



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Thursday 3 May 2018**

**Session 5**



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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 3 May 2018

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

## General Question Time

### Acting Chief Constable (Meetings)

**1. Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when ministers last met the Acting Chief Constable of Police Scotland. (S5O-02047)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** I meet regularly with the designated deputy chief constable of Police Scotland, who is currently leading the service while the post of chief constable is vacant. My last meeting with him was on 28 March 2018.

**Daniel Johnson:** Scottish National Party policy on policing has meant that police staff numbers have been cut. Trained officers, who should be on the front line, are instead doing desk work that should be done by staff. That was confirmed in the Scottish Police Authority's report yesterday. We now know that the 1,000 extra officers that the SNP promised were not doing what the public expected them to do. They were, in the SPA's words, "backfilling" civilian roles.

Does the minister agree that we should help to relieve the pressure on our local forces by redeploying those officers to front-line duties, as defined by the acting chief constable yesterday? If not, how many officers is the minister prepared to lose from Police Scotland by the end of the current session of Parliament?

**Michael Matheson:** I am not clear whether Daniel Johnson welcomes the fact that there was a significant increase in police officer numbers under the SNP, which continues to be the case. He may or may not be aware that Police Scotland, in the "Policing 2026: Serving a Changing Scotland" strategy that it published last year—it is the first time that we have had a national strategy for policing in Scotland—set out the need to rebalance its workforce and to ensure that it is able to move forward with the correct level of staff and officers, given the changing nature of crime. At that time, if I recall correctly, the then justice spokesperson for the Labour Party supported that work and recognised the need to rebalance the workforce. The work is now moving forward under Police Scotland, with oversight from the Scottish Police Authority.

Alongside that work, independent assurance is being provided by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, which is looking at the increasing operational capability that the force is focused on taking forward. That is the strategy that Police Scotland set out last year in "Policing 2026", which is now being implemented. The focus is on ensuring that the service has the necessary operational capacity and that it increases its operational capacity in order to ensure that the correct capacity is in place.

In the past day or two, Daniel Johnson has had a lot to say on police numbers with regard to the three-year financial strategy. He may be aware that the issue was discussed just yesterday at the Scottish Police Authority board meeting. Police Scotland and the SPA made it clear that their focus is on building police capacity, and that the paper that was provided to the board was an illustration, to express how much capacity they could create by increasing operational capacity. The key fact for Daniel Johnson is that the figures do not equate to a reduction in officer numbers; the SPA made that clear during its board meeting yesterday.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** In 2014, Michael Matheson told a parliamentary committee:

"There are no plans for us to change our position on the 1,000 extra officers."

He said:

"The commitment remains and I intend to take it forward as the new cabinet secretary."—[*Official Report, Justice Committee*, 25 November 2014; c 43.]

Given that that promise was broken, how does he expect British Transport Police officers to trust him when he says that he will protect their pensions?

**Michael Matheson:** As is often the case, Liam Kerr has got his facts mixed up and is not aware of subsequent events that have taken place. He will be aware that an election took place in 2016, during which we set out clearly the need for the police service to rebalance its workforce.

We are not, however, taking the same approach to policing that the Conservative Party has taken in England and Wales, which involves slashing almost 20,000 police officers. We have seen significant problems in the police service across England and Wales as a result of the sheer incompetence of home secretaries in managing policing over a number of years.

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** As far as I can tell, Labour has expressed four different positions on police numbers since 2007. Daniel Johnson, in a rather confused "Good Morning Scotland" interview yesterday, expressed another entirely different position. Labour's previous justice

spokesperson supported decisions regarding police numbers being the responsibility of the chief constable, and yet it now seems to be against that. Is the cabinet secretary as confused as I am about the position of the Labour Party?

**Michael Matheson:** I did hear Daniel Johnson on “Good Morning Scotland” the other day and I must confess that it was one of the most confusing interviews that I have ever heard in terms of Labour’s position on police officer numbers.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Rubbish!

**Michael Matheson:** If Jackie Baillie thinks that that is rubbish, she should replay the interview on the iPlayer and hear for herself how confusing it was. It was a bit of a comedy exchange, to be perfectly frank. I am not clear about the Labour Party’s policy on this matter, or any other matter.

However, we as a Government are very clear about the need to make sure that we continue to support our police service. That is why we made a commitment—which neither Labour nor any other party made—to maintain police budgets and make sure that there was a real-terms increase, which allows us to invest an extra £100 million in our police service over the course of this parliamentary session. We are continuing with the reform fund, with another £31 million being invested in our police service this year. Alongside that, we have been able to secure the money that for years was being pinched from the police by the Tories, as the police could not reclaim VAT; they have been allowed to retain that, investing another £25 million in the police service. This Government is investing in our police service and we will continue to do that in the years ahead.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** When the cabinet secretary last met the acting chief constable did he discuss the call that I have made repeatedly for an inquiry into the policing of the miners’ strike? It has been 17 months since we met the cabinet secretary, along with retired miners, their union reps and legal representatives, but we have still not had an official response. When will we get an official response to our call?

**Michael Matheson:** The answer to the first part of Neil Findlay’s question is no. As I have said to him on a number of occasions, this is a matter to which I am continuing to give due consideration.

### **Organ Donation (Opt-out System)**

**2. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making toward introducing an opt-out system for organ donation. (S5O-02048)

**The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell):** The Scottish Government is

committed to introducing a workable soft opt-out system that will add to the improvements that have already been delivered, and legislation to provide for such a system will be introduced before the summer recess. It is important that we take the time to get the system right. It needs to be developed in a way that will do no harm to trust in the national health service or the safety of donation. We are working with stakeholders to achieve that.

**Fulton MacGregor:** Last week I hosted a round-table event for Kidney Research UK on renal regenerative medicine. We heard from a range of stakeholders how Scotland is leading the way on life sciences. Will the minister advise how the opt-out system can work in tandem with regenerative medicine to improve outcomes for kidney patients?

**Aileen Campbell:** Opt out will of course work alongside the range of measures that we already have in place, including the work on regenerative medicine. We know that for opt out to be successful it has to work alongside other measures and would be part of the on-going work on improving outcomes for patients. We also recognise the potential for research in regenerative medicine to lead transformative new approaches to the treatment of renal disease. Officials from the chief scientist’s office are in discussions with Kidney Research UK on collaborative funding of research in that area.

### **Tourism (Rutherglen)**

**3. Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it supports the promotion of tourism in Rutherglen constituency. (S5O-02049)

**The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan):** The Scottish Government fully recognises the importance of tourism to the economy and endeavours to promote tourism across the whole of Scotland. We appreciate that Rutherglen, like all constituencies, possesses its own unique attractions, including its magnificent town hall, a VisitScotland five-star-rated arts venue, which plays an important role as a visitor information partner in the iKnow Scotland scheme. VisitScotland will continue to work with local authorities, destination management organisations and businesses to ensure that each of Scotland’s destinations is well positioned to offer an exciting and enjoyable experience to tourists.

**Clare Haughey:** The minister will be aware of some of the fantastic tourist attractions in my constituency, ranging from the urban park of Cuningar Loop to the David Livingstone Centre, the historic buildings, parks and cycle trails and the place where William Wallace was betrayed, to

name but a few. VisitLanarkshire and VisitScotland poorly serve my constituency, often misaddressing venues as being in Glasgow or not promoting local amenities and, instead, directing tourists elsewhere in the area. Will the minister give an assurance that the Scottish Government will liaise with those agencies, so that opportunities for tourism and attracting visitors to my constituency are not missed?

**Dr Allan:** Although many of those are operational matters for VisitScotland, I recognise the points that the member is making.

VisitScotland is committed to serving the whole of Scotland and we want to ensure that its work is efficient and accurate. It should be said that the information that is available on the VisitScotland website is often provided by businesses, which may choose to self-identify as Glasgow businesses. However, I understand the member's concerns and I will ask Scottish Government officials to raise those concerns as part of their regular engagement with VisitScotland.

**Rachael Hamilton (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I am sure that the minister recognises that culture is a driver of tourism. On that note, would the minister agree with me that we should do more to see regions appoint cultural ambassadors who can play key roles in supporting and promoting tourism throughout Scotland?

**Dr Allan:** Certainly, communities and ambassadors for communities have a major role to play in supporting and promoting communities, as the member says. For instance, VisitScotland now has information partnerships throughout Scotland and I am sure that there are many in the constituency that the member represents. We are keen at all times to look at new ways of ensuring that these measures are successful.

### Council-run Bus Services

**4. Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will remove any legal impediments to council-run bus services. (S5O-02050)

**The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf):** The Scottish Government will shortly introduce a transport bill that will give local authorities the flexibility to pursue partnership working or local franchising or indeed to run their own buses, allowing them to better respond to local needs.

**Lewis Macdonald:** I welcome that answer. I am sure that the minister will be aware that First continues to cut bus services in Aberdeen, most recently the X40, 25, 16 and 9 routes, and that Aberdeen City Council has stepped in to secure alternative services for the communities that are affected. Does the minister agree that the city

council should be enabled to set up in business directly if its judgment is that that is the best way to secure frequent, reliable and affordable services in the future? If so—and I welcome the commitment that he has made to cover that option in the bill—will he ensure that the bill does not give commercial operators a veto over any such decision?

**Humza Yousaf:** Once the bill is introduced, the devil will no doubt be in the detail, and I look forward to amendments through the bill process from right across the chamber.

However, I absolutely agree with the premise of what the member says. The entire purpose of the bus element of the transport bill is to give local authorities more powers than they have ever had over their transport services, including of course the bus services. I think that local franchising and enhanced partnership will be of interest, as will, potentially, municipally owned bus companies. I look forward to the member's contributions once that transport bill is introduced.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** Although broadly supportive of the principle of municipally owned services, my concern is that those services might prove disproportionately costly to councils in rural and island communities, as many of them are in effect lifeline services and may require quite substantial subsidies. Has the Scottish Government given any consideration to the concept of central funding support for such councils and, if so, what the cost implications of doing so might be?

**Humza Yousaf:** The member will probably be aware of this but it is worth reiterating that we fund bus services to the tune of about a quarter of a billion pounds. An element of that is the bus service operators grant, which goes to the operators directly. Local authorities also have the ability to fund services that have been withdrawn and are perhaps not profitable but socially necessary, so some mechanisms already exist for them to do what the member describes.

Once the bill is introduced, it will be accompanied by a financial memorandum. There will be no doubt be a wide-ranging debate in this chamber on some of the provisions in that.

For municipally owned bus companies or local franchising, it will be important to get the checks and balances right. We all want to ensure that patronage increases on our bus services as opposed to the trajectory that we have seen over the past few decades. I will work with any member, including of course Jamie Greene, on any sensible measures.

## NHS Tayside

**5. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how recent developments at NHS Tayside could affect the delivery of patient care. (S5O-02051)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison):** The Scottish Government's position on patient safety is clear—it is, and will remain, paramount. That is why we have committed to continuing to provide brokerage to NHS Tayside to protect and maintain the quality of patient services. There is no evidence of any impact on the quality of care being provided to patients in NHS Tayside. Since taking up post, John Brown and Malcolm Wright have made it a priority to engage with staff at all levels and to provide reassurance that day-to-day operations will be minimally affected.

**Murdo Fraser:** NHS Tayside is now facing brokerage approaching £44 million, which will have to be repaid in due course. When I and other members met the new management team at NHS Tayside two weeks ago, they were not able to give us any assurances that the cost savings that need to be found would not have an impact on delivery of front-line services in Perth and Kinross, where there have been public concerns over a long period over services at Perth royal infirmary. Can the cabinet secretary give me an assurance today that, notwithstanding the problems at NHS Tayside, there will be no further reduction in the services available at Perth royal infirmary?

**Shona Robison:** First, the priority is protecting patient services but, obviously, that does not mean that patient services will not evolve and change over time. Murdo Fraser will be aware of the shaping surgical services review. I am sure that he has had many meetings about it, as have other local members. The proposals constitute major service change and, as such, require ministerial approval. I will carefully consider all the available information and all representations before coming to a final decision in the best interests of patients.

It has been clear, and I am sure that Murdo Fraser has been told this on a number of occasions, that accident and emergency services at Perth royal infirmary will continue. That is important for local people. What is being talked about is where unscheduled surgical care is delivered. We have to make sure that the two things are not conflated.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** Last month, it was reported that NHS Tayside is on the cusp of the eradication of hepatitis C in Tayside, having treated a higher proportion of people with hep C than in all other parts of Scotland. Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that this is an

outstanding achievement by NHS Tayside, from which many other health boards can learn?

**Shona Robison:** Yes, I am aware that NHS Tayside has been at the forefront of efforts to tackle hepatitis C for many years. I met the staff leading on this at the recent Tayside staff awards. They report excellent progress on their aim of elimination, in line with the Government's aim of eliminating hepatitis as a public health concern across Scotland. I know that hepatitis C clinicians across Scotland meet regularly as part of a national network and are learning from one another's approaches. NHS Tayside has a lot to offer other areas of Scotland. I am also aware that the Minister for Public Health and Sport is due to visit the hepatitis treatment centre in Tayside later this month and will, I am sure, learn more about the approach at that visit.

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary says that there is no evidence of impact on services. However, treatment waiting times are getting worse at NHS Tayside. NHS Tayside also tells us that it has to make £200 million savings over the next five years. The British Medical Association, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and staff are telling us that the pressure is like nothing before and that it is impacting on services. Surely the cabinet secretary accepts that savings and cuts relate to more pressure being put on staff and on services and more patients being failed.

**Shona Robison:** What is true is that NHS Tayside has to live within its means, as other boards do. Over the past few months, and indeed years, NHS Tayside has been found to be an outlier on many aspects of service delivery. That is why it needs to address such things as agency spend and prescribing costs, of which it has traditionally been a high user compared to other boards. There are areas in which it can make changes to make sure that the front-line services that patients receive are not impacted.

## Road Repairs (A77 and M77)

**6. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government when the A77/M77 main arterial route between Ayrshire and Glasgow is scheduled for repair. (S5O-02052)

**The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf):** Our trunk road maintenance contractors have a responsibility to inspect the A77 and the M77 frequently to identify defects and repair the most serious as quickly as possible.

Connect, which is the design, build, finance and operate company that maintains the M77 between junctions 5 and 8, has a resurfacing scheme under way that will resurface at least 7.5km of lane length. Those works are being carried out



currently, having started on 16 April, with overnight carriageway closures between 8 pm and 6 am. It is anticipated that the works will take two to three weeks to complete. This follows the severe deterioration experienced as a result of a severe winter.

Our operating company Scotland TranServ, which maintains the A77 and the other parts of the M77, has a programme of structural maintenance and patching planned for throughout 2018. The programme is currently under development and will be shared once it is finalised.

**Brian Whittle:** The minister is correct; I met Transport Scotland last week to discuss the issue and—lo and behold!—the repair started the next day. Far be it from me to suggest that it was the meeting that instigated the action.

As the minister said, trunk roads are inspected every week. How can roads be allowed to deteriorate to such a bad state before action is taken? The road south of Kilmarnock is so bad that temporary road signs are appearing on the dual carriageway between Monkton and Kilmarnock, but there are no plans to do any work. Is the minister aware of that? What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that critical repairs are made to that arterial route?

**Humza Yousaf:** Far be it from me to suggest that the power of Brian Whittle is limited only by the ego of Brian Whittle. [*Laughter.*] I say that only in jest.

In all seriousness, I say to Brian Whittle that we have maintained the M77—£50 million has been spent since 2007. On top of that, we have the south-west Scotland transport study, and if the member has concerns about specific parts of the route, he should feed them into the study.

I take exception to Brian Whittle's characterisation of our trunk road network. In the 2016 report, "Maintaining Scotland's roads", Audit Scotland, which is never shy to criticise the Government, said that 87 per cent of trunk roads "are in acceptable condition". There is still work to do, of course; we want the position to be better. That is why we increased the road maintenance budget by £65 million between 2017-18 and 2018-19.

If Brian Whittle has suggestions for further improvement, we will feed them back to the operating company.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:01

### Police Officer Numbers

**1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):** This week, we discovered that the number of police officers in Scotland is at its lowest level for nine years and that, over the longer term, police ranks could fall even further. A fall of 1,200 officers, as has been reported, would be completely unacceptable to Conservative members. Would it be unacceptable to the First Minister, too?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes.

**Ruth Davidson:** That is great—it would be unacceptable. The fall will not be 1,200. What we need to know now is how many it will be. Will it be 600? Will be 800? Police Scotland is facing a £30 million black hole, so we know that the cuts are coming, and people outside Parliament have a right to know where they will fall.

We know that Police Scotland is under extreme pressure, the effects of which are becoming clear. This week, we learned that 872 charges, which included firearms offences, drug dealing and child sex crimes, had to be dropped last year because police reports were filled in too late. When action is dropped against hundreds of suspects in cases as serious as those, and it is all down to officers being overworked, under pressure and flooded by paperwork, it is clear that something is very wrong. If that is the case, how can any cut to front-line policing be justified?

**The First Minister:** I have to admit to being somewhat bemused by Ruth Davidson's line of questioning. She started by saying that the issue had emerged this week. The issue to do with police numbers has not emerged this week; it emerged in June last year, when "Policing 2026: Serving a Changing Scotland" was published. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice came to the chamber to make a statement about the strategy. What he said then, among other things, was that officer numbers will remain significantly above the number that we inherited—that will continue to be the case—but as part of policing 2026 the police have asked for the ability to rebalance the workforce, to take account of the changing nature of policing and their plans to increase operational capacity by moving officers from back-room to front-line roles.

That was all set out in June last year, as were the plans to reduce police officer numbers by up to 100 in 2018-19 and 300 in 2019-20. Therefore, when Ruth Davidson says that we have to be clear about this, I simply say to her that we were clear

about it last year, and that it is not really my fault, or the Cabinet Secretary for Justice's fault, that she was not paying attention.

Of course, all that is being independently monitored and assured by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland, which has confirmed that Police Scotland made good progress last year in moving about 85 officers from support roles into the front line, and that it is on course to increase that number. It has given an assurance that Police Scotland's commitment to bringing the budget into balance in a sustainable way did not reduce operational capacity. That will continue to be monitored and assured.

Lastly, and on the second issue that Ruth Davidson raised, which was delayed police reporting to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, I say that that is, of course, regrettable and we want to ensure that it does not happen. However, let me put the matter into context: the numbers that Ruth Davidson cited account for 0.3 per cent of the overall number of cases. We will continue to make sure that Police Scotland is timeous in what it does, because that is important. I am sure that Ruth Davidson would not want to give a misleading impression to Parliament.

**Ruth Davidson:** I am sure that 872 victims of crime who did not see those crimes being prosecuted will have been delighted to hear the answer that the First Minister has just given, about how little the crimes against them matter to her.

However, this is what is puzzling to police officers. The justice secretary claims that reductions to police numbers are fine, because more police time will soon be dedicated to front-line policing. However, yesterday, the Scottish Police Federation said that it is baffled by the justice secretary's claims, because it sees no evidence of officers being freed up to spend more time on the front line. Who should we trust here? Should we trust the First Minister and her Government, who say that everything is fine, or Scotland's front-line police officers, who say that it is not?

**The First Minister:** In my previous answer, I cited HMICS, which I hope all of us, regardless of political differences, trust. Let me repeat what I said in that answer; perhaps Ruth Davidson will actually listen to it.

HMICS has confirmed that, during 2017-18, Police Scotland has made good progress in moving approximately 85 officers from support roles to the front line. It also confirmed that Police Scotland is on course to increase that number. Of course, it is to HMICS that we look for independent assurance that the increase in front-line capacity is being delivered.

Let me repeat that the numbers that have been published this week show that the number of police officers in Scotland is 963 more than the number that we inherited in 2007. [*The First Minister has corrected this contribution. See end of report.*] Let us look at the rest of the United Kingdom. In England, where Ruth Davidson's party is in Government, we have seen a decline in police officer numbers of about 20,000 over recent years. We will continue to make sure that we keep police officer numbers above the level that we inherited, and to support the police with real-terms increases in their resource budget, to ensure that they can continue to do the excellent job that they are doing in keeping crime at historically low levels.

