUC politics somewhat challenging to go along with—for example, attempts to protest at the Scottish Conservative Party conference. There have been occasions on which partisan politics has been given too high a priority. However, on the ATUC’s 150th birthday, I do not wish to focus on disagreement.

The anniversary has been marked by receptions from the Scottish Trades Union Congress and Aberdeen City Council, and by an organised rally on international women’s day. The ATUC’s having existed for 150 years is certainly no mean feat. The context that we use to consider past events is always valuable, so it is wise to reflect on the many social changes that have taken place over that time. When the ATUC was formed, the Prime Minister was Benjamin Disraeli, who was a modernising one-nation Conservative—which I say, if it is not too bold of me to mention it. In the late 19th century, working conditions for a significant percentage of the population were far more dangerous than any of us today could contemplate or entertain. One of the trade unions’ foremost achievements has been the change in conditions, especially around the turn of the 20th century and in the move towards sustained industrialisation.

Aberdeen has a proud industrial history. The granite city was at the forefront of shipbuilding and fishing in the 19th century, and that industrial trend continues to this day, when the importance of oil and gas is clear for all to see. I am proud to represent the area here in Parliament. Of course, where there is industry, there are people. Whatever our political differences, I recognise that people are at the heart of the ATUC's aims and objectives, which arise from a desire to achieve change for the better for those people. We may disagree on how to get there, but if we can agree across partisan divides that we all seek such goals in good faith, that opens the door to an honest and civil discussion, such as elements of our politics have lacked in recent times.

In conclusion, being in existence for 150 years is an achievement for just about any organisation, and it is one that is worthy of congratulation. The ATUC has throughout its history been a part of many successes in Aberdeen. Where there are differences in opinion, I will do my best to engage, in good faith, to find solutions that benefit all the people whom we represent.

17:49

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I join other members in congratulating Lewis Macdonald on securing debating time to celebrate Aberdeen Trades Union Council's 150th anniversary. I am pleased to wear its badge in the chamber to help with the celebrations, which mark years of dedication and commitment to ensuring the highest possible standards in workers' rights and working conditions across Aberdeen and the north-east. The impact that it has had on the wider trade union movement and the continued success that I know it will have for years to come are a real testimony to those who have been a part of it at all levels over the years. I wish it every luck for the future.

Many have made a contribution to Aberdeen Trades Union Council and the trade union movement in Aberdeen and the north-east. They are far too many to name—although Lewis Macdonald made a sterling job of doing that. However, let me single out one. Jimmy Milne was an Aberdonian, one-time secretary of Aberdeen Trades Union Council and general secretary of the STUC, who took the trade union message out from Aberdeen to all of Scotland. He made his mark in Aberdeen by working for safer conditions for fishing trawler crews, but his interests were much wider than that. I well remember him as the founder of Treesbank, along with Glasgow Trades Council. Treesbank was an educational facility for trade unionists—in Kilmarnock, I think—that was a forerunner of its time, as it believed passionately in educating trade unionists to take the argument

forward. I and, I am sure, many trade unionists have many happy memories of Treesbank.

When Aberdeen Trades Union Council was set up in 1868, things were a little different—Stewart Stevenson touched on that. Workers had few rights, and their conditions were appalling. Women were confined to roles attached to their gender, and any hope of genuine representation for the working class in the world of politics was little more than a pipe dream. That is hardly surprising, given that the Labour Party had not yet been founded. The Labour Party was, of course, founded by the trade unions, and it was undeniably the Labour Party along with organisations such as Aberdeen Trades Union Council that paved the way for workers' rights, transforming their conditions and giving working-class women in particular the voice that they desperately needed.

There are now some 14 trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party. They represent a wide variety of workers, from those in more traditional industries, such as steel and mining, which are represented by Community and the National Union of Mineworkers, to workers in manufacturing, which is covered by the GMB and Unite the union, and workers in retail, who are given a voice by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

Over the past decades, those industries have been faced with a number of challenges. It was a strong and united trade union and Labour movement that stood shoulder to shoulder with the striking miners during the 1980s, and it is Labour, alongside our colleagues in the trade unions, that is today fighting against exploitative zero-hours contracts that many workers have no choice but to work under, with a complete lack of financial stability or job security.

The world of work is changing. Workers and their patterns of work are changing. Unions are changing, too, because they need to deal with more uncertainty in the workplace, the rise of the gig economy and deindustrialisation. Trade unions and trades councils have a huge role to play.