**Ruth Davidson:** We always know when the First Minister has had to go on the back foot, because then she looks to England and Wales or anywhere apart from at her own responsibilities in Scotland.

The facts are these. We were all told—the country was told—that the creation of a single force would free resources and provide huge savings to spend on front-line policing. The reality is that, five years on, we have a £30 million black hole in police accounts, and officer numbers are going down and we do not know how many more are for the axe. Front-line officers say that they are not getting the equipment or the time that they need to do their jobs. Hundreds of crimes are going unprosecuted because police are overworked.

Although money is short, this is the moment at which the Scottish National Party proposes to spend half a million pounds per officer on merging the British Transport Police with Police Scotland, which is a move that raises serious security risks.

Scotland's police officers are asking how they can be expected to do their job in those circumstances. Can the First Minister answer them?

**The First Minister:** Police officers up and down the country are doing a fantastic job. Let us inject some reality into this exchange. I have already cited HMICS. Let me do so again, by quoting from its most recent annual report. This is the reality, across Scotland. It states:

"Operational performance remains strong for the fourth year of the single service, with officers and police staff at all levels committed to providing a good service to communities across Scotland. Users of policing remain positive about their experience".

Of course they do: the vast majority of people in Scotland experience no crime whatsoever. Crime is at a 43-year low. The majority of people believe that their local police do either a good or an excellent job, and the Scottish crime and justice

survey shows that crime has fallen by more than a third just since 2008-09.

Of course, our police service faces real challenges, as our other public services do, partly because of the austerity that is being imposed by the Conservative Party, but under this Government it is getting real-terms increases in its resource budget. We will continue to protect police officer numbers that are significantly above the level that we inherited, and we will continue to support our police officers to do the excellent job that they do every single day of the week.

### Suicide Prevention

**2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Yesterday, the Samaritans warned that suicide prevention is not being taken seriously enough by this Government—that it is not a top priority. Are the Samaritans wrong?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** No. I would not for a minute say that the Samaritans are wrong. We are looking to work closely—I think that we are working closely—with the Samaritans and other organisations as we finalise the new suicide prevention strategy, which is intended to make sure that we have the best facilities in place for people who need help. We will continue to do that. Maureen Watt, the Minister for Mental Health, has already made it clear that the feedback from the draft strategy will be listened to and built on in shaping the final strategy. I hope that all those who have an interest feel able to contribute, and I thank those who have done so, so far.

**Richard Leonard:** As the First Minister will know, Scotland's suicide rate is more than twice the rate for Britain as a whole, and that in Dundee the suicide rate has increased by 61 per cent in a year. Behind those statistics are real people and real families who have lost loved ones, including the family of David Ramsay.

In the autumn of 2016, David Ramsay made three separate attempts at suicide in the space of a week. After harming himself and attempting to take his own life by overdosing, David's family convinced him to seek urgent help from his doctor. His general practitioner referred him to the Carseview centre in Dundee because the GP believed that, in her words, he "required admission". Twice he had emergency assessments and twice he was turned away. It then took more than 32 hours for him to get his medication. A care plan was supposed to have been drawn up for him. It has never been seen and is now missing. David hanged himself on the morning of 9 October 2016, four days after being turned away by the centre. He was 50 years old.

Tragically, David Ramsay's story and the experience of his family is not unique in Dundee,

so when I was in Dundee in March I backed the call by families for a public inquiry into mental health services at NHS Tayside. Why has the First Minister's Government remained silent on this crisis and silent on that demand for a public inquiry?

**The First Minister:** First, I take the opportunity to convey my deep condolences to the family of Mr Ramsay. I understand that a member of his family has been in touch with the Scottish Government and that the Minister for Mental Health sent a reply to that relative last month.

Richard Leonard has raised issues about the Carseview centre in NHS Tayside. It is not right or fair to say that the Government has "remained silent". I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has visited Carseview on a number of occasions.

I understand that the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland carried out an unannounced inspection of Carseview in March, and made a number of recommendations. Let me make it very clear today, as the health secretary and the mental health minister have already done, that we expect NHS Tayside to respond fully to the recommendations within three months. The recommendations have also, I understand, been shared with Healthcare Improvement Scotland. We will pay very close attention to NHS Tayside's response, and if we consider that further action is required, that action will be taken.

**Richard Leonard:** Dozens of families want an inquiry. David Ramsay's niece, Gillian, and his father, David, are in the gallery today. They have had to come to Edinburgh because the Government has ignored them. Gillian wrote to the First Minister directly in June last year, and then again in February this year, but nothing has changed. They are yet another family that has been failed by the Government. How many more families must be failed? How many more families need to suffer before the First Minister finally recognises that now is the time for change?

**The First Minister:** Again, I convey my condolences to Mr Ramsay's family. As I said, there has been communication with the family. It is important to repeat what I said earlier: it is simply not the case that no action is being taken. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland has carried out an unannounced inspection, and recommendations have been made. It is now the Government's expectation—it should be everybody's expectation—that NHS Tayside responds to and implements those recommendations. We will monitor that very carefully.

In terms of a wider inquiry into the individual case—or any other cases—it is open to law

officers to order a fatal accident inquiry. That is a matter for law officers and not for ministers.

We will continue to monitor the changes that are made by NHS Tayside. In addition, there will be additional investment in locally based preventative mental health treatment, as well as additional investment in the Carseview centre, in order to improve the quality and standard of care that is provided to the population of Tayside.

I return to my earlier answer on the new suicide prevention strategy, which is extremely important. Richard Leonard referred to suicide rates in his second question. My view is quite simple: one suicide is one too many. However, it is important to recognise that, although the numbers fluctuate from year to year, the five-year rolling average shows that suicide rates are on a downward trend in Scotland. Our responsibility is to ensure that we accelerate that progress and ensure that action is taken, and investment is provided, to support that progress.

I hope that we can agree that the issue is one on which we should all be prepared to work collaboratively. We will continue to do our job in ensuring that NHS Tayside responds to recommendations. We will also take the action to ensure that we have in place the best possible suicide prevention strategy, which we expect to publish in the summer of this year.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** There are a number of constituency supplementaries, the first of which is from Kenneth Gibson.

#### **EDF Energy (Hunterston B Nuclear Power Station)**

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** The First Minister will be aware that EDF Energy, the owner of Hunterston B nuclear power station in my constituency, has shut down reactor 3 for repairs until the end of 2018, as a precaution, after expected new keyway root cracks in the reactor core were found to be happening at a slightly faster rate than expected. Rightly, EDF has put the safety of its workforce and local communities first.

I understand that the First Minister will meet EDF's new chief executive, Simone Rossi, at 2 pm today. Will she seek assurances that safety will remain EDF's number 1 priority and that, once repairs are completed fully, Hunterston B will continue to operate at least until its planned closure in 2023 and prior to the commencement of decommissioning?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, I will raise those points. As the member mentioned, I have a meeting with EDF this afternoon, which was arranged some time ago. We are in regular contact with EDF, as well as with the nuclear

safety and security regulator, the Office for Nuclear Regulation, on this very important issue. I know that the company is seeking to reassure the public about safety at Hunterston. For our part, we are always very clear that the Scottish Government expects the strictest environmental and safety standards to be met at Scotland's nuclear power stations. I will be happy—indeed, keen—to seek further assurances on that point when I meet the company today.

#### **Deaths in Police Custody**

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** Today is the third anniversary of the death of Sheku Bayoh in police custody. We are still waiting on full details of what happened that morning, and three years is a long time for a family to wait. Is the First Minister confident that the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner has the appropriate powers, capacity and leadership to investigate deaths in custody? Following the independent inquiry into such deaths in England and Wales, which was chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini, will the Scottish Government now commit to undertake an inquiry into deaths in custody in Scotland to restore confidence in the system?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I thank Claire Baker for raising this issue. My thoughts and, I am sure, the thoughts of everyone across the chamber—particularly today—are with the family and friends of Mr Bayoh.

This is, of course, a live investigation and therefore members will understand that I require to be careful about what I say. The Crown Office has to undertake further work before a decision can be made about whether there should be any criminal proceedings. It is a complex investigation, but I know that the Crown Office has indicated that a decision will be made as soon as possible. The previous Lord Advocate made clear in 2015 that, regardless of the outcome of this investigation, a fatal accident inquiry will be held. Hopefully, that will provide public scrutiny of the circumstances of this tragic incident.

Claire Baker asked me about two further points, the first of which was whether I am satisfied that the PIRC has sufficient resources to meet the demands placed upon it. Yes, I am. In recognition of the additional demands that are faced by the PIRC, we acted to ensure that its budget for this financial year has increased by more than £1 million.

On the issue of Dame Elish Angiolini's review of deaths in police custody in England and Wales, robust structures are in place in Scotland. The Lord Advocate is the head of the investigation of deaths system here, and the Crown Office can already ask the PIRC to carry out an independent

inquiry into a death in police custody. Custody arrangements in Scotland are distinct from those in England and Wales. For example, since 2014, healthcare in police custody has been delivered by the national health service, to ensure that services are as effective as possible. Indeed, the Angiolini report urges the United Kingdom Government to implement that approach in England as well.

We will continue to consider whether any further action is necessary, but I hope that my answer gives some reassurance to the member today.

### **Crimes (Glasgow)**

**Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con):** On Tuesday, a car crashed in Springburn in an event that is now being treated as attempted murder. A few weeks ago, a man was shot and killed by a masked gunman in Maryhill Road, only a couple of hundred yards from my office. In March, a man was shot at and stabbed in a residential street in Springburn, very close to my home.

These are extremely serious and violent crimes that have happened within weeks of one another in a relatively small area. Obviously, local residents are concerned. What reassurances can the First Minister give to the community that the Scottish Government is working alongside Police Scotland to prevent such crimes from taking place?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** These are extremely serious incidents. Annie Wells will appreciate that some, if not all, of them continue to be the subject of police investigation and that therefore it would not be appropriate for me to comment in detail. Suffice to say, the police are very active in tackling serious and organised crime. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and I are regularly briefed by the police on their efforts and progress.

The Crown Office has had some recent success in bringing serious and organised criminals to justice. I can give an absolute assurance that the Scottish Government will continue to work closely with the police and the Crown in ensuring that that happens, and that the public can be assured that such crimes are treated extremely seriously.

### **DGOne Leisure Complex**

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** This week, Professor John Cole published the report of his independent inquiry into the flawed construction of the DGOne leisure complex in Dumfries. Although there are lessons for the council, he concluded that full responsibility for the defective construction lay with the contractor, Kier Construction. From breaches in the law with regard to building warrants to a fire escape

strategy that completely compromised safety, its actions were criminal, in my view.

Does the First Minister therefore believe that it is acceptable that Kier Construction continues to rake in millions of pounds from the taxpayer, building schools and hospitals for the Scottish Government? Further, given that Professor Cole concluded that there are striking similarities between the safety-related failings by a major contractor that were exposed in this inquiry and those that were exposed in the one that he carried out into the construction of Edinburgh schools, surely the time has come for a fundamental review of the way in which we plan, procure, design and manage public sector construction projects so that we can stop cowboy construction firms ripping off the public and, frankly, putting lives at risk.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Edinburgh schools situation—a very serious one—involved private finance initiative schools and, of course, the form of PFI that was used by previous Labour Administrations is no longer used to build public buildings in Scotland. I hope that the member welcomes that.

On the wider issues, we are required to openly procure such projects. Of course, some of the issues that are raised are for the particular local councils, not directly for the Scottish Government. However, we will pay extremely close attention to the findings and recommendations of the report that the member cites. If that requires us to take any further action, that is exactly what we will do.

### **Education Reform (Consultation)**

**3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I suspect that everybody in Parliament and throughout the country wants Scotland to have a great education system, in which teachers feel supported to do their jobs and in which we successfully tackle the poverty-related attainment gap that our country still experiences. However, this week, the Government released the analysis of yet another consultation on its plans for education reform, which have more to do with regional structures than with schools, teachers and the resources that they need. That is the Government's third time of asking, and, for the third time, it has been told that its plans do not have the support of teachers, parents and education professionals—and we know that they do not have the support of Parliament. Is it not time to say “Three strikes and you're out” to the proposals? The Government should return with a change of direction that is more about the resources that our schools and teachers need than about the reform that nobody but the Government seems to want.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The regional structures that Patrick Harvie has referred to—I guess that he is talking about the regional

improvement collaboratives—are all about providing support for front-line teachers to do exactly what all of us want, which is to improve attainment and standards in our schools. Our education reforms are all about putting teachers and parents at the heart of decision making in the life of a school, because we know that decisions that shape the education of young people should be made by the professionals who know them best—teachers—and parents.

Patrick Harvie mentioned resources. We have increased the resources that go to our schools—not just the real-terms resource increase in local authority budgets but the pupil equity fund, which is putting more than £100 million directly into the hands of head teachers. If Patrick Harvie visits schools, as I and the education secretary do regularly, I am sure that he will hear, as we do, the very positive feedback about how pupil equity funding is allowing teachers to transform what they do to raise attainment in schools.

**Patrick Harvie:** This should not be about party-political point scoring; it should be about us all uniting around the changes that our schools and education system need. Greens are by no means the only people to agree with the teaching unions, for example, which say that the pupil equity fund is no substitute for the money that has been cut from our education system, year after year. Scotland has lost thousands of teachers, additional support needs specialists, school librarians, school counsellors and other staff—the people whose talents and professionalism our schools need.

Does the First Minister understand that, if she changes direction on the issue and focuses on the resources, skills and professionals that our schools need, she will not only gain support in Parliament and among those who work in schools up and down the country but help to make teaching the fantastic, attractive profession that we all want and need it to be? Will she ask her cabinet secretary to change direction and come back with a plan that is focused on the resources that our schools need?

**The First Minister:** Teacher numbers have increased for two years in a row. Many of the additional teachers are directly down to the pupil equity fund, which is helping—*[Interruption.]* Labour members obviously do not like to talk about additional teachers in our schools. Many of the additional teachers are funded directly by the pupil equity fund, and we will continue to ensure that those resources go directly to head teachers to allow them to do the good work that they are doing.

We will continue to pursue reforms that are all about empowering teachers, head teachers and parents, because the evidence says that that is how we will make the biggest difference in schools

to the poverty-related attainment gap. There are, of course, things that we need to do outside schools to help to close that gap, and much of that will be done through our reforms around social security and child poverty, but we will continue to focus on how to make sure that the power lies where it should lie in our education system: with front-line teachers and head teachers.

I am delighted to hear Patrick Harvie say that this is not a party-political issue. It is certainly not a party-political issue from my perspective or from that of the education secretary. Time and time again, I have heard Opposition parties across the chamber call for action to be taken to close the attainment gap in our schools, but every time that proposals are made to do that, they always manage to oppose them. That does not quite add up.

**The Presiding Officer:** There are a number of supplementaries—I will take up to four, if there is time.

### Baby Box Safety

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** Yesterday, we learned that one of the world's leading experts on cot deaths, who is an adviser to the Scottish Government, had raised significant safety concerns about the Government's baby box scheme. We also learned, for the first time, that he had raised those extremely serious concerns with the Government early last year. Will the First Minister agree today to set out in full all the advice that the Government has received from experts on the safety of the boxes? Will she confirm whether they have been accredited in full by the British Standards Institution?

**The First Minister:** The Tories should be deeply ashamed of themselves for needlessly trying to frighten parents. I saw that, this morning, Miles Briggs tweeted a call for all the safety accreditation documents to be published. That was done months ago. I do not believe that Miles Briggs does not know that. Therefore, the question is: why is he trying to wilfully mislead people about that?

Let me briefly address the issue, because it is really important to parents. The baby box conforms to all relevant safety standards. There is not yet a specific British standard for baby boxes, but the baby box conforms to the standards that are in place for a crib or a cradle for domestic use. That includes passing all the necessary stability, static load and strength safety tests.

Yesterday, there was focus on the fact that the safety certificate—which has been published—says that materials under clause 4(1) of the standard were excluded from testing. Clause 4(1) has three parts to it. One relates to materials

made of wood, which is not relevant to the baby box; another relates to products made of metal, which is not relevant to the baby box; and the third requires materials to conform to another standard, and the baby box conforms to that further standard.

Concerns have also been raised about fire risk. The baby box complies with all relevant safety standards. There are clear instructions in the box not to place it in the vicinity of open fires; the mattress in the box is fully compliant with BS 1877, on flammability; and the construction complies with BS 7177, on the specification for mattresses for children's cots. I hope that that helps to allay, if not the concerns of the Tories, any concerns that the Tories might have caused in the minds of parents.

What is it about the baby box that so offends the Conservatives? Is it just because it is Scottish National Party policy? Is it because we are giving state support to families, when the Tory preference is always to take that away from families? Is it because we have not insisted on a rape clause for eligibility for the baby box? The baby box is a good thing, and the Tories should stop unfairly criticising it.

#### Legislative Consent

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Has the First Minister had a chance to review David Mundell's comments at committee this morning, where he refused to confirm that the United Kingdom Government will respect a decision of the Scottish Parliament on legislative consent for the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill? Is it therefore fair to conclude that the UK Government is prepared to ignore the will of the Scottish Parliament?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I am sad to say that I did not have the opportunity to watch David Mundell at committee this morning, but I have heard reports of what he said. Two issues are relevant. First, the secretary of state refused to say that the UK Government would respect any decision that this Parliament takes on legislative consent for the withdrawal bill. In the absence of such a commitment, how can we be expected to take the UK Government at its word when it says that it would respect our decisions on consent when it comes to any orders that might be laid at a later stage?

Secondly, the secretary of state also seemed to confirm that, even if every single member of this Parliament were to vote to withhold consent to an order that was being laid to reserve power at Westminster, the UK Government could take that to be consent and do it anyway. That is not a definition of consent that anybody across the country will be familiar with.

We want to reach agreement, but we will not do so if the UK Government insists on riding roughshod over the powers of this Parliament.

#### Offshore Safety

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Is the First Minister aware of the Health and Safety Executive's comments last week about major hydrocarbon releases every year putting the lives of multiple offshore workers at risk? Is she aware that researchers at Robert Gordon University have reported on substantial fatigue and psychological distress offshore as a result of changes to on/off rotas? Is she aware that the quality assurance company DNV GL reported this week that 46 per cent of professionals in the sector believe there to have been underinvestment in inspection and maintenance of infrastructure offshore, saying that they would not rule out the possibility of catastrophic failure as a result?

In the run-up to the 30th anniversary of Piper Alpha, what reassurance can she give offshore workers that her Government is alive to those concerns and will support trade unions and United Kingdom and Scottish regulators in seeking to ensure the safest possible working environment for Scottish workers offshore?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** My overriding message is that safety in the North Sea is paramount. Nothing is more important than ensuring that the safety of those who work offshore is paramount. That was a regular area of discussion at the oil and gas task force.

The Scottish Government has supported, and will continue to support, trade unions in raising any concerns with operators in the North Sea. I expect any recommendations that the Health and Safety Executive makes to be taken seriously and implemented. If Lewis Macdonald wants to raise specific concerns, I would be happy to look into them further.

#### Immigration Powers (Devolution)

**4. Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government will seek the devolution of all immigration powers. (S5F-02308)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, we will. The United Kingdom Government's immigration policy not only is inhumane but is harming Scotland's interests. It is damaging communities, breaking up families and, if targets for reducing net migration to tens of thousands are pursued, could cost Scotland's economy up to £10 billion a year by 2040.

In February, we published a paper demonstrating why migration is essential to Scotland's prosperity and how a different

approach with new powers for the Scottish Parliament could operate. We outlined options for devolution within a UK framework to create a new route for people who want to settle in Scotland. That proposal would be additional to the current routes that the UK has in place.

The numerous scandals that have come to light in recent weeks, which have been caused under consecutive Tory Home Secretaries, reinforce the urgency for Scotland to have its own system and have control over immigration.

**Mairi Gougeon:** In the past week, the Home Office has backed down after threatening to deport a family in Fulton MacGregor's constituency by mistake, and the Home Secretary has resigned for misleading Parliament and the public over the setting of immigration targets. There is also continuing fallout from the Windrush scandal, and there are claims that the Prime Minister herself blocked requests from her own Government to allow more doctors from overseas into the UK. Nevertheless, we are expected to believe that the Home Office can handle the more than 3 million applications for settled status from European Union citizens. That is not to mention those who already have settled status and felt compelled to leave the country or now just do not want to come.

That situation leaves shortages across farms in Angus, for example, where there is expected to be a shortfall of around 15 to 20 per cent in the number of seasonal workers this summer. How bad does it have to get before the Tories accept that they are failing the people of Scotland on immigration and put the powers in this Parliament's hands?

**The First Minister:** Mairi Gougeon is absolutely right, and I hope that members around the chamber will support those calls. I had the opportunity briefly to meet the family from Fulton MacGregor's constituency when they attended First Minister's question time a couple of weeks ago. I heard directly from them about the stress and anxiety that they have suffered because of Home Office ineptitude. The other scandals that have come to light in recent weeks underline the fact that such cases are just the tip of the iceberg.

I said "ineptitude" a moment ago, but much of what we are talking about is not just ineptitude; it is the result of deliberate policies that the Tory Government is pursuing. The hostile environment policy, which is the policy of the Prime Minister—who was previously the Home Secretary—is dehumanising migrants to this country and is casting suspicion over anybody who chooses to make this country their home. It is absolutely despicable, and it must end. I hope that the new Home Secretary will change the culture and policy fundamentally. Above all, I hope that more powers over immigration come to this Parliament soon, so

that we can exercise them humanely and in the interests of the country's economy.

### **Schools (Access to Arts Education)**

**5. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of social background, have full access to arts education. (S5F-02293)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Curriculum for excellence recognises the value of the expressive arts as one of the eight curriculum areas in Scotland. Local authorities are, of course, responsible for ensuring that all children and young people have access to the full curriculum, including the expressive arts. For our part, we are supporting them by delivering a real-terms increase in revenue and capital funding to local authorities.

**Liz Smith:** During a recent visit to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the principal, Jeffrey Sharkey, assured the Education and Skills Committee that his institution is wholly committed to a diversity of intake and widened access, but he warned that that commitment was being seriously undermined by the fact that a diminishing number of pupils in Scotland have access to quality arts provision, especially music tuition.

Does the First Minister agree with Professor Sharkey's assertion that the issue is a serious one that is having

"a detrimental effect on the cultural life of the nation and on the ... creative potential of our young people"?

Will she undertake, in the review that the Scottish Government is about to commission, to examine all possible channels of additional funding, including those that might be offered via private sector partnerships?

**The First Minister:** I thank Liz Smith for raising an important issue. I have a couple of brief points to make.

As I said in my original answer, in Scottish schools the subject of music is part of the expressive arts area of curriculum for excellence. Instrumental music tuition is an additional, discretionary service that is provided by local authorities, which means that local authorities decide what instrumental music tuition to provide and how to provide it, depending on their priorities and traditions.

My second point is that I share the concerns about the decisions of a number of local authorities to reduce access to instrumental music tuition for young people. The Deputy First Minister has asked his officials—while, of course, respecting the autonomy of local councils—to identify ways of ensuring that instrumental music



tuition remains accessible to people, regardless of background, in the future. I understand that, following the intervention of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, West Lothian Council is already looking again at its decision.

The issue is an important one to which the Scottish Government pays close attention. Over and above what I have mentioned—although I appreciate that the programmes that I am about to mention are not the equivalent of music tuition in schools—since 2007, the Scottish Government has invested more than £100 million in the youth music initiative, which has had an impact in helping young people to access opportunities to make music. Since 2012, we have also provided more than £2 million to Sistema Scotland, which is a charity that provides opportunities for young people to get involved in big noise orchestras, one of which is based in my constituency. Across Scotland, that reaches 2,000 children every week.

As I said, I appreciate that those programmes are not equivalent to tuition in schools, but I hope that they reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that young people get the opportunity to experience music in all its forms.

#### **Asda and Sainsbury's (Proposed Merger)**

**6. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with Asda and Sainsbury's regarding their merger and any impact this might have on jobs in Scotland. (S5F-02301)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity held a call with representatives of Asda on Tuesday of this week, in which it was made clear that the proposed merger will result in no store closures in Scotland. We were also informed that Asda intends to keep its two distribution centres at Falkirk and Grangemouth open, and there are no indications of job losses. However, we will continue to engage with both supermarkets to ensure that those promises are followed through, that Scottish consumers benefit and, crucially—this is a really important point—that Scottish suppliers benefit and do not lose out.

**Jackie Baillie:** I very much welcome the First Minister's response. It would appear that local managers in Asda have been briefing their staff that jobs in stores are safe for a year. Although that is welcome, it is pretty meaningless, given that the Competition and Markets Authority will not report on the merger until the end of 2019.

That said, I have not heard any guarantees about the future of jobs at the Asda distribution centres, which, as the First Minister will be aware, employ around 1,100 workers in Falkirk and

Grangemouth. I understand that the GMB trade union, which represents thousands of Asda staff, has written to the Scottish Government, asking it to get involved. Will the First Minister ensure that there is transparency on Asda's plans for jobs in the company's stores and that an undertaking is given on its continued commitment to Grangemouth and Falkirk, in particular?

**The First Minister:** Jackie Baillie is right to refer to the Competition and Markets Authority, which has indicated that it is likely to review the merger. That process has still to be undertaken.

Fergus Ewing tells me that he has already written to the relevant unions to offer meetings. That work will be taken forward, and we will do everything that we can to make sure that the unions are kept fully up to date.

I have outlined the commitments that Asda has given to the Scottish Government. They are commitments at this stage, and we will monitor the situation very closely to ensure that the promises that have been made—including promises about the two distribution centres—are followed through. We will, of course, seek the same discussions and commitments from Sainsbury's.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Asda and Sainsbury's play a significant role in enabling the sale of quality Scottish produce, which supports farmers and food and drink producers throughout Scotland. What assurances has the First Minister had about their continuing commitment to promote and sell locally produced and locally sourced Scottish food and drink? I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, Fergus Ewing.

**The First Minister:** That is an important point, given in particular the concerns that there often are in the food and drink supply chain and primary producers' concerns that they do not always enjoy the benefits of the huge growth in food and drink. I note and understand the concern that NFU Scotland has expressed that the immense purchasing power that would be generated from such a merger could give the organisation an opportunity to bargain even harder with suppliers throughout the supply chain.

Both Asda and Sainsbury's have provided assurances to us that they think that significant opportunities will be created for Scottish suppliers to develop new product ranges and grow their businesses. However, as with commitments around jobs in the distribution centres, it is important that we ensure that those promises are followed through. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity will be very focused on that.

## Save the Hampden Roar

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-10278, in the name of James Dornan, on the save the Hampden roar campaign. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the *Evening Times'* campaign, Save the Hampden Roar, to retain Hampden Park as the home of Scottish football; understands that the SFA is to make a decision on whether it will renew the lease of the national stadium; recognises that Hampden Park has been the country's home football ground since 1903 when it was opened as the largest stadium in the world; highlights that it has played host to countless memorable international and club football games, including being the venue of the 1960 European Cup final where Real Madrid defeated Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3, and the scene of the famous Zinedine Zidane goal in the 2002 Champions League final; looks forward to the stadium showcasing four matches at the 2020 European Championships; notes that, in addition to football matches, Hampden Park has held other major sporting events, including for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and been the venue for major concerts; acknowledges the significant economic benefit that it believes Hampden Park brings locally and to the wider Glasgow area; notes the comments by the Glasgow City Council leader, Councillor Susan Aitken, that the case for the national stadium to retain its Glasgow home of 115 years is compelling, and further notes the calls on the SFA to commit its future to Hampden Park.

12:48

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion.

Before I start on what I want to say about the situation, I give a huge thanks to Ged O'Brien, who is a Scottish football historian and who opened the Scottish football museum at Hampden; Graeme Brown, who leads the 1st Hampden park campaign, which is looking to get recognition for the very first of the three Hampden stadiums, which is now Hampden bowling club; and John and Ali McHugh and the rest of those who participate through the Hampden collection and the save the Hampden roar campaign.

I want to highlight the current situation regarding Hampden park, which is an important issue in my constituency. The media have informed us that there is a possibility that the Scottish Football Association will not renew its lease for cup games and international matches and will leave for pastures new. To be fair, recent reports suggest that a deal that will keep the SFA at Hampden is close. If so, we must ensure that the future of Queen's Park is assured. I want to place on record the serious and negative impact that there would be on the south side of Glasgow in particular if the SFA were to leave for Murrayfield or elsewhere.

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** Mr Dornan will be aware that I am a card-carrying member of the tartan army and have been for many years. I fully understand why he is involved in the campaign, as the local constituency member. If the SFA buys Hampden and becomes the owner, in what way will Hampden benefit and be improved? That is what most people in the tartan army want.

**James Dornan:** That is a good point. I have doubts about the way that the SFA has gone about the issue, but my hope—and, to be honest, my expectation—is that, if the SFA gets Hampden for a song, as it appears will be the case, there will be a commitment from the SFA and others to redevelop it over time and to work with appropriate bodies to ensure that transport to and from the stadium is better than it is currently. I cannot say that I have the problems with transport that many supporters claim, as I can walk to it from my house, so it is not a major issue for me.

My constituency incorporates, among other areas, Cathcart, Mount Florida, Battlefield, Langside and Newlands, all of which would feel the economic impact if the changes were made. It is about more than that, however. Hampden is part of the nation's psyche and has been an integral part of day-to-day life for Scotland since its construction in 1903. It is more than a stadium. Some call Old Trafford the theatre of dreams but, for us, Hampden is the platform of hope or, for many football fans, deepest despair. The stadium is the fulcrum of the history of Scottish football.

My first memory of Hampden is of Celtic playing Dunfermline in the 1961 Scottish cup final first leg, which ended nothing each. Celtic then got beat in the replay—[*Interruption.*] I hope that the minister is not gloating—I would be very upset if she was. [*Laughter.*] I missed that game, because I had homework to do. However, in the 1965 cup final, we got our revenge and beat Dunfermline 3-2, with Billy McNeill scoring a famous goal. I was there for Scotland v Czechoslovakia, when Tommy Hutchison scored with a magnificent header to put us through to the world cup for the first time in 16 years, and for Celtic v Leeds, when there were 130,000 in the ground to see that magnificent 2-1 victory for Celtic to get us into the final of the European cup again.

Hampden is the world's oldest continuously used international ground and it became the template for all modern stadia that followed. As I said, there have been three Hampdens, and it has settled in its current incarnation. At its peak, it could hold 185,000 people. The structure marks the epicentre of the footballing earthquake that, according to football historian Ged O'Brien, made Scotland the founder of world football.

The history is fascinating. Many people say that football was created by our neighbours down south. There is no doubt at all that the oldest football association is the English FA, which was established in 1863. However, it appears that the first club to play football was called, aptly, the Football Club, and it had its first games in Dalry park. The first known football club in the world was indeed from Scotland. Members may also be surprised to hear that the first football act was enacted in the Scottish Parliament, if not in this building. I am looking round to see whether Stewart Stevenson is here but, in 1424—those two statements are not in any way connected—James I passed a law prohibiting football or, as it was put in old Scots,

“playing at the fut ball”.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** It is absolutely fascinating to look backwards at the history but, looking forward, some people feel that to have three major stadiums is just too much and a luxury that we cannot afford. How does the member respond to that?

**James Dornan:** I would say that the stadiums have not suddenly appeared out of the blue. We have had three major stadiums in Glasgow for longer than my life, and my life has been quite long so far. I really do not see that as an issue; I see it as something that people who are trying to get Hampden to close or to get the SFA to move are hanging their hat on.

In the summer of 1867, a group of men from the local Young Men’s Christian Association were playing what they called football, and they turned out to be Queen’s Park Football Club. They were passing the ball about on an open park with bundles of old clothes for the goals. One hundred years later, kids like me were doing exactly the same thing while 11 men who came from within 30 miles of Hampden and, to be fair, Parkhead, won the European cup in Lisbon.

The irony is that the Queen’s Park team are so proud of what they have achieved that they hardly talk about it—it is just part of their DNA. They believe that anyone could have come up with it. A quizmaster once said that it’s only easy if you know the answer, and Queen’s Park knew. They simply thought, “Why wouldn’t you pass around an opposition, use tactics, have half time or play 11-a-side?” Queen’s Park, run from Hampden, dominated the early game until the rest of the world copied and caught up. They were aptly called the Scotch professors, and they are the founders of the beautiful game that is currently enjoyed the world over.

On 30 November 1872, which is a date—30 November, not 1872—that will ring a bell for many members, the world’s first international football

match, between Scotland and England, was played. Queen’s Park played on behalf of Scotland. Coincidentally, the date marks a centenary celebration for another Glasgow club—one of the other two that have a stadium in Glasgow—as Rangers beat Bayern Munich in Barcelona 100 years later.

Football is about histories and personal memories. Hampden is a place where I have seen players the likes of which the world had never seen before. Maradona, Pelé, Zidane, Law, Cooper, Dalglish and Larsson are only some of the greats whom I have witnessed in my lifetime. There is hardly a family in Scotland that will not have some sort of memory of a game played in that wonderful stadium: families huddled around the television, the country’s eyes fixed on our national landmark; teams lining up as Scottish cups were won or lost; the national side seconds from making it to the world cup; the tartan army gathering in the stadium in 1978 to see off the opposition; and Ally’s army, with the folks at home filling the atmosphere from Hampden to every living room the length and breadth of this country. That is why I am proud to be the voice of the keep Hampden roaring campaign in the chamber today, and that is why we must keep Scottish football at its national home, which is Hampden.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. We are really pushed for time, so I have to insist that members do not go beyond four minutes.

12:56

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** First, I congratulate my colleague James Dornan on bringing the debate to the chamber.

For many, including me, Hampden park is not just the home of Scottish football but a shrine, and the scene of many fond memories of incredible club and international games, world-class athletics and iconic music performances. Looking back, I fondly remember watching umpteen Scottish cup finals, from Hearts v Rangers in 1976, when I was a toddler, to Celtic v Motherwell in 2013, missing out only on the old firm games in between. I enjoyed some incredible matches, such as Motherwell beating Dundee United in 1991, Gretna’s loss to Hearts on penalties in 2006 and, of course, my own team, St Mirren, defeating UEFA cup finalists and perennial cup final bridesmaids Dundee United in 1987. I even remember, back in the mists of time, watching a league cup match between John Mason’s Clyde and Queen’s Park.

Who can forget international matches such as Scotland v England back in 1978, just before the world cup in Argentina? Scotland attacked

relentlessly for 90 minutes against a catenaccio-minded England team, who—as I recall—crossed the halfway line only once and scored. It was an absolute scandal. Who can forget Scotland qualifying for the 1990 world cup by beating France 2-0? That was a fabulous night.

Regardless of who wins, there is no denying the electrifying atmosphere that exists at Hampden, which continued even after the old coup became all seated. Hampden not only holds special importance for Scottish football fans, but has attracted supporters from around the world as the host of three European cup finals, two cup-winners cup finals and a UEFA cup final.

Hampden park is not just a world-class stadium, but a record-breaking one. On consecutive Saturdays in 1937, Hampden established two records that remain unsurpassed. On 17 April 1937, the first all-ticket Scotland match attracted 149,415 fans—including, I am told, a youngish Bruce Crawford—who witnessed Scotland skelp England 3-1. That is a British record for any match. A week later, in the Scottish cup final, a crowd of 146,433—a European record for a club match—were crammed in to watch Celtic beat Aberdeen 2-1, while 20,000 supporters were locked outside.

Another record was set at the 1960 European cup final, in which Los Blancos win their fifth European cup in a row, beating Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3. That is the highest attendance at a European cup final. Ten years later, as James Dornan mentioned, 136,505 people saw Celtic beat Leeds 2-1—that is a record for a European cup semi-final crowd.

Over the years, renowned musicians have chosen Hampden as a stop on their world tours, including Tina Turner, Bon Jovi, George Michael, the Eagles, Bruce Springsteen, AC/DC and Beyoncé. Rumour has it that Jackie Baillie even saw Robbie Williams there, albeit that she was a guest of BT.

To lose Hampden is unthinkable, because it is a totem that benefits Glasgow's economy and standing. It would mean the loss of an iconic building, which was envied as the largest in the world when the present site opened in 1903.

Of course there has been legitimate criticism of Hampden's facilities. Upgrades could be made to enhance the safety and enjoyment of fans. However, I believe that much of the criticism made of our national stadium is unjustified.

On alternatives to renewing the SFA's lease, the only realistic options would be to use Murrayfield, the home of Scottish rugby, Ibrox or Celtic park. However, neither of the latter two options would be reasonable as they would require the SFA to pay Rangers or Celtic rent and thus offer a financial

advantage to the two wealthiest clubs in Scotland, the recent history of Rangers notwithstanding. The team housed at the stadium in question would know that a final or a semi-final would be likely to be played at their ground, which would offer them an on-field advantage. The same issue does not arise at Hampden. Queen's Park is an amateur team that gains no sporting advantage from its income on the lease.

A sacrilegious move to Murrayfield would make travelling more difficult for fans living on the west coast, such as in my constituency of Cunninghame North, and would involve money that was previously invested in football going to rugby. That means that the fan ticket price would no longer trickle down to grass-roots football or into funding Queen's Park, Scotland's oldest club and former footballing giant of the Victorian era, which might not survive.

For 115 years, Hampden has been at the heart of the Scottish game and the scene of good days and bad days for Scottish football. There have been great games and big names, historic cup success and some magnificent finals. Hampden park is a stadium to be proud of and its historic legacy must continue.

13:01

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate James Dornan on securing time in the chamber for this debate. I really welcome the opportunity to contribute.

As we have heard, everyone has their own personal experience of Hampden park, and I am no exception. I have seen many Scotland matches and cup finals there. I have seen Olympic football matches there. I took my youngest to her first football match there. I even played volleyball on an inflatable volleyball court on the hallowed turf prior to the Scottish cup final in the late 1980s as an apparent pre-match entertainment—a phrase that I never thought I would say out loud.

I have been to many concerts there, dating back to the late 80s when I saw the Rolling Stones from the terraces—standing next to Billy Connolly, no less. I also saw AC/DC a couple of times and Oasis, U2, Bon Jovi and Nickelback, who, incidentally, I am going to see tonight—I have a spare ticket if Mr Dornan fancies it.

I was there at every night of the athletics during the Commonwealth games to witness the Hampden Commonwealth roar. I introduced my youngest and middle daughters to Usain Bolt in Hampden park in Glasgow, no less.

The list of special moments in Mr Dornan's motion conjures up many memories and emotions. I especially remember Zinedine Zidane's winning

goal in the champion's league final—left foot, on the volley from the 18-yard box, top corner. Surely no one is allowed to be that good. To me, it is tantamount to cheating.

Sport and music do that to us. It is not just about watching; it is about that well of shared emotion in a crowd. It is about the feeling that we get when we witness something incredible live, shared with 40,000-plus others. Every time we see it, or remember it, those emotions rush back to greet us all over again.

I have a great deal of sympathy with Mr Dornan's motion. I find myself torn, to a certain extent, because I remember the debate prior to the refurbishment of Hampden park back in the day when the alternative was to build a new multipurpose stadium out at Strathclyde park. From a practical perspective, that made a bit of sense. The transport network meant that access would be easier, given the motorways nearby. There was plenty of space for car parking. A stadium that could be used daily would be a much better use of public funds. The facilities would be built to modern standards. The case made absolute sense, but, in the end, a new stadium elsewhere would not be Hampden park.

So, the old stadium was refurbished and became what we see today. Therein lies the dilemma. Sport is not just about practicalities. As we have heard today, deep-seated accompanying passion bubbles away underneath it.

Should we look at the financial implications of sharing facilities with rugby at Murrayfield, which is a fantastic stadium? I love going there to see rugby internationals. Hearts played there for a while and it worked. However, I have to say that Murrayfield is not in Glasgow—and I am a west coastie so I have to be able to say that. Do we move from a built-up and congested area, which, if we were starting from scratch, we would never consider for an international stadium? Do we once again back nostalgia, history and emotion? Perhaps the younger generation would develop their own nostalgia no matter where the games were played. To be honest, I do not know.