Many moons ago, when I was slightly younger than I am now, I was a member of Strathkelvin District Trades Council. Now I am pleased to go along and support the trades council in West Dunbartonshire when it invites me. The partnership of trade unions and their local communities is powerful.

I again congratulate Aberdeen Trades Union Council on its achievements over the past 150 years. I look forward to its future over the next 150 years and, indeed, to strengthened trades councils across Scotland.

17:53

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Like other members, I congratulate Lewis Macdonald on securing the debate. The topic is important because, as Jackie Baillie has just reminded us, it is vital to recognise the progress that has been made in the century and a half that has passed since the formation of Aberdeen Trades Union Council because of both it and the wider union movement.

The context in which the ATUC was founded was, of course, very different. The legal status of trade unions in the United Kingdom had been established only the year before by the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, which reported that their establishment was to the advantage of both employers and employees. It is interesting that 1867 was also the year in which Dundee Trades Union Council had its first recorded meeting.

The 10-week great strike of 1868 by Aberdeen's stonemasons led to hardship and poverty for many of Aberdeen's residents, but it also led to the coming together of 13 societies and branches of masons and prompted the formal establishment of the council, principally by the Aberdeen branches of the Associated Carpenters and Joiners of Scotland and the Operative Masons and Granite Workers Union. The year 1868 was also when the Trades Union Congress was established, yet it was not until 1871 that unions were legalised formally, through the Trade Union Act 1871.

Tom Mason mentioned Disraeli, who, in 1875, improved the position of the unions considerably when he introduced the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875, which allowed peaceful picketing. The Employers and Workmen Act 1875 enabled workers to sue employers in the civil courts if they broke employment contracts.

The north-east looked very different in those days, too. The railway had reached Aberdeen some 18 years earlier. In fact, it was only a few months before the ATUC's formation, in November 1867, that Aberdeen joint station opened. Shipbuilding boomed between the 1850s and the 1870s. Granite continued to be produced and, shortly prior to the ATUC's formation, a network of sewers was built in Aberdeen.

All that required labour, and that labour required a voice. The ATUC aimed to provide that voice, as is reflected by the simple statement in its objects referring to

"the advancement and protection of the rights of labour"

and

"the well-being of the working classes generally".

For the next 150 years, the ATUC—a body that was made up of affiliated trade union branches and organisations in Aberdeen and

Aberdeenshire—would promote the interests of those affiliated organisations and seek united action, particularly to improve the economic and social conditions of working people.

The changing times were reflected in its location. Until 1956, the ATUC had spent most of its history in the trades hall in Belmont Street. Thereafter, it relocated to the Adelphi, off Union Street, where, perhaps very differently to 150 years ago, it is now bordered by a maritime museum, an outstanding Hungarian goulash restaurant, a letting agent, a mural that celebrates women's suffrage and the Asylum Books and Games graphic novel store. My caseworker tells me that the hall is a social as well as a union hub—he has participated in live-action role-play games there as well as DJing at a wedding.

As Stewart Stevenson said, the ATUC remains as relevant today as it was all those years ago. For example, it played a key role in the formation of the Scottish Trades Union Congress in 1897; it provided council officers as elected presidents of that organisation; and latterly, when a Grampian Federation of Trades Council was established in 1973, it represented trades across the Moray and Banff and Buchan areas.

The ATUC also has a role through its full and focused annual calendar of events, which include, since 1890, the May day rally; since 1998, the workers' memorial day; and since 2005, as Lewis Macdonald said, the St Andrew's day anti-racism and anti-fascism march.

The ATUC has, over 150 years, become a powerful force in the north-east. Disraeli memorably said:

"Power has only one duty—to secure the social welfare of the People."

I have little doubt that the ATUC will spend the next 150 years as it has the previous: using its power to do exactly that.

17:57

**The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Keith Brown):** I thank Lewis Macdonald for bringing the debate to the Scottish Parliament. As others have, I congratulate the members of Aberdeen Trades Union Council, past and present, on reaching their 150th anniversary.

When the council was established, in 1868, its mission, as we have heard, was the emancipation of the working classes. There has been mention of Disraeli and others, but it strikes me that that time was around 20 years after the publication of "The Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx. Perhaps some of that language owes something to Marx's work.

Spanning three centuries, the council has worked continuously to represent workers, to constructively challenge working conditions and practices and to create the conditions for cultural and societal change. As the years have passed, trade unions, including those affiliated to Aberdeen Trades Union Council, have been instrumental in making our workplaces safer, fairer and more democratic. That is a fact that the Scottish Government recognises and for which it is extremely grateful.