It is a question of head versus heart. I will watch this story develop and maybe my opinion will take shape. I have to say that when it comes to sport, I would always follow my heart.

13:04

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** I congratulate my colleague James Dornan on bringing Hampden, the home of Scottish football, to the attention of the Parliament. Like other members, I want to look back at some key moments in Hampden's history that I had some

involvement with and to see whether we can look forward to what a future Hampden might look like.

My first recollection of going to Hampden was for the 1970 Scotland v England international, along with my brother Danny, to see Scotland and to see our own Kilmarnock player, Billy Dickson, playing at left back, alongside great players such as Jinky Johnstone and John Greig for Scotland, and Gordon Banks and Bobby Moore for England. There was an incredible crowd of 137,000, which is nearly three times the current Hampden capacity, all of whom were basically in the same space as today. I can remember us being squashed in like sardines, even though we were down at the front with our flask and our sandwiches. A clear penalty claim not given to Scotland and a nil-nil result meant that the honours were shared.

Next up, in 1976, we had Saint-Étienne v Bayern Munich in the European cup final, with Glasgow becoming European for the days up to and after the game and taking full advantage of the more liberal continental licensing laws that were denied to us Scots at that time. "Allez les verts," was the cry around Hampden as the Scottish supporters got behind the underdogs. Alas, their hopes were dashed by the wonderful Gerd Müller, who scored the only goal for Bayern. However, I have retained a fondness for Saint-Étienne to this day and I know that Saint-Étienne bought the big square Hampden goalposts that denied them twice that day.

Lastly in my reminiscences, there is the 2012 Scottish league cup final between Kilmarnock and Celtic. A late Killie winner caused near hysteria and joy at the Killie end, only for all of us to be hammered just moments later by the sad news that Kilmarnock star Liam Kelly's dad had suffered a heart attack and later died after witnessing his son's finest achievement.

Does all this stuff matter? I think that it does. History and tradition are a crucial part of defining who we are as a football nation. We are collectively the sum of our parts and our past, and we can sense that the Hampden tradition is very much alive when we go there to see the national team. The excitement of a Scottish cup final is still as intense as it always has been, and that, in my view, is also due to the sheer magic of Hampden on a cup final day.

Is there a better stadium than Hampden for Scottish internationals and cup finals? I do not think so, but we should not hold back from thinking about what more we could do to the stadium to make it one of the best in the world and fit for the 21st century. We certainly need better transport links for the fans, as James Dornan mentioned. Some stadiums have transport services that come right inside or alongside their grounds and many

have leisure and retail facilities embedded within the stadium complex. Some have magnificent overhead canopies, which make the atmosphere even more electric, so why not Hampden?

Hampden is still and always will be the one true home of the tartan army. Long may it continue into this century and beyond. Again, I congratulate James Dornan on supporting Hampden and bringing the issue to the attention of the Parliament.

13:08

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** I congratulate James Dornan on securing this important debate, and I thank the *Evening Times* for its campaign and all those who have supported it and have argued the case.

I should start by declaring a personal interest. Given that my husband is Councillor Archie Graham, who represents the area in which Hampden is sited, and that he has been vocal in his support for maintaining Hampden as the centre of Scottish football, I am not sure whether I would be welcomed home if I did not join with others in highlighting the importance of keeping the Hampden roar.

The case against Hampden, as far as I understand it, focuses on the quality of the stadium itself for spectators. I have had the privilege of watching many an exhilarating game in a fantastic atmosphere over the years, so I am not sure whether I agree with the naysayers. Indeed, in the first old firm final that I attended, in 1989, Joe Miller scored and I discovered that it was possible to traverse 100m of the terracing without my feet touching the ground. That resulted in my being probably the only person in the ground who hoped that there would not be another goal scored. However, I have never forgotten the excitement of that day.

I recognise that there are concerns, but I do not believe that those concerns are grounds for the massive upheaval that has been suggested; they are eminently fixable and I trust that the dialogue between the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and the SFA can easily reach a resolution to those concerns. In contrast, the case for staying at Hampden is overwhelming, in my view, on historical, emotional and economic grounds. I give a particular shout out to Queen's Park Football Club, which is unique in Scotland's footballing history.

Hampden represents not just a football ground. It is the home of Scottish football, and a place of past footballing glory. The Scottish Football Museum, which is based there, is wonderful testimony to that. It is a football ground into which

national funding and national pride have been invested and those are significant.

Hampden is also of huge financial significance to the local area and to the broader Glasgow and Scottish economy. It is estimated that, in 2007, the UEFA cup final brought £15 million into the city. The Olympic matches in 2012, which have been referred to, have been assessed as bringing in £7 million. I cannot overstate the impact of Hampden's existence on the local retail, licensing and hospitality businesses. It also has an impact on local jobs—Hampden employs a lot of people, many of whom are local and are doing a good job there.

Hampden attracts football, as we have heard, concerts and conferences. It is also an important part of Glasgow's success as one of the top sporting venues in the world. We must not underestimate the importance of Hampden and sport to the broader tourism economy of Glasgow and the west of Scotland.

In my view, there is sentiment, there is history, and there is emotion. There is also, however, a direct impact on Glasgow. The SFA cannot make a short-term decision on what it perceives to be its narrow interests now, given the national interest and investment. The local community, Glasgow and Scotland deserve better than that. I am sure that we can make the case for the Hampden roar to continue, because it stirs our emotions but also creates economic opportunity for our city.

13:12

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** I thank James Dornan for bringing this debate to the chamber. As a football fan, I believe that this is an important debate. There are many opinions in the debate on our national stadium. For me, the most important thing is that our national sport should be played in our national stadium.

I admit that my opinions on the issue are purely emotional. Is Hampden the best stadium in Scotland? It is probably not. Do the area and the community struggle during a full house? It can be challenging. However, what a day out people get when they are there. All those points miss the crucial point that Hampden is the home of Scottish football, and the home of Queen's Park, which was a giant in the pre-professional early days of football and in effect invented what we now know as the modern passing game.

Hampden is the place where I watched a young Diego Maradona in 1979. It is where I watched St Mirren win the Scottish cup in 1987, and where I watched them win the Scottish league cup in 2013 as a not-so-young man. It is where every young football player dreams of playing. Most important, it is where our national team plays.

I love the place. Scotland games for me and Stacey are a day out when we go to the south side of Glasgow and enjoy the full day out. From that perspective, I am lucky that my wife loves football. Members cannot say that romance is dead—she enjoys it herself. As Johann Lamont said, we help the local economy on match days by going out there and spending the day out.

Hampden is also where I watched my dad's previous apprentice armature winder, Archie Gemmill, from Glenburn in Paisley, play. Everyone will remember Archie for his fantastic goal in the 1978 world cup—it is about the only part of 1978 that we all want to remember, right enough. It was fantastic.

Queen's Park, as James Dornan said, created the beautiful game and it is important that we remember that Hampden is home to Queen's Park, too. Such heritage cannot be given up. I know what moving from a spiritual home is like for a football team. St Mirren left Love Street stadium in 2009 for a new home that was fit for the 21st century. It was shiny and new, but it lacked the history, the passion for the place and the atmosphere. Only now, after a change of ownership and a lot of hard work from the younger fans, have those issues been addressed. The young men and women who have been involved in a lot of that call themselves the north bank aggro—not in an aggressive way; that is just what they call themselves. Many of them have never even been in the historic north bank in Paisley. That demonstrates why history and football are so important for everyone.

Hampden is our national game's home. We need to look at ways of making this magnificent old stadium better and we need to make it easier for people to travel to and from the stadium. We must not give up on the history that the stadium has. We cannot lose that passion. That grand old stadium is part of us and part of our nation's history, and we must all ensure that it is part of Scotland's future.

13:15

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I thank James Dornan for securing this debate on saving the Hampden roar. James Dornan's debates always force me to talk about football, so here we go again.

The SFA has a decision to make about where the national stadium will be after 2020. As a keen football fan and supporter of the newly crowned Scottish Professional Football League champions, I have fond memories of Hampden and its roar—but I am talking about the Hampden that gave birth to the wall of noise before it was tamed by the stadium's refurbishment, back in the 1990s.

As I sat down to write this speech, I took time to reflect on my own memorable moments of high drama in Mount Florida over the years. My first visit was as an 11-year-old, when I was taken to the 1975 cup final between Celtic and Airdrieonians—Billy McNeill's last game. I have the programme here. Not only was there a sense of history, but the atmosphere—to me anyway, as a boy—was incredible.

Ten years after that, I was at the Scotland-England match, which Scotland won 1-0—I have that programme here, too. In general, I do not have a great memory for goals or goalscorers, but I well remember Richard Gough soaring majestically to head past a static Peter Shilton. Hampden did indeed roar. I watched highlights of the game at the weekend and the noise—even through my computer—was incredible. We were in the stand for that one—my dad was not one for the terracing—but when I moved to Glasgow as an adult I usually opted for the standing option, even if it meant getting soaked sometimes. Walking down Aitkenhead Road on match day back then, I would feel the hairs on the back of my neck stand up, as the noise rolled down off the old terracing, in anticipation of the duel ahead.

Sadly, times have changed and, in my view, not for the better. The new stadium is soulless. Fans are miles away from the action. The wall of noise is gone. Fans who are at the back would be better off watching the match on the telly at home. Sure, the stadium has had its moments. Brian Whittle mentioned the Zinedine Zidane goal, and we had Leigh Griffiths's two stunning free kicks against England last summer.

Of course, there was also the moment when I took to the pitch in a five-a-side competition, sharing the pitch with one of my heroes, Danny McGrain. That was one of the finest moments.

However, I do not often get excited about going to games at Hampden. The SFA has a tough decision to make and it looks as though it is down to two choices: Hampden or Murrayfield.

**Johann Lamont:** It is being so cheery that keeps you going. [*Laughter.*] Does not the fact that a massive amount of public money has gone into Hampden weigh heavily with you in the context of a decision to move?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind members to speak through the chair, please.

**Graham Simpson:** I had not been to Murrayfield until Celtic played a couple of European games there. I was super-impressed. I remember coming out of the stadium and thinking, "This should be the national stadium." I realise that I am out of step with everyone else in the debate—

**George Adam:** Nothing unusual there. [Laughter.]

**Graham Simpson:** Yes.

The Scottish Rugby Union today made a pitch for football to move to Murrayfield. If we put aside any anti-rugby bias, we can surely see that having the national stadium in the capital makes some sense.

It is probably best that I sit down at this point. [Interruption.] I hope that the SFA gets this right. The Hampden roar is a bit of a distant memory—unfortunately. We will see what happens.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are a brave man, Mr Simpson.

13:19

**Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** Apart from Graham Simpson's contribution, we have heard overwhelming support today for keeping the home of Scottish football at Hampden. I, too, support that, but in broader society opinion is split. My office manager, Allan Stubbs, said that in making this speech today, I had to mention him. We have had very robust conversations in the office about the issue—especially when we heard about the motion that had been lodged by James Dornan, whom I thank for bringing this important issue to the chamber.

I see the issue as one of history and heritage, as others have mentioned. If we lose the idea of the home of Scottish football being at Hampden, we will lose part of our national identity in the game. Whatever people's thoughts might have been on the rights and wrongs of the Rangers situation, something was lost from the game when the club moved down the divisions. Losing Hampden as the national stadium could be very bad for the game overall. Would it ever be suggested that this Parliament should be moved from here to another city in the country, or that Wembley stadium should be moved to Birmingham or Newcastle? There would be a big uproar if that were to happen.

George Adam spoke about the situation at St Mirren Football Club, which has turned itself around. There is no love lost between me and Airdrieonians Football Club, as I am an Albion Rovers fan. I come from the bit of Coatbridge that joins on to Airdie. Everybody knew that, on match days, Airdie was a very busy place. The old Broomfield stadium was always booming, as anybody who supports clubs and who went to see them play there would know. Since the club has moved to its new stadium, it has not managed to get that back.

I agree with what other members have said, in that we do not need to get rid of the idea of

Hampden park being the home of Scottish football. Bruce Crawford, Johann Lamont and others have mentioned that the approach should be about fixing the stadium's problems, which seem to be mainly about transport; surely we could fix those problems by working with the council and the SFA. There is also scope for refurbishment inside the stadium.

I believe in accessibility for everybody, whether they are players or supporters. We are examining that in the cross-party group on the future of football in Scotland. I thank the SFA for the great work that it is doing with that group, and also the group's members who have come to the chamber today.

I must not forget Queen's Park, which others have mentioned and which is one of our oldest clubs. Okay—I probably should forget it for now, since it beat my own team, Albion Rovers, last week. On a more serious note, I wish Queen's Park well for the future. It needs to be taken into account in this debate, because a massive part of our heritage would be lost if Queen's Park were to go. I also take this opportunity to say that my team was unlucky. We spent only one day—the last day of the season—at the bottom of the table, and then we went down.

A lot of exciting things are in the pipeline. As members know, Hampden will host games at the European championships in 2020. I look forward to those games very much, and hope that the Scotland team will be there and that I will be able to go and support it. Even if we are not there, as others have said, the fact that the stadium will host those games anyway will be a brilliant thing for the city and our country as a whole.

13:23

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** I was not going to speak in the debate, but I have been tempted into it. I congratulate James Dornan on securing this important debate on the motion on the future of Hampden.

Like all the other members who have spoken, I have great memories of Hampden. I first attended there at a Scottish cup semi-final in April 1972, when Celtic played Kilmarnock. I remember the excitement of going to the ground and experiencing the packed crowd and the atmosphere. I also remember the game in September 1973 that James Dornan recalled, at which Scotland qualified for the Munich world cup tournament. What a fantastic occasion that was.

As far as the future is concerned, if the choice that is on the table is between Hampden and Murrayfield, there is only one winner: it should be Hampden. Like Graham Simpson, I attended games back in 2014, when I was impressed with



Murrayfield as a stadium but thought on both occasions that it struggled as regards transport and dealing with the volume of people who had come through from Glasgow. Therefore, there are potential transport issues with having the national stadium at Murrayfield, as well as the clear emotional attachment to Glasgow.

However, I think there are serious issues to be addressed in relation to Hampden. I do not think that the current set-up there is fit for purpose as a proper, modern national stadium. If we look at aerial shots of Hampden now and compare them with shots from the 1960 European cup final between Real Madrid and Eintracht Frankfurt, we can see that a lot of the infrastructure is the same. The façade outside is very similar and a lot of the terracing that was there in 1960 remains, just with seats built on top.

I remember that, in the 1970s, when I used to go to Hampden as a kid, we would get up to the top of the east terrace. It was really exciting and almost part of the occasion that the teams on the pitch seemed so far away. The only player we could recognise was Jimmy Johnstone, because of his blazing red hair. However, that is no longer good enough, if we want to attract people to a modern stadium.

There is also a practical point to be made. If we want to get back especially to great Scotland world cup occasions, we need a stadium where everyone is much closer to the park. The problem at Hampden is that there is an athletics track round the edge, and the seats—especially at the front—are very low. People who sit there just see a lot of legs running about in front of them, and people at the back are too far away. I think there are real issues for the SFA in remodelling Hampden and making sure that we have a national stadium that is fit for purpose.

13:26

**The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell):** I, too, congratulate James Dornan on securing the debate. I know that, both as a football fan and as the constituency MSP, he cares passionately about the topic.

Many of the contributions that we have heard have highlighted Hampden's proud history and the unique role that our national stadium has played in Scottish, and indeed world, football. Countless incredible moments at Hampden are now woven into the fabric of our game—cup finals, internationals, goals and moments of drama, excitement, joy and—as many members have outlined—despair.

There have also been memorable occasions that have resonated beyond our shores, many of which are set out in James Dornan's motion. In

2002, for example, Hampden witnessed one of the greatest cup final goals when Zinedine Zidane scored with an unforgettable volley to win the champions league for Real Madrid. Brian Whittle spoke about that.

In 2020, Hampden will host its first international tournament fixtures for the UEFA European championships. Of course, all guests will receive a warm Scottish welcome, but the celebrated Hampden roar will be all the louder if Scotland can be there at the men's team's first major finals since 1998. Despite some of the disagreements that we have had this afternoon, I am sure that that is something that we all agree on.

The debate has reinforced the fact that Hampden—the home of Queen's Park Football Club—holds a unique place in football, and I join members in celebrating its history. The stadium also played a crucial role in the success of the 2014 Commonwealth games—which meant that it unfortunately missed out on the finest Scottish cup final, in which St Johnstone, of course, beat Dundee United. Hampden has also hosted concerts by some of the biggest names in music. I think that Kenny Gibson revealed that he is a bit of a Beyoncé fan. I am not sure whether he meant to do that.

However, as James Dornan and other members highlighted, discussions about the future of Hampden are now under way. The SFA lease on the stadium will come to an end in 2020 after the European championships, and the association has embarked on a process to consider where its Scottish cup and men's internationals should be played. The SPFL will also consider where its showpiece league cup fixtures should be held.

Of the options that were initially considered, a peripatetic solution involving Celtic park or Ibrox and Murrayfield was discounted, leaving two remaining anchor tenant options, those being Hampden and Murrayfield. Two separate SFA workstreams are now being considered in detail, exploring the pros and cons of each, and we expect the SFA board to make a decision in principle later this summer.

Although we are here to discuss Hampden, I would also like to mention Murrayfield briefly, because it, too, is an iconic stadium. It is a world-class venue that has also hosted some of the most memorable moments of Scottish sporting history. It has successfully hosted football matches, including Hearts fixtures earlier this season. I know that the SRU has put forward a strong case for Murrayfield, which the SFA is now actively considering.

We have been actively engaged in the issue with a range of stakeholders for about 18 months. However, at the outset, we emphasised to the

SFA and Queen's Park that our preference is for the decision to be consensual—one that is made and owned by football, and with vision and ambition at its heart. We fully appreciate the decision's significance to members—particularly James Dornan and others—and football fans. The issue is of huge symbolic importance to the nation. We recognise the enormous challenges to the SFA in reaching a decision on such an emotive and high-profile issue.

Of course, a wide range of views have been expressed today—those of Graham Simpson and those of everybody else. [*Laughter.*] However, we need to acknowledge that fans and the football family will hold a range of views, some of which might differ from those that we have heard this afternoon. Hampden is a great venue, but there remain concerns, as others have outlined and acknowledged, about the fan experience, particularly those who sit in the stands behind the goals, and about transport difficulties. Members have underlined those concerns.

We know that the SFA is taking a robust and thorough approach to the decision, and is carefully navigating through all the views that have been expressed. The SFA will continue to have our full support as it works through the complex process that will allow it to make a final decision, based on the best evidence that is available, including the financial dimension.

It is also important to emphasise, again, the importance of the issue to Queen's Park—as James Dornan, Kenny Gibson, Fulton MacGregor and others have expressed—because it cannot be overstated. The Scottish Government recognises the pioneering role that Queen's Park has played in the development of the modern game and the unique position that it holds as the sole amateur club in the professional leagues. Queen's Park's contribution to Scottish football alone is enormous—with former players including Sir Alex Ferguson and Andy Robertson, who played in a champions league semi-final for Liverpool last night. The future of Hampden is inextricably linked with the future of Queen's Park. The stadium holds a special place in the heart of the club. We know how important the decision is to the president, the board and everyone at Queen's Park, including the fans. The club has agreed in principle to sell the stadium to the SFA. I know that that is a huge step, which was not taken lightly, given how important the stadium is to the club.

I have set out the SFA process for reaching this crucial decision. We have actively engaged throughout and will continue to do so. We recognise how important the decision is for the SFA, Queen's Park, Glasgow, football fans, the football family and, indeed, the whole country. Football is our national game and is of enormous

importance to all of us—our constituents and our communities.

The issue is difficult and I am aware—as all members are—that Scottish football faces many challenges, on and off the park. However, it is important to recognise the breadth and depth of the excellent work that is taking place in football, much of which is going unrecognised. Just last week, Stuart McMillan and the Parliament hosted a reception to celebrate the work of the SFA and our cashback for communities programme in inspiring young people and helping them to fulfil their potential. The SPFL Trust and the trusts and foundations that are associated with our clubs deliver incredible activity, which complements the work that is undertaken below the SPFL by clubs of all sizes in all parts of the country, which do so much good in their communities.

It is also important to recognise that the number of women and girls who play and watch football is growing, and that the SFA is creating the world's first affiliated national association for para-football, which will ensure that people of all abilities can fulfil their potential.

Members mentioned the fantastic work of the Scottish football museum, which is based at Hampden. We recently worked with the museum on the excellent "Football Memories" dementia project, which was celebrated recently in the Parliament with the acknowledgment of the publication of the book, "Mind the Time", which is an anthology of football poetry edited by Jim Mackintosh, who is the poet in residence at St Johnstone. The book is a celebration of fans and what football means to people and communities across the country. However, I know that Willie Coffey will have been happy that we sang, "Paper Roses", which is of particular relevance to Kilmarnock.

**Willie Coffey:** Hear, hear.

**Aileen Campbell:** Although today's debate focuses on the future of Hampden, it gives us the chance to celebrate and reflect on all that is good in football. It also gives us the chance to ensure that when we look to the future, we do so with ambition and vision. We will continue to keep members updated as the SFA continues to examine the vexed issue of Hampden's future.

I again thank James Dornan for bringing this important issue for debate this afternoon.

13:34

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Digital Connectivity

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** Good afternoon. The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-12010, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on Scotland's digital connectivity.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing):** I am pleased to open this debate on Scotland's digital connectivity. I welcome the broad consensus across the Parliament in support of high-quality digital connectivity for all of Scotland. We all want a Scotland that prepares our children to join a digitally skilled workforce, delivers digitally innovative public services to all our communities and delivers inclusive economic growth, with businesses in our rural and urban communities flourishing. We want a Scotland that ensures that we are fully digitally connected.

That is vital to our economic prosperity as a country, and it will also result in significant social and environmental benefits. Increased access to fast and reliable broadband and mobile services enables greater flexibility in the way that we work. By enabling people to work from home, for example, we reduce the pressure on our transport routes, which actively helps us to achieve our world-leading carbon reduction plans.

Improved connectivity in our rural areas will enable us not only to boost tourism but to provide a platform for businesses to transform the way that they work. Better digital connection means more efficient and effective health provision in our rural and island communities. It will also support the work of emergency services to keep people safe in the most remote locations. For staff working in sectors such as forestry and aquaculture in remote areas, there are obvious health and safety benefits.

Greater connectivity also opens up and improves employment opportunities for those with caring commitments. Businesses in the hospitality sector can market themselves far more effectively with good digital connectivity and provide visitors with the same levels of connectivity that they have at home and increasingly take for granted. Tourist attractions can embrace the latest technology by using augmented reality to transform the visitor experience.

It is important to acknowledge that Scotland traditionally lagged behind the rest of the United Kingdom in broadband coverage. Overcoming the challenge of our geography and rurality required that we take a different approach. That is what the

digital Scotland superfast broadband programme has delivered. I thank all the partners in the DSSB, who have worked with us to transform the availability of broadband throughout the country and bridge that gap.

As the tables that were published this week in an answer to a parliamentary question from Gillian Martin show, commercial investment alone would have delivered fibre broadband coverage to just 66 per cent of premises, largely in urban Scotland. Had that been the case, with no DSSB, coverage in the Highlands and Islands would have been just 21 per cent and there would have been no planned commercial coverage at all in Orkney, Shetland or the Western Isles.

The good news is that around 890,000 additional premises now have access to fibre broadband through the digital Scotland roll-out. Our internal data, as well as that of thinkbroadband—the same independent analysts that the UK Government uses—shows that, by the end of last year, we had exceeded our target of 95 per cent fibre broadband coverage across Scotland.

In fact, the vast majority of people in Scotland can now access superfast broadband at 30 megabits per second or above. This week, Ofcom released new data taken from January this year that showed that, since its previous report, superfast broadband coverage in Scotland had increased by 4 percentage points to 91 per cent and halved the gap between Scotland and the overall UK total from 4 per cent to 2 per cent. That was the single largest increase of any nation in the UK.

On top of that, thinkbroadband's data, which purports to give a more up-to-date view of coverage, shows that superfast coverage in Scotland is now above 93 per cent, which is within two percentage points of the overall UK total. That gap, which was 10 per cent in 2014 and around 19 per cent in 2012, has reduced to just 2 percentage points. As the Labour amendment says, that gap has been significantly reduced, according to the independent, impartial analysts that are used by us and by our colleagues in the UK Government. No matter what source is referenced, it is simply a matter of fact that Scotland has caught up dramatically with the rest of the UK.

Although we have achieved our original 95 per cent target, which was for fibre broadband through DSSB, I recognise that there is more to be done. I will not be satisfied until every home and business has access to superfast broadband at our stipulated level of 30Mbps. I also want to state, as I have said many times before, that for those people who still do not have that, it is small comfort that many others are getting it or have got it. I understand that. I recognise and accept

people's frustration, and I realise that the promise of achieving 100 per cent coverage by the end of 2021 might just add to the frustration of those who do not yet have superfast broadband.

However, it is only our ambition that will remove that frustration. We could have stopped at 95 per cent. We could have decided that the UK Government's broadband universal service obligation, which is set at just 10Mbps, was sufficient for our rural communities, but we did not do so. That is why we have committed an initial £600 million to the first phase of the reaching 100 per cent programme. The announcement of that investment during December's budget was momentous, because there is no other such commitment anywhere else in the UK.

I am determined to ensure that R100 focuses on our hardest-to-reach rural areas—the Liberal Democrat amendment mentions that—leaving coverage gaps in urban areas to be filled by commercial suppliers in the first instance. I put on record that I am greatly encouraged by the emerging plans from the likes of BT, Virgin Media, CityFibre and Vodafone, among others, which suggest that that is indeed the correct approach.

The scale of our investment and our ambition is attracting interest from a wide range of telecoms suppliers across the UK and Europe. We are talking about a huge public investment, and it is vital that we get the right deal for Scotland. Therefore, the procurement will take time, but the dialogue that we are currently undertaking with the various bidders is key to getting the right outcome. Our aim is to have suppliers in place early next year.

Our engagement with local authorities through the DSSB programme has been exemplary. In fact, the model that we have used has been recognised by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as an example of best practice, and we are continuing with that approach. I have already set out our plans at the convention of the Highlands and Islands. Crucially, I have secured the support of all those local authority administrations for the call that we have made to the UK Government to pay its fair share towards the R100 programme. I did the same thing at the meeting of the south of Scotland alliance that was held a few weeks ago, which I attended with the Deputy First Minister.

In addition, this week I announced the setting up of two strategic groups to inform the delivery of the R100 programme. One group will cover the north lot of the programme, and the other will cover the central and south lots. The groups will involve the Scottish Government and key local agencies sharing and exchanging information that will help with the future roll-out of the programme. I plan to

attend the first meeting of the north group on Monday morning.

The Scottish Government understands well the expertise that our councils, as community leaders, bring to the table, for example on road works and planning matters, and we want to utilise that important resource. An opportunity will be provided to discuss with them how our R100 approach complements their plans on digital connectivity.

The R100 programme will differ from the DSSB programme in some key respects. The initial procurement will be split across three regional lots that are designed to maximise competition. That is vital to drive value and innovation.

The initial phase of R100 will extend a future-proofed, accessible fibre network into remote rural areas and provide the essential platform for delivering superfast broadband for all for decades to come and for a variety of technologies. To ensure that that happens, it is a mandated requirement of the procurement to deliver new backhaul in particular rural and island locations across Scotland. We are purposely targeting the funds where they are needed most in rural Scotland.

The initial investment will deliver superfast access to a significant proportion of the premises to be targeted, but we do not expect it to deliver 100 per cent coverage on its own. There will be further phases through which we will ensure that superfast broadband reaches each and every premise in Scotland. We expect that to involve a wide range of superfast technologies, supported by a national voucher scheme that is available to individuals and communities.

All of that activity is reserved to Westminster. As I said earlier, the Scottish Government has had to become active in that in the absence of a coherent UK-wide strategy for rural connectivity. That has meant that the Scottish Government has had to take the lead, given the economic importance of rural connectivity, and that is why we committed £600 million to the initial phase of our R100 programme. The UK Government's contribution to R100 is £21 million, which is just 3 per cent of the total funding.

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** How much did the Scottish Government contribute to phase 1 of the roll-out of broadband? How did that compare with the UK contribution?

**Fergus Ewing:** There were two programmes—one in the Highlands and Islands and one in the rest of Scotland. The total programme cost just over £400 million, and the UK Government contributed £100 million of that. The Scottish public sector, comprising the Scottish Government, local authorities and Highlands and

Islands Enterprise, put in £164 million—I think that that figure is correct, but I will check it later. The UK Government put in a solid amount of money—I made that clear when I gave evidence to the UK Scottish Affairs Committee and explicitly went through those figures—but the public sector contribution across Scotland as a whole was rather greater than that. As I said, I think that the figure was £164 million, but I will ask for that to be checked and corrected if it is out by a couple of million pounds. In addition, I think that there was around £10 million or £11 million from the European Union. Those were the figures.

As that point has been raised, £100 million is perhaps around two thirds of £164 million. However, instead of getting a two thirds contribution, we are getting just 3 per cent for R100. Any fair-minded person could reach only one conclusion: that such a dismal and paltry contribution to R100 is unfair, particularly given—as the UK Government and Matt Hancock accept, I think—that broadband is, like defence and foreign affairs, a reserved matter.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Fergus Ewing:** To contribute just 3 per cent when the UK Government is responsible for that matter of public policy can only be seen as unfair. There is an opportunity today for us to send a reasonable message from across the Parliament to Westminster that we believe that the UK Government should make a fairer contribution. If we speak with one voice, it is entirely within the art of the possible that a reasonable negotiation will result.

I am happy to give way to Jamie Greene if I have time to do so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There is time for interventions in the debate.

**Jamie Greene:** Before we spend the next three hours on the myth that the issue is solely a reserved matter, I say that the cabinet secretary knows fine well that there was an agreement between the Scottish Government and the UK Government that the Scottish Government would deliver the contracts for DSSB. The idea that the matter is entirely reserved and that the Scottish Government is simply intervening of its own accord is absolutely a myth, and we should put that myth to bed now, at the beginning of the debate, before we waste two and a half hours talking about it.

**Fergus Ewing:** It is not a matter of any dubiety that digital telephony and the internet are reserved matters. Indeed, if Mr Greene wants to check schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998, as I have done, he will see that those words are specifically mentioned. Therefore, there is no dubiety.

**Jamie Greene:** Answer the point.

**Fergus Ewing:** I am answering the points, one by one.

Further, Mr Hancock accepted that the matter is reserved when he appeared before the Scottish Affairs Committee earlier this week. Therefore, when the member claims that it is wrong to say that the issue is purely reserved, I am afraid that that is factually wrong.

Mr Greene also referred to the DSSB. I would have preferred it if the UK Government had met all of its responsibilities, but at least it contributed a reasonable amount to the DSSB of £100 million, in comparison to our £164 million. That cannot be said about the current contract, which is vital for rural and island Scotland. Without that investment, there will be no high-speed broadband to the most rural and island communities. We cannot expect commercial providers to invest, because there is simply not a market rationale for doing so. Therefore, public investment must happen, because otherwise there will not be rural connectivity. My argument is simple: this is a reserved matter, and the UK has stumped up before—albeit not for its full responsibilities, but at least for a reasonably substantial amount—but this time, it is putting in a piffling, paltry and stingy 3 per cent. Surely no reasonable person could conclude that that is fair.

I was keen to deal with that issue thoroughly, and I think that I have perhaps gone over my time. I look forward to the debate. I am genuinely interested in trying to maintain a consensus among all parties, particularly given that, as I said to the select committee in London, I would like there to be a UK standing committee on digital connectivity, in which the UK Government and the devolved Administrations play a part towards achieving what I think are shared objectives. Those objectives could not be more important to rural and island Scotland and to their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges that the gap in broadband coverage between Scotland and the rest of the UK has been bridged in recent years; recognises the role played by the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme, including local authority partners, which has now exceeded its 95% fibre broadband coverage target and will continue rolling out throughout 2018 and into 2019; notes the investment of £600 million by the Scottish Government in the Reaching 100% (R100) programme, which seeks to provide access to superfast broadband to all homes and businesses, including in remote, rural and island communities, and calls on the UK Government to increase its funding contribution to R100 from just 3% of the total and ensure that Scotland sees tangible financial, social and environmental benefits from the broadband Universal Service Obligation.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will certainly let members know if they are over time, as you know. There is time in hand, so I can be relatively generous, but do not test it too far.

I call Finlay Carson to speak to and move amendment S5M-12010.2, in the name of Peter Chapman.

14:47

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to open the debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, as the party's spokesman on the digital economy. The importance of digital connectivity should not be underestimated. When people miss out on the benefits of good connectivity, they miss out on the benefits of modern society. The Scottish National Party Government's slow progress in rolling out superfast broadband to those who need it most is resulting in communities, particularly in rural areas, missing out on those benefits.

In this modern digital world, poor connectivity has an impact on the economy, on our health and on our society. With technology continuing to change at a hugely rapid pace, we must ensure that our digital economy has the strong foundation of connectivity that it requires. Digital connectivity is pivotal to the Scottish economy moving forward. We are moving into the world of big data, where connection to national networks is not just desirable, but is essential when it comes not only to the day-to-day operations of our businesses but to the everyday lives of everybody living in Scotland.

**Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** Will Finlay Carson confirm for the record that broadband is a reserved matter? Does he believe that it is appropriate that the UK Government is contributing only 3 per cent of the total investment in the reaching 100 per cent programme?

**Finlay Carson:** I will cover those topics later in my speech. However, I point out right now that Scotland has already benefited from nearly 2.5 times more funding per head for superfast broadband than England has.

Fergus Ewing's SNP Government has failed to prioritise and roll out broadband across parts of Scotland where there is no or poor connectivity. That has serious implications for industry, home workers and members of rural communities, who rely on connection to the internet for personal and professional use, and it is potentially impacting negatively on the economic sustainability of rural Scotland. The closure of local bank branches also has a disproportionately detrimental effect on rural residents, who are now compelled to rely on

computers and mobile phone apps for which a strong broadband signal is necessary.

Digital connectivity also has implications for the health of the general public and the availability of vital health services in rural areas. In my constituency, as a result of inadequate broadband provision, the Kirkcudbright medical practice has had to have medical records physically carried back and forth between practices because staff cannot access them online.

Fergus Ewing often stands in the chamber and crows about the 95 per cent of people who have broadband access, but what about the have-nots? The latest Ofcom figures show that progress is worryingly slow in areas with the poorest broadband availability. It is clear that the SNP Government has widened the digital divide through its inability, or lack of desire, to accelerate roll-out of broadband where it is needed most. In doing so, it has widened the social, economic and democratic deficits between rural and central-belt Scotland.

**Fergus Ewing:** Is Finlay Carson aware that, thanks to investment from the digital Scotland superfast broadband programme, coverage in his area, Dumfries and Galloway, has increased by 62 per cent? In 2014, fibre coverage stood at only 20.4 per cent, according to thinkbroadband, but by the end of the contract that was delivered in Scotland by the Scottish Government, along with the UK Government funding that I mentioned, it had gone up to 82 per cent. How can he claim that we have somehow completely failed when his constituency has so manifestly benefited?

**Finlay Carson:** The cabinet secretary fails to recognise that I welcome the improvements—I am simply saying that they have not been quick enough in the places where they are needed most. I will move on to that later in my speech.

The motion that is before us today is disingenuous, because it is clear that Scotland still lags behind the rest of the UK. Indeed, Fergus Ewing admitted in committee that although the SNP Government had reached its 95 per cent fibre connection target—which I welcome—that in itself does not necessarily enable superfast speeds.

This Government alone has decided where and when to spend money that has come forward. However, the results stand in stark contrast to those in England and Wales, where the digital divide is smaller and better progress has been made. The Scottish Government has failed to maximise the funding from the UK Government. For example, we are trailing behind on full-fibre coverage. Fibre to the premises, or FTTP, provides a fibre-optic connection all the way from the telephone exchange or cabinet to the business or home, but only one in 100 premises in Scotland

has it, in comparison with one in 25 in England and Wales. In addition, Scotland lags behind England and Wales in the provision of superfast speeds above 24Mbps.

Most important is that Scotland has a larger proportion of premises that fall below the universal service obligation speed of 10Mbps. Here, 5.5 per cent of premises still have slower speeds than the USO specifies, in comparison with 3.2 per cent in England and 3.98 per cent in Wales. Moreover, six out of the 10 worst constituencies for download speeds are in Scotland, and no areas in Scotland fall within the top 10 areas with the best speeds.

In spite of its multitude of failings, the SNP has tried to claim credit for UK Government and private funding on superfast broadband. However, in reality, £126 million is being funded by BT, and—which the cabinet secretary alluded to earlier—£283 million is being funded by the DCMS, the European regional development fund and Scottish local authorities, while the Scottish Government is contributing only 15 per cent of the total.

It is clear that, as usual, the SNP is good at sharing statistics that portray Government successes, while being unwilling to own up to its mistakes and failings. In fact, anyone who looks at this year's SNP Government budget will quickly realise that, rather than the Government increasing the budget for 2018, its capital connectivity investment has dropped by more than 80 per cent.

We continue to hear about the budget for R100 from 2019 to 2022, but right here, right now there is a missed opportunity, and 2018 essentially constitutes a wasted year for broadband roll-out in rural Scotland, in particular.

The cabinet secretary may boast of achieving his 95 per cent fibre broadband target, but surely he must recognise that, for all the talk, the reality on the ground in constituencies across the country is very different, and the digital divide has never been greater. We can shout about uplifts in speeds, but those improvements affect those who already get superfast speeds. There are still more than 130,000 premises in Scotland that are on 10Mbps or below, which in 2018 is just not good enough.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I thank Finlay Carson for finally taking an intervention. Is he saying that he is content with the UK Government's 10Mbps when the Scottish Government wants 30Mbps? Is he happy with the 10Mbps download speed?

**Finlay Carson:** I thank Emma Harper for that intervention, because it gives me the opportunity to say that we have—as she well knows—constituents in Galloway and West Dumfries and

South Scotland who do not have any connectivity at the moment, although at least we have a guarantee that something will happen over the next year, under the universal service obligation. Through R100, other constituents might have to wait not just until 2021, but until the end of 2021.

Improvements might have been made for people who live in the central belt who already have speeds that allow them to do most things. However, for people who live in rural and remote areas, there has been unsatisfactory investment. For those who are living with speeds of 10Mbps or below, there has been an improvement of only 1 per cent since May 2017—a meagre improvement of 21,000 more premises in the past year. That is hardly a statistic to be proud of, and for my constituents and constituents across Scotland it will only reinforce the point that on this issue, as on so many others, rural Scotland takes second place to the SNP's preferred central belt. Just as the SNP is failing to close the attainment gap in our schools, it is failing to close the digital gap.

Community broadband Scotland, with its red tape, has failed to deliver any significant improvement to individuals or businesses. Given the right guidance and leadership, it could have gone a long way towards supporting some of the hardest-to-reach areas, but it has failed to do so.

The Scottish Conservatives are committed to prioritising and accelerating rural superfast broadband roll-out. The introduction of the universal service obligation by 2020, which was announced by the UK Government, is a major step forward for broadband right across rural areas.

As the member for the rural constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, I have many cases in my inbox of businesses that are continually let down in respect of when superfast broadband will be rolled out. Of particular relevance to the tourism sector is the fact that Auchenlarie, Brighthouse and Whitecairn holiday parks in my constituency are all still in the dark as to when they will be able to deliver superfast speeds to holiday guests, which is having an impact on bookings right now.

Likewise, the owner of the Galloway Activity Centre has to travel to a local hotel to pay his staff and check bookings. If we look up his postcode on the Digital Scotland website we can see that it says that his cabinet is enabled for fibre, but he is too far from the cabinet to get an increased connection speed.

The website also states:

"We are working hard to bring faster broadband to as many homes and businesses as possible."

The date for superfast broadband is not available: it is unknown. There are no timescales, other than a commitment by the Scottish Government that it

will happen some time before the end of 2021. That is three and a half years away. I am sure that everyone in the chamber agrees that that is totally unacceptable.