Trade unions have played, and will continue to play, a vital role in improving our country's health and safety records. Evidence shows that accident rates are lower where employees feel that they genuinely have a say in health and safety matters compared with workplaces where employees do not get involved. As a former shop steward for a number of years, I realise some of the points that have been made about the role of shop stewards and trade unions now. Difficult though that role still is, it bears no resemblance to the difficulties that people faced 150 years ago in trying genuinely to represent the interests of their members, not least on matters of health and safety.

Although Scotland's health and safety record is now among the best in Europe, I am sure that the chamber will agree that one workplace fatality is one too many. International workers' memorial day, which takes place on 28 April, allows us to remember all those who lost their lives or their livelihoods because of unsafe workplaces or practices.

This year, of course, marks the 30th anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster. The destruction of that North Sea oil platform by an explosion that was caused by a gas leak is a poignant example, and the disaster significantly affected Aberdeen. On 6 July 1988, 165 offshore workers and two seafarers lost their lives. Immediately after the disaster, oil workers and union activists campaigned for safety improvements. The Offshore Industry Liaison Committee was set up and is now part of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, with around 2,500 members.

Beyond health and safety, our trade unions must be given credit for giving workers an effective voice, for supporting equality groups and for increasing productivity and innovation in workplaces.

For those reasons, the Scottish Government believes that every worker should have the right to an effective voice in the workplace and to union representation.

The impact of trade union representation is evident in Office for National Statistics figures that show that levels of industrial dispute in Scotland decreased by 71 per cent between 2007 and 2016

and that 11 days per 1,000 employees are lost due to industrial disputes in Scotland, which compares with 38 days per 1,000 employees when this Government came to power. That reflects, in part, our commitment to effective industrial relations in Scotland.

The Scottish Government is committed to protecting and enhancing industrial relations in Scotland. That is demonstrated by our relationship with the Scottish Trades Union Congress, which we see as a social and economic partner. At the opening of the STUC annual congress yesterday, the First Minister announced that we are maintaining funding of more than £2 million a year for Scottish union learning in order to promote workplace learning and enable members to access learning and training opportunities at a time that suits their needs.

We are also funding a third year of the trade union modernisation fund, which seeks to promote better working practices and to offset the burden of the Trade Union Act 2016. In 2018-19, the funding will focus on embedding fair work in sectors in which precarious work is prevalent.

It is clear that the efforts of the trade union movement in Scotland have contributed to significant progress on a number of fronts. However, challenges remain, such as the use of exploitative zero-hours contracts, the increase in precarious work, the fact that nearly one in five workers in Scotland is still paid below the real living wage and the fact that employment law, including power over industrial relations, is currently reserved to the United Kingdom Government.

I hope that all members who are here this evening will show their appreciation for the Aberdeen Trades Union Council and the wider trade union movement by supporting the devolution of employment law.

In the meantime, we must build on the significant progress that we are making in the delivery of greater fairness in the workplace. This year, we will work with Scottish Government partners including the STUC and members of the Parliament to develop and publish a fair work action plan.

Members just heard a statement about the Burntisland Fabrications takeover. I think that there is a direct line between the work that people in the ATUC were undertaking in the latter part of the 19th century and the partnership work that has had such a tremendous outcome at BiFab.

The fair work action plan will set out how the Scottish Government will utilise all its strategic levers to promote fairer working practices and realise greater inclusive growth.

Jackie Baillie rightly and proudly mentioned the links between the Labour Party and trade unions. It is fair to say that members of all political parties have played their part in trade unions in trying to effect change and bring about improvements for the workers whom they represent.

In June, we will announce our new national performance framework—the measures and targets that we use in assessing how successful we are as a country—and fair work will be adopted as one of our high-level aims. One of the new indicators that we will use will be the level of collective bargaining in the economy. That significant and progressive development recognises that collective bargaining is a sign of a healthy and successful country.

The UK Government, on the other hand, is determined to regress industrial relations. The Trade Union Act 2016, which the Scottish Government opposed and would like to see repealed, is a direct attempt to reduce the influence of trade unions. The Scottish Government and the STUC have worked together to combat the burden that the act places on public sector employers, including the legal requirement to publish information on facility time. Together, we have created a reporting template that is designed to minimise the reporting burden on the public sector. Crucially, it will set out the value that facility time brings to organisations through dispute prevention and improved employee wellbeing.

I again congratulate the ATUC on the valuable contribution that it has made to industrial relations in Scotland and, in particular, to improving the standard of living for so many workers and their families in the north-east.

*Meeting closed at 18:04.*

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