Thank goodness that we have the commitment for at least 10Mbps everywhere. The date for that is still more than a year away, but having a connection is better than having no connection.

I have been in correspondence with a company in Dalbeattie, which is having to commit thousands of pounds—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Oh. You did see me waving my pen, Mr Carson.

**Finlay Carson:** Yes.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Only a few seconds more, please.

**Finlay Carson:** Thank you. That company is going to invest thousands of pounds because it does not know when superfast broadband can be rolled out.

I am aware of the unprecedented technical and planning issues that affect infrastructure roll-out, but given the amount of time for which we have been doing this, uncertainties should be addressed and timescales should be easier to predict.

For SNP members—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No—

**Finlay Carson:** Two seconds, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Okay. Let me hear it in two seconds. I am watching the clock.

**Finlay Carson:** Let us not just have back patting by the SNP; let us get this sorted out. I encourage members across the chamber to back the amendments from Peter Chapman and others calling for the Government to step up to the mark.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That was more than two seconds. I have been very generous. Move your amendment, please.

**Finlay Carson:** I move amendment S5M-12010.2, in the name of Peter Chapman, to leave out from “the gap” to end and insert:

“broadband coverage is important to communities and businesses across Scotland; recognises the role played by the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme as part of a wide range of measures being taken by both the UK and Scottish governments to roll out broadband across Scotland; acknowledges that the DSSB programme aims to provide fibre coverage to 95% of premises; notes that superfast broadband speeds in Scotland lag behind England and Wales, with a digital gap widening between urban and rural Scotland; welcomes the fact that £100.8 million of this funding has already come from the UK Government and that £62.8 million has come from the Scottish Government; notes that the Scottish Government agreed to take delivery of UK funding and

manage broadband delivery in Scotland following mutual agreement between both governments; notes that, despite the R100 programme target, the Scottish Government has not committed any of the proposed £600 million to reach 100% in the 2018 Scottish Budget; understands that the R100 programme was initially planned to be delivered by 2021 but that the completion date has been changed until the end of that year, and notes that the UK Government allocated funding back in 2014 for Phase 2 but that the Scottish Government has been unable to provide any detail on how this investment will be spread across future budget years 2018-21.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Colin Smyth to speak to and move amendment S5M-12010.3. I will give you a generous seven minutes, Mr Smyth. That means eight or nine, if you like—as a maximum.

14:58

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

Every aspect of society and our lives is changing as a result of technology. Access to broadband when and where we want it is becoming an essential part of modern life. Research by Which? has found that nine out of 10 people view a broadband connection as a necessity, alongside water and energy utilities, and food and housing. That is a higher proportion than those who identified a television, a phone, a car or savings as necessities. We can see why. Broadband opens up new opportunities for learning, leisure, health, communication and business.

As someone who represents a large rural area, my mailbag can testify that, for many people, the reality of accessing broadband is often very different from the rhetoric on it. There is the hotelier who was told that to compete, they needed to focus on online bookings, but who often could not access those bookings because their broadband routinely cut out.

There is the businessman with an exchange-only line, who has been waiting years simply to be told that he will, but not when, be able to connect to fibre broadband. There is the family who could see the shiny new green cabinet at the end of their street for months, but no one from digital Scotland or BT Openreach could tell them, even to within a few months, a date on which it was likely that they would be able access fibre broadband, until literally the last minute.

There is the farmer who contacted me, frustrated that no one could ever tell him whether he would be in the dreaded 5 per cent who were never going to be part of the 95 per cent Government fibre broadband target, so that he could decide whether he should focus on making his own arrangements through, for example, satellite broadband. There is the family who



signed up for speeds up to 30Mbps based on the provider's advert, only to discover that, like nine out of 10 people, the maximum speed advertised was something that they could never get because their home was so far away from the fibre-enabled cabinet that the copper—not fibre optic—cable had to stretch to.

I could go on about the frustrations of my constituents when it comes to broadband; I am sure that other members will have many similar examples. To be fair, the cabinet secretary acknowledged those frustrations in his opening comments, but unfortunately those frustrations—those realities—are not reflected in the wording of the Government's motion.

The Government continues to define what happens in Scotland based on comparing it with the rest of the UK and with England in particular, arguing that the gap in broadband coverage between Scotland and the rest of the UK has been bridged in recent years. That gap has certainly been reduced; I recognise the progress and congratulate all parties involved, including local authorities in Dumfries and Galloway and in the Highlands and Islands, which made significant financial contributions to the work to deliver the improvements. However, a gap remains.

According to the website thinkbroadband, 95.1 per cent of the UK had availability of UK-defined superfast broadband of speeds of 24Mbps or more in the first quarter of 2018, compared with 93.3 per cent in Scotland. The figures will, of course, vary depending on what terms one uses to describe broadband and how it is defined. Herein lies one of the problems in the debate—the interchangeable use of phrases to suit the arguments that people want to make.

The current Scottish Government target of 95 per cent is for fibre broadband. That is not the same as superfast broadband, but just to make sure that the public are left thoroughly confused, the digital Scotland website calls the target one for high-speed fibre broadband.

**Fergus Ewing:** I very much welcome the tone of Mr Smyth's speech. On the specific point that he raises about the possibility of confusion, he is quite right. To dispel that confusion, I confirm our commitment to rural and island Scotland that every house and every business will have access to superfast broadband at 30Mbps—a higher target than the DSSB and one that I hope Mr Smyth will welcome.

**Colin Smyth:** That is absolutely a commitment that I welcome. I will deal with that specific point later in my speech, and the difference between the previous 95 per cent target and the far more appropriate and more welcome target that is set out in R100, both in relation to the percentage of

coverage and to a specific commitment on speeds of 30Mbps and above.

However, we have to be clear that at the moment, Scotland does not have 95 per cent superfast broadband coverage. That is one of the frustrations that the public have. They believed that that was what they were going to get when that 95 per cent target was rolled out, and they have been left disappointed in many areas. The local variations within Scotland can be quite significant.

In my home area, Dumfries and Galloway, there is a 10 per cent difference between the proportion of people who have fibre broadband and those who have superfast broadband speeds. In Orkney, access to fibre broadband sits at 82 per cent, but the availability of superfast speeds is just 65 per cent.

It is not just rural Scotland where there is a digital divide: access to the internet is lower in many of our most deprived areas. The Scottish Government's own household survey—albeit that it was in 2016—showed that 27 per cent of households in the most deprived areas had no home internet access, compared with 15 per cent of households elsewhere.

Availability of broadband is not the same as being able to access it. A report by Ofcom last year found that although, at the time, 87 per cent of Scottish premises had availability of superfast broadband of 30Mbps, only 39 per cent had active connections that were delivering superfast speeds.

Even those who can afford the often hefty cost of a superfast broadband subscription are not guaranteed the headline speeds for which they thought they had signed up. Too often, average speeds fall far short of the maximums claimed—an issue that I know the Advertising Standards Agency is rightly taking action to address.

Whether in rural areas or deprived communities, too many people are being excluded from the opportunities that superfast broadband can provide. R100 is a chance to address those shortcomings and to be clear with the public that everyone will have access to superfast broadband at speeds that make a difference.

The commitment to 100 per cent coverage and a clear minimum speed of 30 Mbps is a step forward, beyond the inadequate 10 Mbps speed that is proposed in the UK Government's universal service obligation. The commitment to an outside-in approach is also welcome.

What we now need, however, is the detail and a clear timetable that shows exactly how people in rural areas and in our deprived communities will no longer be disadvantaged and, for once, will be put first.

**Fergus Ewing:** I want to confirm, both to Mr Smyth and to Mr Rumbles, who included the point in his amendment, that as soon as the tender process is completed, we will provide as much detail as we can on regional roll-out of the programme.

I fully understand that all members want to know the detail, but it will not be possible to provide that until the tender process is completed early next year. It shall be done as soon as possible.

**Colin Smyth:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that commitment, because it was a weakness in the previous programme that people did not know when their community was likely to have access to fibre broadband. I welcome the commitment to having a clear timetable.

We need to know that people in the most difficult-to-reach premises, which were not included in the initial first-phase procurement, will not be left behind. There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that that is the case.

It is not just when it comes to broadband that Scotland has a digital divide. Many of our communities are being left behind due to poor mobile connectivity, with my own South Scotland region plagued by so-called not-spots, where a mobile connection—never mind 4G—is simply not available. I can tell Parliament today that the new £212 million Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary on the edge of the town of Dumfries—hardly the most remote place in the world—still does not have mobile phone coverage five months after it opened.

There have been some improvements in connectivity across Scotland from mobile network operators, partly driven by compliance with Ofcom's requirements for spectrum use. The Scottish Government's new 4G infill programme is certainly a step in the right direction.

There is a huge opportunity with the emergency service mobile communication programme, which has real potential to improve services in our rural communities if we ensure that additional commercial coverage can piggyback on the masts that will be developed to deliver the emergency services programme. Beyond funding future-proofing of mast upgrades so that they can provide commercial coverage, the Scottish Government also has a role to play in ensuring that our planning system does not act as a barrier to improved mobile connectivity. It is a huge issue for our constituents.

It is clear that progress has been made in connecting our communities better, and we should recognise that. Scotland, however, still has a digital divide. Too many of our rural and deprived communities have slow or no broadband. There are parts of my region where 4G is a type of

football pitch and certainly not something that people will get on their mobile phones any time soon.

The motion from the Government and the amendment from the Conservatives partly acknowledge some of the challenges, but are too much about trying to blame each other for the digital divide. The lack of adequate broadband and mobile coverage in too many of our communities is too often being used as an extension of the constitutional tit for tat between the two Governments. That is not what our constituents want.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Would you please conclude and move your amendment?

**Colin Smyth:** Our constituents want to see both Governments working together.

I therefore move amendment S5M-12010.3, to insert after "island communities":

"; calls on the Scottish Government to publish a full and clear regional timetable for the roll-out of superfast broadband; further calls for R100 to prioritise the remote, rural and island communities that currently endure unreliable, intermittent or no broadband connections; recognises that the Scottish Government's participation in delivering improved broadband, thus far, has been slow, particularly for those areas with the worst performing services, and that the cost of delivering the R100 programme may be significantly more than it has publicised."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Mike Rumbles to speak to and move amendment S5M-12010.1.

I will be generous with you as well—you do not hear me saying that very often, Mr Rumbles, but I have said it today. You can use up to an extra two minutes, but that would absorb any interventions.

15:09

**Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I appreciate those comments.

We have heard many assertions about digital connectivity already in the debate, and many promises from the Scottish Government on the issue since it came to power more than a decade ago. The first thing that I want to do is test the credibility of those assertions, both those in the motion before us and those made by the cabinet secretary in his speech.

On 25 November last year, the cabinet secretary said:

"As a direct result of our investment, more than 800,000 premises now have access to fibre broadband, while we are on track to deliver 95 per cent coverage by the end of this year."

Time and time again, we have heard Scottish Government ministers claim credit for the success of the digital Scotland superfast broadband programme, as happened again this afternoon—*[Interruption.]* I think that Mr Stevenson will have an opportunity to speak in the debate, and I look forward to hearing his speech.

Not once have we heard the Scottish Government acknowledge that the vast majority of funding for the programme came from the investment that the United Kingdom coalition Government delivered in 2013 and 2014, from the European Union, from local authorities and from British Telecommunications. That investment included Scotland's share of £530 million from Broadband Delivery UK.

This week, in *The Press and Journal*, a UK minister claimed that the £121 million that was allocated in 2014 for local fibre roll-out in Scotland is still sitting in Scottish Government coffers.

**Fergus Ewing:** Let me reiterate what I have said in this debate, in the select committee and in the Scottish Parliament on previous occasions: the DSSB contract was a partnership, and parties put in different amounts. The UK put in £100 million, the Scottish public sector, including the Scottish Government, HIE and local authorities, put in £164 million, and if my maths is correct, BT put in £126 million. I have made that absolutely clear.

The investment was made by the Scottish Government: because we were running the main contract, it is correct, factually, to say that the investment was made by us. However, I have always acknowledged that the contribution of the UK Government was £100 million. I have never hidden that. I have always made it clear, and I do so again. I hope that Mr Rumbles is now happy.

**Mike Rumbles:** I am always happy, and never more so than when I am holding the cabinet secretary to account in this Parliament.

As a matter of fact, the Scottish Government's direct investment in the digital Scotland broadband programme comes to less than a fifth of the total. We can agree on the figures; it is how the programme is presented that is the issue.

In January, thinkbroadband reported that 93.4 per cent of homes in Scotland had access to fibre broadband, and two weeks ago the cabinet secretary issued a quite astonishing press release congratulating the Scottish Government on reaching an unprecedented 95 per cent fibre coverage.

The extraordinary thing about that is that I well remember the cabinet secretary coming to the chamber on 19 December last year to give us that very same fact. Either he was mistaken then or he

has a very short memory. Perhaps—worse—he thinks that we all have short memories.

It is unfortunate that even in areas where new cabling has been laid, the existing poor service has often not improved one iota. In January this year, it was estimated that there is superfast broadband coverage in Scotland of between 87 and 89 per cent. Ofcom's report this week put the proportion at 91 per cent, with 95 per cent coverage in England. Those are the facts. The cabinet secretary must now start to show real progress for people in rural areas, to ensure that rural communities are not left behind.

I believe in giving credit where credit is due. I welcome the Scottish Government's £600 million investment in the R100 programme, even though responsibility for the area is reserved. Given new 4G and alternative technologies, I have no doubt that the target is achievable. What I doubt is whether it will be achieved within the timescale and with the earmarked resources.

The cabinet secretary has said that the Scottish Government will

"announce initial deployment plans early in 2019, once contracts have been agreed."—*[Written Answers, 26 April 2018; S5W-15964.]*

What customers want to know is when they will become part of that roll-out, which is why the Liberal Democrat amendment in my name calls on the Scottish Government to publish a

"clear regional timetable for the roll-out".

I sincerely hope that the UK Government has more to bring to the table, but it is the Scottish Government that must now demonstrate that its commitment to expanding rural broadband is more open and transparent. Customers want to know when they will receive superfast broadband, and the Scottish Government needs to be able to tell them.

Despite the development of new technologies, and despite speeds getting faster and faster for some people, businesses and residents outside Scotland's cities have too often been left behind.

Internet speeds in some parts of rural Aberdeenshire, as Mr Stevenson must know, are woeful, and many other parts of the north-east are not much better.

Presiding Officer, I heard what the cabinet secretary said earlier on, just before you took over the chair, which was that he would publish what he was able to. That is not good enough: we need a very clear detailed and published roll-out programme that consumers can check to see when they will be connected over the next three and a half years. They do not want to have to listen to vague promises that they will be connected—they want to know when. If they do

not know that, many people will be left in the dark. I urge the cabinet secretary—even if he does nothing else—to put that right.

I move amendment S5M-12010.1, to insert, after “island communities”:

“; calls on the Scottish Government to publish a full and clear regional timetable for the roll-out of superfast broadband; further calls for R100 to prioritise the remote, rural and island communities that currently endure unreliable, intermittent or no broadband connections; recognises that the Scottish Government’s participation in delivering improved broadband, thus far, has been slow, particularly for those areas with the worst performing services, and that the cost of delivering the R100 programme may be significantly more than it has publicised”.

15:15

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Communications is a very important part of the world economy and every aspect of the world. The first great step forward in digital communications took place 2,000 years ago, when the Romans introduced wig-wag, which was a hilltop system that carried a signal from Londinium to Roma and back in the course of a single day. That replaced the three months that it would have taken, by sea and by cleft stick, before then.

When the telegraph came in, in the early 1800s, there was another quantum leap. Of course, when Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated the telephone system for the first time, in 1876, that took us to another place—voice. Only five years later, the telephone directory for Edinburgh had 300 connections in it. Scotland has been a leader in communications in many ways in the past.

In his opening remarks, the cabinet secretary spoke about there being broad consensus on the need for broadband. I am delighted that no one has attempted to break that consensus, because we all know and assert its importance.

The first digital communications system on which I worked, when I worked in technology, was in the 1960s. It ran at 110 bits per second—not kilobits or megabits—but we were able to connect all 400 branches of the bank to a real-time data inquiry and collection system at that speed. We have moved on rapidly with mobile technology. The first digital system, GSM—the global system for mobile communications—came in in 1990. I was one of a group of 12 people who piloted it in the UK. When I was the manager of the Bank of Scotland’s data centre 30 years ago, my telecoms bill was £10 million. I could buy that service now for a few hundred pounds. Things progress all the time.

Before I go on too much, I want to rein in Fin Carson slightly. I heard, with delight, that the UK

Government will deliver a speed of 10 megabytes per second to everyone. That would be eight times its current promise, because that is for 10 megabits, and not 10 megabytes. I also want to say that smartphones do not rely on the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers 802.11 standard, which is for wi-fi, but on high performance data mining and applications, or HPDMA; enhanced data GSM environment, or EDGE; and general packet radio service, or GPRS. In other words, they use different communications technologies, so wi-fi is really quite irrelevant.

**Finlay Carson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Stewart Stevenson:** I may come back to Mr Carson later.

In the time that I have left, I want to pick up a particular point in the Tory amendment, which says that the digital gap is

“widening between urban and rural Scotland”.

Let us look at some numbers. In 2012, for cities, the penetration of fibre-enabled premises ranged from 95 per cent in Dundee to 59 per cent in Stirling. At the other end of the scale, in Aberdeenshire, as Mr Rumbles referred to, we were at 25.1 per cent, which was 33.9 percentage points behind the worst city and 74.9 percentage points behind the best. Argyll and Bute was on 26 per cent, Moray was on 28 per cent, Highland was on 23 per cent and the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland were on zero. Has the gap widened? Well, clearly not.

Argyll and Bute has advanced by 54.8 points, Moray by 66.2 points, Highland by 62.4 points, Western Isles by 75.9 points, Orkney by 74.7 points, Shetland by 79.6 points and Aberdeenshire—the council area in which Peter Chapman, Mike Rumbles and I live—by 65.6 points. In only one city has it grown by more than 20 points—in Stirling, which was bottom of the pack, it has grown by 34.6 points. I have juggled the numbers left-handed, right-handed, two-handed, off the floor, off the wall and every which way, and rural areas are catching up with cities every single day.

More fundamentally, I expect that, by 2021, people such me, who are in the 5 per cent who are not fibred—and indeed who do not have DAB radio, do not have Freeview, have no mobile phone signal and cannot see either of the data satellites because of terrain issues—will be fibre at the premises. I expect that most of the R100 will end up in that position. That means that rural areas will have 300Mbps megabits capability if they have fibre at the premises. We will actually be ahead of urban areas, if we are lucky.

We need to see what comes from the contracts, but there is a huge difference between getting fibre to the premises, which is a very likely outcome of the tender that is out there—that is what I hear from some of those who might be interested in bidding—and the miserable 10 megabits that the UK Government guaranteeing to everybody. It is well outside the 30Mbps that our Government is promising, but it is substantially ahead of what the UK Government is promising. We are likely to have fibre to the premises as part of R100.

Is there a challenge here? I will not know when I will get my fibre until a little man or woman engineer has come and looked at the path to my very door. They will need to walk from the exchange up to my house and check where they can lay the cable. Every premises will need to be inspected before a date can be given. We can do it by area only in the first instance—

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Mr Stevenson should bring his remarks to a conclusion.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Inspection of premises needs to follow after that.

I will be very happy to support the Government's motion. I may even think about some of the amendments, although the Tories' amendment is a bit of a challenge.

15:22

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I am happy to speak in this debate on digital connectivity, mostly because Stewart Stevenson is in the chamber and it is a joy to listen to him.

I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, Fergus Ewing.

I would like to make a couple of points about digital connectivity and to focus on the south-west of Scotland, as a member who represents the South Scotland region. Since becoming an MSP, I have had many constituent calls, emails and queries about broadband. It is a very important issue to everybody in the region, both on a personal level and for our rural businesses. I have hosted sessions in Dumfries, New Galloway and Stranraer, with great support from the digital Scotland superfast broadband team and community broadband Scotland. I also had the pleasure of cutting the ribbon for a new big green box at Springholm, which is bringing better broadband to the village. The technical knowledge and know-how, both nationally and on the ground, and the solutions to the problems have been greatly welcomed. I thank everyone who has helped, including Fiona Muir and her colleagues in

the DSSB team, who have worked closely with me on many local issues.

The Scottish Government has taken action to engage with the people of Scotland and has made digital infrastructure investment a priority for Scotland's businesses and people. Digital access is vital for rural businesses, farm businesses and our general practitioner practices. Yesterday, I met Dr Carey Lunan and Dr Alastair Forbes, who are chair and deputy chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and we exchanged examples of the necessity of access to good broadband infrastructure to support the work that is required in patient care today. It is crucial for downloading laboratory results, for viewing and sharing key information and, increasingly, for telehealth and telemedicine activities.

Despite the matter being reserved to the UK Government, the SNP is ensuring that Scotland has world-class digital infrastructure. In the south-west of Scotland, I have been working—with Mr Carson—on digital access to support local businesses in the Mossyard exchange area. There is some progress, although it is still quite challenging. I think that he would agree with me on that.

I note from Mike Rumbles's amendment that he calls for—

**Finlay Carson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Emma Harper:** Yes, of course I will.

**Finlay Carson:** Can the member explain why there has been so little improvement in broadband speeds for those with the poorest speeds? It all very well to increase speeds where people already have superfast broadband. Has the progress for those with the slowest speeds been satisfactory?

**Emma Harper:** The progress that has been made has, at least, been forward moving. There are obviously issues with new technology and such things that we need to explore, but I welcome any progress that has been made. I would support any action that the Scottish Government can take to support access for people in rural areas.

I note from Mike Rumbles's amendment that he calls for

“R100 to prioritise the remote”

and

“rural ... communities”.

That is great, and I encourage him and Conservative members to lobby the UK Government so that more financial support for R100 is a commitment that is not only made but delivered by the UK Government. Investment in Scottish broadband, and in improved coverage,

has not been a priority for the UK Government so far. Indeed, the cabinet secretary's motion

"calls on the UK government to increase its funding contribution to R100 from just 3% of the total and ensure that Scotland sees tangible financial, social and environmental benefits from the broadband Universal Service Obligation."

**Mike Rumbles:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Emma Harper:** Mr Rumbles is whispering in my lug.

**Mike Rumbles:** I agree with the member. The UK Government should give more to the programme. After all, the issue is reserved, as I said in my opening speech. The more important non-partisan point is this: would it not be good if the cabinet secretary could ensure that connection timescales are published when we have a roll-out programme, so that people know where they are?

**Emma Harper:** We could ask the Scottish Government whether that data—if it were accurate—could be available. However, I know that there is flux, with changes to schedules and timetables, which might make providing that information difficult, because people would have problems if the information was inaccurate.

The UK Government can do better, it should do better and it has a responsibility to do better.

On an interesting note, in order to address specific South Scotland digital and broadband issues, the interim board of the new south of Scotland economic partnership has established an infrastructure thematic group, which will review and make recommendations—including on digital infrastructure—build on existing plans and seek opportunities for innovation. A series of interviews and workshops with businesses is currently being planned, which will inform the thematic group, along with the on-going public consultation. I thank Amanda Burgauer from Scottish Rural Action, who is a member of SOSEP, for the update on progress. The partnership will also seek to identify initiatives and prevent any potential duplication of efforts to ensure that moneys are invested for the maximum return. SOSEP is keen to address the uptake of digital infrastructure by residents and businesses in the south of Scotland to maximise the social and economic benefits of being digitally connected.

Connectivity is improving. As an added note, I am keen to mention that I now have a 4G mobile phone signal all the way from Dumfries to Stranraer on the A75. That was not the case this time last year.

I know that there is work to be done, particularly in the south-west. I look forward to hearing whether the UK Government will commit to more

R100 funding to support the further faster access to vital communications that the rural south-west, the south and the rest of Scotland deserve.

15:28

**Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Con):** I, too, would like to look at some facts, figures and timescales. The Scottish Government promised that, by the end of 2017, 95 per cent of Scottish homes and businesses would be able to connect to fibre broadband. Although some politicians claim that that target was achieved, not all is quite as it seems.

The fact is that having a connection to fibre broadband does not automatically give us superfast broadband speeds of 25Mbps or more. In fact, the cabinet secretary stated that to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee on 31 January 2018. I will quote him, which is not something that I always do. He said that the roll-out of fibre broadband does not necessarily enable superfast broadband.

**Fergus Ewing:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Edward Mountain:** No. I will let the cabinet secretary in in a minute, but I would like to make a little bit more progress.

Here is the real position: according to the figures from thinkbroadband, only 93.66 per cent of homes and businesses in Scotland are connected to fibre broadband with speeds in excess of 24Mbps, so the claim is not quite true. In the Highlands and Islands, the situation is worse, as one in five of our constituents does not have the superfast broadband that is required to watch today's debate online.

I welcome the Scottish Government's ambition to increase superfast broadband coverage with its R100 programme. Every politician wants to see 100 per cent of homes and businesses having access to fast broadband. However, I am struggling to work out when the cabinet secretary will deliver on the Government's promise—his promise. Let us not forget that, when it comes to delivering infrastructure projects, this Government seems to base opening dates on political opportunities rather than realistic construction dates and that, to add further flexibility, it often uses seasons rather than dates to hide delays. Here are three classic examples: the Queensferry crossing; the Aberdeen western peripheral route; and the Dalraddy to Kincaig dualling project. I would therefore like to ask the Scottish Government whether it can deliver superfast broadband on time. It would be helpful if the cabinet secretary could confirm what timeframe he is working to. Every time I question him—*[Interruption.]*

Ms Martin, if you want to interrupt, I am happy to give way to the cabinet secretary.

**Stewart Stevenson:** It was me.

**Edward Mountain:** I am sorry; I could not hear who was speaking from a sedentary position. It was Mr Stevenson—I might have guessed.

Every time I question the cabinet secretary about when we will all have supervised broadband, I get more confused because I get a different answer. Last year, the programme for government confirmed that 100 per cent access to superfast broadband would be achieved by 2021. When I questioned the cabinet secretary about the issue again in the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, I was told that 100 per cent access to superfast broadband would be achieved by the end of 2021. That is confusing. I am happy to give way to him if he can give me and Parliament a definitive answer. When will we all have superfast broadband?

**Fergus Ewing:** I have made it clear umpteen times. I have always said the same thing with regard to my commitments, which is that we plan to give everyone access to superfast broadband—that means everyone and every business—by the end of 2021. I think that that is what “by 2021” means; I do not think that there is a difference, frankly. That is the commitment that we have made. I am baffled by the proposition that I have given out a load of different dates, because the date is absolutely clear. What baffles me is that people from rural constituencies, such as Mr Mountain are not totally behind this project—a unique project in the UK, without which the objective of providing access to all rural and island dwellers could not conceivably be achieved within that timescale.

**Edward Mountain:** I am sorry, but I am going to take the cabinet secretary to task on this, because I have the wonderful ability to look at digital connectivity in this Parliament and find out that, on 29 November 2017, he retweeted a tweet from the First Minister that said:

“@scotgov is about to invest 100s of millions £ more getting superfast broadband to 100% of premises by end of this parliament - which is a commitment the UK government has not even made”.

I think that the cabinet secretary knows as well as I do that the end of this session of Parliament will be at the end of March 2021. That means that—as set out by the First Minister in a tweet that was republicised by the cabinet secretary—we should have 100 per cent access to superfast broadband by that time.

The question is, who is right? Is it the First Minister or the cabinet secretary? Perhaps there is a more cynical explanation. Is the cabinet secretary trying to pull a rabbit out of a hat by

delaying the delivery date, knowing perhaps that he can deliver 100 per cent access before the end of 2021 so that he can claim a victory before an election? If that is the case, I would say that most people in Scotland would prefer the cabinet secretary to be honest.

I believe that the Scottish Government is nowhere near achieving its promise to deliver superfast broadband to all premises by the end of this parliamentary session. It is clear that it is moving the goalposts because it knows that it cannot deliver and it does not want to stand at another election on another broken promise.

Households and businesses across the Highlands and Scotland need to move forward in the digital fast lane. I say frankly to the cabinet secretary that this is not good enough. There is no point in blaming other people—as has been done this afternoon—by saying that it is all somebody else’s fault. I urge the cabinet secretary to move forward, to delay no longer and to deliver superfast broadband to all houses and businesses by the end of March 2021—which the First Minister said that she would do.

The time for excuses is over. The time to deliver is now—please deliver on time.

15:35

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** As an MSP for a constituency that falls largely within the intervention area of the digital Scotland superfast broadband programme, I am well aware of the remarkable efforts of that programme, but I also share the frustrations of constituents who are not yet able to benefit from superfast broadband.

Although this area is reserved to Westminster, the decision by the Scottish Government to intervene was necessary to ensure that vast swathes of rural Scotland are not left behind. Without the intervention of the Scottish Government, most of my constituency would have no access to superfast broadband. The impact of 100 per cent access by 2021 will be hugely significant for people in my constituency and our local economy. Three benefits are that remote working will be enabled; there will be access to digital health; and businesses will be able to consider the option of rural premises, rather than the city of Aberdeen, which will be a massive boost to the local economy in my constituency.

Last month, the goal of 95 per cent of Scottish premises with access to superfast broadband was reached. Ofcom noted:

“Superfast broadband availability in Scotland has increased at a faster rate than other UK nations”.

which I think is impressive, given the particular geographical challenges of our country. The

challenge of delivering fibre broadband in Aberdeenshire is made more difficult because that area has twice the national average of exchange-only lines, which are more expensive to upgrade.

**Mike Rumbles:** Will the member take a helpful intervention?

**Gillian Martin:** Yes, I will.

**Mike Rumbles:** I agree with everything that Gillian Martin has said. We both represent constituents in Aberdeenshire, and she is absolutely correct. Will she respond to my earlier intervention, which I hope was a non-partisan point? Our constituents would like to know approximately when they could be connected, over the next three and a half years. Would that information not be very helpful?

**Gillian Martin:** I listened when Mike Rumbles made that point. My parents are the sort of people who are on the phone asking me when superfast broadband will be delivered to Bourtie, and I reckon that they would like to know. I do not know how feasible and practical it would be, given the various situations that can happen to make the date more difficult to predict.

The national average for exchange-only lines is 22 per cent, but Aberdeenshire's figure is more than 45 per cent, which is around 50,000 homes. The roll-out of infrastructure through the digital Scotland broadband programme has been primarily achieved by running fibre cable from telephone exchanges to roadside cabinets and relying on existing copper wire that runs from the cabinets to premises. However, 45 per cent of lines in Aberdeenshire run directly from exchanges to premises, and that has created a significant challenge. Without the intervention, it has been estimated that only 66 per cent of Scotland would be able to receive fibre broadband, so it is a significant achievement that around 95 per cent of premises in Aberdeenshire currently have access, compared with 25.1 per cent that the area would have if it was left to commercial deployment—that is a staggering achievement for my constituency.

Although the progress made so far is welcome, it is clear that more needs to be done, because it is frustrating for people in the remaining 9.3 per cent. I am grateful that the Scottish Government recognises that and has committed to invest more than £600 million—more than the UK Government has ever invested in broadband—to the programme to reach 100 per cent.

The north of Scotland is being allocated £384 million of that funding, which is nearly two thirds of the total sum of £600 million that is being invested in the R100 programme. However, people who live in some new housing developments do not currently have access to superfast broadband. I understand that the intervention areas were

defined at the beginning of the contract in 2012 using postcode data from 2011. That means that new postcodes that were created for properties that were built after that time are not included in the programme's roll-out. The Scottish Government updated Scottish planning policy and the national planning framework to allow local authorities to insist on digital connectivity as a requirement of any new development and in order to counteract that situation.

The cabinet secretary has also been trying to secure a commitment that Scotland will benefit from the UK Government's universal service obligation. I agree with the cabinet secretary that it would be grossly unfair if people from Scotland were excluded from the USO despite contributing funding to it. However, I am grateful to my colleague Emma Harper for highlighting that the UK Government's programme is only for 10Mbps, which is not by any means as ambitious as the Scottish Government's aim of providing 30Mbps.

I highlight that there is only 17 per cent geographical coverage of 4G in Scotland, and only 53 per cent coverage of premises. That leaves rural areas at a significant disadvantage. Telecoms policy is reserved to the UK Government but I note that, yet again, the Scottish Government is having to intervene and it has funded a £25 million project to address mobile not-spots across the country. One of the initial 16 not-spot sites earmarked is the fantastic and beautiful village of Collieston in my constituency, and I take this opportunity to lobby for Methlick to be included, too, as it is a town in which no one can get a phone signal of any kind.

I pay tribute to Fergus Ewing for driving forward towards the goal of 100 per cent access. It is not an easy task; it is a very difficult task. It was rather ridiculous that Matt Hancock said that the Scottish Government is too interested in the constitution to roll out broadband. He said—clearly primed by his Scottish Tory colleagues, who were sniggering in the background as he trotted out their programmed mantra—that we are “Too interested in independence.” That mantra has served the Scottish Tories well as a deflection mechanism for any public or media scrutiny of their lack of policies or action. If only Mr Hancock's focus on addressing rural digital poverty had been anything near that of Mr Ewing, the Scottish Government might not have needed to intervene. I say on behalf of Aberdeenshire East, thank goodness that it has.

15:42

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** There is no doubt that the advances in information and digital technology have never been greater than in my lifetime and present tremendous opportunities for



everyone. As a young computing student in the early 1980s at Glasgow College of Technology, I recall having to feed in my computer program via punch cards before it would even run or be processed, which just goes to show the advances that have been made.

I marvel at the fact that people can share photographs from locations all over the world and have instant access to news, music and sport. Tremendous advances have been made, but the reality for far too many people in this country is that they do not have access to that technology or to those advances.

A lot of the speeches in the debate have focused on the digital divide between rural and urban communities, but I will focus on those who, because of the circumstances in which they find themselves, the communities in which they live and their lack of access to money, do not have access to any of that technology at all.

We live in a country where 1 million people are in poverty, 695,000 people are in fuel poverty and more than 200,000 children live in poverty. The idea of access to a lot of the technology that members have spoken about is simply a dream and not the reality for a single parent who lives in Castlemilk or a child growing up in Easterhouse.

I live in Rutherglen and Cambuslang, where there are communities that are among the 5 per cent most deprived areas in the country. For example, a person who lives Burnhill in the Rutherglen area possibly cannot afford access to a smart phone or an internet connection and having a router seems far fetched. Therefore, there are real challenges for the Parliament and the Government to move the debate forward so that we can ensure that there is not only coverage but greater access throughout the country.

Some of the challenges on technology have been compounded by the UK welfare changes. For instance, to have access to universal credit, an individual also needs access to an online account.

A recent survey by Citizens Advice Scotland showed that 18 per cent people of the people citizens advice bureaux had come across did not have any access to the internet. That means that, if one of those people is trying to get access to universal credit, they are perhaps using technology that they have never used in their life and to which they do not have immediate access in the neighbourhood, so they go along to their local library. However, because of challenges in public services recently, information technology services at local libraries have been reduced or the libraries' opening hours curtailed. There are real challenges there.

One of the other issues is the way that big business drives the digital divide. Many of the contracts that companies such as Sky and BT offer are high-value, long-term contracts. People who work in short-term jobs, perhaps as part of the gig economy, are not able to make such long-term commitments and, therefore, are locked out of those digital contracts. Therefore, financial exclusion can also drive digital exclusion.

There are some excellent local examples of how to combat that. In Cambuslang, the West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative set up its own communications co-operative, Whitcomm Co-operative Ltd, in 2008. It offers cheaper packages than those offered by Sky and BT, and there has been an 80 per cent uptake in the area. That is an example of good practice that the Government should consider.

On how we move the debate forward, I understand that the Government wants to talk about the progress that it has made on broadband access, but there are fundamental challenges around deprivation and poverty that restrict people's access to technology. We need to give greater support to local projects such as that in West Whitlawburn and invest properly in IT facilities at libraries. I appeal to the Government to try to use its influence with the businesses that offer longer-term deals that, potentially, lock out people in areas of social exclusion.

In the debate, a lot of speakers have exchanged statistics on megabits and megabytes but, if we want to open up the advantages of technology to everyone in our country, we need a more fundamental and wider debate. That is something in which the whole Parliament should engage.

15:48

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** I congratulate my colleague Stewart Stevenson on his foresight in hosting a digital Scotland briefing session in the Parliament earlier today. Among his many talents, he possesses either psychic powers or an impeccable sense of timing.

As ever, it was extremely useful to get an update on where work in my constituency to improve broadband connections has taken us, and I will share it with the chamber. As of last week, the digital Scotland superfast broadband programme had led to 11,333 premises being connected to fibre broadband, with 9,409 of them, by virtue of proximity, being capable of receiving speeds of more than 24 Mbps.

Commercial delivery has led to 69.7 per cent of Angus being connected to fibre broadband. Without the DSSB, that is all that we would have had. Instead, the commercial and digital Scotland programmes together mean that just under 93 per

cent of premises in the county are connected to fibre, with 85.7 per cent of premises able to receive speeds of more than 24Mbps.

However, the impact of the DSSB project in my constituency has been far more pronounced than that, because the commercial programme in Angus South was to have made a minimal contribution. In my constituency, we are where we are largely because of DSSB deployment and the impact of gainshare. That said, there remains considerable work left to be done, but I know that the Scottish Government is committed to delivery, and I will continue, on behalf of my constituents, to make sure that it happens.

As MSPs, all of us have a duty to raise awareness of the issue of people not understanding the need to get a package. For example, only 37.35 per cent of premises in Angus have ordered a fibre service from a digital Scotland structure although they could benefit from doing so. There is a myriad of reasons for that uptake level. For some people, the broadband speed that they already have is enough for their needs, but there is a lack of awareness out there. We need to help people to better understand that the fact that the infrastructure is in place does not mean that they will automatically be linked into it. Broadband issues are a significant contributor to my surgery case load, and that will be the case for many colleagues. I understand entirely why constituents are so keen to have a reliable, efficient connection.

We should be clear about the fact that, when it comes to the upgrade work that is taking place across Scotland, we are talking about a reserved area—there are no ifs, no buts and no maybes. However much political rivals want to muddy the waters, that is a fact. Therefore, it is to the credit of Fergus Ewing and the Scottish Government that they have stepped up to the plate by committing 97 per cent of the funding for the R100 programme and setting the bar far higher than the UK Government's 10Mbps broadband universal service obligation.

Nevertheless, I hope that the R100 tendering process results in the ending of the Openreach monopoly. It is good that other companies are coming forward to bid for the various lots. I think that we would benefit from having new kids on the block, as it were, because a trawl through my constituency case files would show Openreach failing, time and again, to meet the reasonable expectations of the people I represent, and I suspect that similar exercises in other constituency offices would show the same thing. In the future, all those who have a part to play must work together to avoid duplication and ensure that resources go where they need to be utilised.

That is why, last year, I brought together representatives from digital Scotland, the R100 programme and Angus Council in my constituency. The contracts that deliver the R100 programme must not only allow for innovation and flexibility but must encourage it so that the successful bidders can, for example, tie in with local authorities where those councils are taking a lead.

In April, an initiative that is being led by Angus Council went live at Kirkton industrial estate in Arbroath, as well as at the Orchardbank business park in Forfar, and radio broadband is now available to businesses in both of those locations. In addition, the council will be able to provide a business-grade broadband connection to business premises outwith those sites where they have line-of-sight links to those key locations.

Furthermore, Angus Council has submitted an expression of interest to the WiFi4EU programme. If successful, it will receive €15,000 to support the provision of wi-fi in the county's town centres. The council is also working—belatedly—to deliver wi-fi in four primary schools in my constituency, the current lack of which is the cause of some concern for parents and pupils.

In addition, the councils that are involved in the wider Tay cities deal are developing a proposal that would involve the procurement of a suitable supplier to deliver full-fibre upgrades to identified public sector buildings. That infrastructure could be used to deliver scalable bandwidth to the public sector while reducing the cost of subsequent deployment of full-fibre networks to homes and businesses. We should give credit to Angus Council and the lead officer, Kirsty Macari, for all of that. It is imperative that the councils are regarded as partners in the national R100 programme, because we need commonsense collaboration.

It should be noted that, in advance of R100, progress is still being made in rural parts of my constituency. Over the past few months, the locations that have benefited have included Piperdam, Tealing, Inverarity and Colliston. On top of that, there are individuals who are set to benefit from the provision of fibre direct to their property. The information that was provided earlier this week, which the cabinet secretary reiterated today, will be warmly welcomed by my constituents in Glenisla, Glen Clova and Glen Prosen. Those areas are among those that have been mandated and weighted within the R100 intervention area to incentivise the delivery of fibre infrastructure to some of our more challenging areas.

Good progress has been made and progress continues to be made, but more needs to be done. We must give credit to the Scottish Government

for stepping into the breach and ensuring that we reach the stage at which all our citizens can enjoy access to fast, reliable broadband.

15:54

**Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con):** I remind members that I remain an Aberdeen City Council councillor. Aberdeen city recognises, of course, that fast broadband is vital to its future development. That makes it even more important that everybody else has it, too. I therefore commend the decision to push for 100 per cent superfast connections, and I would be very interested to see a breakdown of how the Government plans to spend the £600 million that it has committed to that in its budget.

I will use my time in the debate to discuss the link between digital connections and an issue that is relevant to the developed world and that seems to affect Scotland in particular—I am, of course, talking about our low productivity growth. According to the Scottish Fiscal Commission, Scotland's productivity growth stood as low as 0.2 per cent last year, and it is scheduled to be just 0.5 per cent this year. The commission believes that Scotland might have reached its maximum economic output, as is evidenced by its low unemployment rate. That means that we cannot experience strong growth until we pursue expansionary supply-side policies.

If we want to grow the economy, productivity is the place to start. In our history, the largest spikes in productivity growth have come about as a result of the discovery and use of new technology. From smoke rings to modern-day tweeting, our mediums of communication have improved vastly. We heard a great history from Mr Stevenson.

Going forward, technology can bring benefits through the efficient automation of mundane tasks and the simplifying of processes. The 21st century has largely been defined by our delve into the digital world, and the benefits to productivity have been plenty. They range from time and cost savings to transformative practices that have often set new standards. Uber brought about the mass move to simple transport apps, Just Eat enhanced the fast-food industry and QuickBooks simplified small business accounts. Even good old Microsoft has standard programs most of which nobody can understand. New algorithms are developed every day. I look forward to the day when most aspects of our routines are transformed and enhanced to leave more time for creativity, entrepreneurship and leisure.

To get to that point, we need to invest in technology infrastructure. It therefore strikes me as odd that the Scottish Government began phase 2 of the broadband procurement only recently,

given that it received funding from the UK Government four years ago. I acknowledge that the new target of 100 per cent superfast broadband exceeds other targets in speed, so I understand why Fergus Ewing gave himself an extra year to complete the roll-out.

**Fergus Ewing:** The reason why the R100 programme is proceeding now and did not proceed earlier is that it was simply not possible to proceed with it earlier because it would have been impossible to design the specification until the DSSB programme was completed. Had we done so, the only potential bidder for any of the three segments would have been BT, because only BT would have known what the specification would have been. For that technical but very important reason, which the industry accepts, it would not have been possible to have had a different timetable for the R100 procurement.

**Tom Mason:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that additional information. What matters is that we are now on line to getting it done.

Rural access is one area in which roll-out has failed so far. I know that that has been mentioned in the committee and quite often in the chamber. Some rural constituencies in Scotland have the lowest access of any in the UK, which prevents businesses from engaging with the rest of Scotland and the wider market. Indeed, in parts of Aberdeenshire we have some of the worst connection levels in the United Kingdom, which puts a ceiling on the north-east's increase in productivity. I therefore welcomed Matt Hancock's local full fibre networks challenge fund, which allows areas in the north-east and across Scotland to enjoy a share of £200 million to stimulate commercial investment in full-fibre networks.

Rural connections are also heavily influenced by mobile coverage. Although the level of 4G coverage has risen well recently, it still lags behind UK levels, with BT saying that mobile networks need better access to public assets at affordable rates. I welcome the Government's plans to roll out 5G with a rural-first approach.

Providing access is only half the battle, however. BT has said that, although access is nearing 100 per cent, take-up is only a third of that. There can be many reasons why people do not use the available access. Some may have fears over cybersafety, while some elderly people may not associate their life success with the internet, so why would they change their minds now? Mr Kelly outlined problems for disadvantaged families. Perhaps some technology needs to be made simpler to deal with that issue. It is wrong to assume that, because someone has the ability to use social media, that translates into an ability to run the digital side of a business. It is

our responsibility, in the Parliament, to do what we can to alleviate those concerns.

We can have all the access in the world but, unless people use it, it will not make a difference. That is why we need to encourage take-up and why the creation of barriers to take-up is not acceptable. The current system counts access as people having an exchange box near their house, but that does not take into account the limited spaces in the box for exchange-to-house connections. Similarly, even with a superfast exchange, if the cable to a house is made of copper, the connection will not be nearly fast enough. In both of those circumstances, the Scottish Government ticks the box of having provided access and moves on, leaving many people without the benefits.

I have highlighted the importance of digital connections in making a real change to a worrying trend in Scotland. Productivity growth will come about only through a carefully planned campaign of increasing access and take-up. I hope that the desire to tick boxes and to get one up on the UK Government will not get in the way of that because, in the end, it would only be holding Scotland back. Take-up is what we require.

16:02

**Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** Broadband connectivity has certainly dominated my case load since I was elected, and I imagine that the same is true for any member who represents a rural or remote part of Scotland. Although the technicalities of connectivity can make for dull reading, the issue is all about what broadband can unlock. In rural and remote Scotland, infrastructure has historically made the difference between communities thriving and communities splintering and people moving elsewhere, and it continues to do so. Infrastructure has always played that role. In the past, that has involved roads, electricity and telephone lines, and now it involves broadband.

We cannot overstate how vital broadband is to ensuring not only that the Highlands and Islands economy stays strong but that people who have been brought up there choose to stay. In relation to all those forms of infrastructure—whether it is the roads 50 years ago, electricity, telephone lines or broadband today—how much attention Governments pay to ensuring that, where the market will fail, they stump up the cash and do not leave it to the market is a test of their concern for those on the periphery in remote and rural Scotland.

It is estimated that, if broadband had been left to the market in the Highlands and Islands, only 25.3 per cent of premises would be connected to fibre

broadband through commercial deployment. However, with Government intervention and investment—I pay tribute to the money from the UK Government as well as the money from the Scottish Government—87.7 per cent of the Highlands area is connected. Nevertheless, the figure is not yet 100 per cent. I hear the frustrations of businesses, young people and families who want access to superfast broadband, and nothing short of 100 per cent will satisfy them.

I return to the point about testing Governments' resolve and their attention to remote and rural parts of Scotland. That is why the Scottish Government's target of 100 per cent is vital to the Highlands and Islands.

**Finlay Carson:** Will the member give way?

**Kate Forbes:** With pleasure.

**Finlay Carson:** The R100 procurement policy makes it clear that it aims to find suppliers who will connect as many premises as possible for the available subsidy, but it is still unclear whether the investment of £600 million will ensure that the 100 per cent target is met. Does Kate Forbes not welcome the fact that, by 2020, everyone will be guaranteed a minimum broadband speed of 10Mbps?

**Stewart Stevenson:** How?

**Finlay Carson:** By using a range of different technologies.

**Kate Forbes:** I clearly welcome any commitment from any Government or member to connect remote places in the Highlands and Islands by using different technologies. However, we need to look to the future. This is what I do not understand about the universal service obligation. Yes, it is welcome that the UK Government wants to connect all premises at a speed of 10Mbps, but that is not the future. We need to be ambitious when it comes to broadband, and the Scottish Government's commitment to 30Mbps is far more ambitious and shows far more concern for broadband's potential to unlock opportunities in the Highlands and Islands than a measly target of 10Mbps.

I return to the need to reach 100 per cent coverage. We are talking about the equivalent of electricity or the roads infrastructure. Across Scotland, there are single-track roads that cannot cope with the current volume of traffic because they were not built as single carriageways. With the greatest public investment in broadband that has ever been made on these islands—£600 million—we have an opportunity not just to meet the demand that exists today but to look five or 10 years down the line and put the infrastructure in place to unlock its potential.

Nobody is unaffected by a lack of access to superfast broadband, including children who have homework to do, people who are working or keeping in touch and businesses, in particular. I will focus on businesses as I close. Small and medium-sized businesses constitute 98 per cent of all enterprises in Scotland—they are the backbone of the economy. In this Parliament, we often hear the accusation that there is a lack of growth in Scotland. Growth is key, but we will drive growth by allowing those small and medium-sized enterprises to access markets and audiences across the world, which can be done on the most remote peninsula in Scotland with access to superfast broadband.

We can see the current need for such access in tourism. The world is coming to Scotland—actually, people are coming to the Highlands, via Edinburgh and maybe Dumfries and Galloway—to see the beauty of this country, and most bookings are made online. Last year, a constituent who has a bed-and-breakfast establishment came to me and said that he had had no bookings for the peak summer season because he had no access to broadband.

**Finlay Carson:** On that point, will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** No, the member is closing.

**Kate Forbes:** We have been considering difficulties in accessing broadband, and mobile connectivity is part of that. Again, we see the Scottish Government, through its 4G infill programme, doing something about that, and I am delighted that the first 60 not-spots have already been identified.

It is all about ambition: 30Mbps rather than a measly 10Mbps, and £600 million rather than a measly 3 per cent of investment. For that, we thank the Scottish Government.

16:08

**Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):** I open by declaring a registrable interest as a partner in a farming business.

From many of the speeches today, it is clear that the Government, although we support its aims in this area, has been too slow to deliver fast and reliable broadband to Scotland. I will highlight the Ofcom figures for my region, as many of my colleagues have done for their regions. The figures are not encouraging: 26,000 Aberdeenshire properties still have broadband speeds below 30Mbps; 15,500 properties do not have 10Mbps; and 4,776 have an abysmal 2Mbps or less. That makes Aberdeenshire one of the least-connected local authorities in the UK; its lack

of coverage is considerably worse than the Scotland-wide figure of 9 per cent.

**Gillian Martin:** Does the member accept that, if we had not intervened, 2Mbps would have been a dream to some of those premises, which would have had no connection whatsoever?

**Peter Chapman:** Broadband speed of 2Mbps is absolutely unacceptable, especially at the end of the DSSB programme, which was funded largely by the UK Government.

We cannot accept the statement in the Government's motion that the gap

"between Scotland and the rest of the UK has been bridged",

because we are still behind—and that is a fact.

I urge the cabinet secretary, rather than boasting of Scotland's remarkable progress, to apologise to Aberdeenshire constituents for sitting on £21 million in funding, which was handed to it in 2014 by the Westminster Government and is still not spent. That could have given many more homes access to decent broadband, but it still sits unspent.

I take a keen interest in today's debate and the improvement of Scotland's digital connectivity, because I cannot access broadband in my rural Strichen home. Despite the nearest cabinet being enabled for superfast broadband, I live too far away to benefit from it. I can achieve something less than 1Mbps down the phone line. I wonder whether I am counted in the 95 per cent, because in theory I am connected. However, if someone has three miles of copper wire between them and the cabinet, it is absolutely no use to them.

I understand the frustration of many rural folks who feel let down by this Government promising access to everyone but failing to deliver. Nearly 20 per cent of my constituency cases since my election in 2016 have related to having either poor broadband speeds or no access at all. That statistic shows that it is a major issue for those living in rural areas. It is nigh on impossible for those trying to run a business in the countryside to do so with poor connectivity.

I was recently contacted by Jane Craigie of Jane Craigie Marketing. She gave a fantastic speech at the NFU Scotland annual general meeting, highlighting the opportunities for rural and farm businesses to develop and grow through better communications. However, her business is being hampered by a lack of broadband. Ms Craigie stated:

"I am passionate about the Scottish Government's aim to develop rural business and am practising this through my own company. The greatest impediment by far to the further development of my business and therefore my recruitment plans is the extremely poor state of broadband

connectivity in my area of Aberdeenshire which, quite frankly, is not fit for domestic, let alone business purposes. This is completely unacceptable in this web-centric era.”

Those are not my words; they are Jane Craigie's words.

**Fergus Ewing:** It is precisely because we want Ms Craigie, and indeed everyone else in Aberdeenshire and the rest of Scotland, to have access to superfast broadband at 30Mbps that we have made our commitment. We are investing £600 million precisely to ensure that Ms Craigie and everybody else gets the access that they need. Surely that should be something that we all welcome.

**Peter Chapman:** I accept that, but why did the Scottish Government cut the funding this year? There was a huge cut in the budget this year, so 2018 has proven to be a wasted year.

Jane Craigie summed up the problems faced by many. She employs two people and would love to employ another two, but the lack of connectivity means that that is virtually impossible. How can a business manage staff without adequate access to online tax forms, payroll systems and internet banking? How can people grow a business if they are unable to communicate with their customers by email or through a website?

The Scottish Government makes much of the achievements of the DSSB programme and, to be fair, we have moved forward. The cabinet secretary tells us that he has spent £400 million reaching 95 per cent of the population, but he never tells us—unless specifically asked in the chamber, as he was today—that of the £403 million spent, the UK Government put in £101 million, local authorities contributed £91 million, BT put in £126 million, HIE and the EU put in £23 million and the Scottish Government put in only £63 million. The truth is that, far from putting in the lion's share of the funding, the Scottish Government contributed only 15 per cent of the total. Far from being short-changed, as the cabinet secretary would argue, Scotland has already received nearly two and a half times the level of funding, per head of population, that England has. That is a hard fact, which the SNP does not like to hear.

Are we going to get the same smoke and mirror figures from this Government on R100 funding? We are 10 months on from the announcement of R100 in July 2017, but we still have no further information on successful procurement, on contracts being signed or on the roll-out process.

We also know that the completion date has slipped from delivery by 2021 to delivery by the end of 2021. Those are not the same thing. We need more clarity on R100, how it will be funded

and whether it will deliver. In Scotland, we deserve better.

16:15

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** The wonderful astronomer and scientist Carl Sagan once said:

“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.”

It is a lovely quotation from a man who was as much a visionary as an astronomer, and it has relevance to the debate today. Technology and raw computing power are increasing at such a rate that they are making things that were previously thought to be impossible routine in today's world. The challenge for us is not just to try our best to keep up but to try and put in place systems that allow society to exploit the power of technology for the greater good of us all.

The computers that took us to the moon in 1969 were only about twice as powerful as a Nintendo games console and our current modern smartphones are way more powerful than the supercomputers of earlier decades. Experts tell us that there has been a trillion-fold increase in computing performance over the past 50 years. If a Nintendo games machine can get us to the moon and back, who knows what lies ahead as computing power accelerates onwards and upwards.

Although our debate focuses on infrastructure, coverage and data speeds, we should never take our eyes off the prize that all of this delivers—the emergence of new ideas and possibilities that we could only dream of before, made possible by the technology that we are creating. We are on a journey, and today's debate gives us a chance to glimpse a little bit of that future. I acknowledge James Kelly's point about closing the poverty gap, not just the digital divide, if we are to succeed in that regard.

Are we doing everything that we can and are we doing it quickly enough? Inevitably, that is what much of the debate has been focused on so far. The key differences in what the Scottish Government is doing for Scotland compared with what is happening anywhere else in the UK are that we are providing total, 100 per cent coverage to all our homes and business over the next three years and we are providing a much higher data speed of 30Mbps for everyone in Scotland, compared with the 10Mbps speed that is the standard for rural Britain. In my view, that UK standard is wrong. If we can do more and we can do it sooner, we should, because other nations are and the risk is that we will get left behind.

Take a look at Estonia, for example. Not so long ago, it was a fairly unknown corner of the Soviet

Union. It is now a confident, technology-driven nation intending to deliver full coverage at 30Mbps a year earlier even than us, and it is promoting take-up of ultrafast 100Mbps data services, which are expected to account for 60 per cent of all its internet subscriptions by 2020. Is it really a surprise, then, that small Estonia leads the way in many aspects of digital business and computing services?

Another example is Singapore. Around 50 years ago, it had a similar income per capita to that of Ghana, but now, thanks to the digital revolution, it is on a par with the USA. The R100 programme investment of £600 million by the Scottish Government to get us our blanket coverage and that high data rate over the next few years is crucial if we are serious about exploiting the opportunities that the digital revolution offers. We would be getting a far higher share of our programme funding from our UK colleagues if the split was comparable to the existing funding arrangements for DSSB.

We also need the communications networks to be the best that they can be to give all our citizens, no matter where they are, the chance to get in on the digital act. There is no point in having fantastic computing power if people cannot share data fast enough through the communications networks. It is a bit like having a Ferrari but only having a dirt-track farm road to drive it on.

Of course, the R100 is not the only development taking place in Scotland. I am pleased to see that our Government is also investing in fixed wireless, 4G mobile and superfast satellite. It is also taking a look at TV white space technology—that is, the unused TV channels between the VHF and UHF parts of the spectrum—to see how best to exploit and deploy those technologies for Scotland. Our digital eggs are thus not all in the one virtual digital basket.

One area that we have not touched on that I would like to highlight is the implications for Scotland of the European Union digital single market. We have yet to hear from those who want Scotland out of Europe and out of the single market whether we should also walk away from the digital single market, which is worth €400 billion per year in data services—not to mention the hundreds of thousands of jobs that it supports.

The European aim is for 100Mbps across all of Europe by 2025 for every household, and common access to all data and content—an end to what we know as geo-blocking—with equal access to online services no matter where one is in Europe. We cannot have all that unless we stay in the digital single market. It is ridiculous for the UK to think it can walk out of the single market but stay in the digital version of the same thing.

The relentless pace of change in technology and computing power is there for us to embrace. If we can, we must, and if we can do more, we should. Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known and discovered. Let us do all that we can to make that happen in Scotland by supporting the Scottish Government's digital investment programme.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Just before I call Clare Adamson, I call Finlay Carson for a brief point of clarification.

**Finlay Carson:** I appreciate you letting me back in, Presiding Officer.

In the heat and emotion of debate, I failed to refer members to my registrable interest as a director of an IT company. I would like to do so now.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Clare Adamson.

16:22

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** On that note, I should probably declare that I am a member of the British Computing Society.

I was interested in the debate this afternoon. Mr Carson has just mentioned passion. I am disappointed at the he-said, she-said rhetoric and who said what in which tweet. I do not think that that will be of interest to our constituents.

I remind Conservative colleagues that it was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Twitter account that put out a branded-up union-flagged "Design is Great Britain" tweet on top of a photograph of the Queensferry crossing—£2.3 billion investment from this Government—that the UK Government had not paid a penny towards. If Conservative members do not mind, I will take their indignation about claiming credit for things with just a little pinch of salt.

I thank Willie Coffey and Mr Kelly for thoughtful speeches and a history of where we are. It reminds me that, in my days of first studying computing, we had punch-card entries for our programming at what was then Glasgow College of Technology and is now Glasgow Caledonian University. That demonstrates how far we have come in this area.

Mr Kelly and Willie Coffey also talked about the digital poverty gap. That concerns me greatly, especially given some of the evidence that we have been hearing on the Social Security Committee on the roll-out of universal credit and the reliance on access to a computer and to the internet to be able to work with that system. I will probably write to Esther McVey with a transcript of

all the concerns that have been raised by Conservative colleagues today, to highlight their recognition that people in the Highlands and rural areas have those problems. That might be contributing to the sanctions that people in those areas are suffering under the Conservative Government.

I want to talk a little about women in the digital economy and how transformational what we have been talking about could be for women. In 2017, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published its paper, "Going Digital: The Future of Work for Women", in which it highlighted how the digital economy is changing in many areas.

The OECD pointed out that digital transformation can strengthen the position of women in the labour market, because more flexible ways of working will present opportunities to combine paid work with caring work, and because less-skilled jobs in the labour market are likely to be replaced. The OECD said:

"Flexibility and choice ... can be beneficial to women and, in particular, may boost their employment rates."

Indeed, there is evidence from the United States that where flexible working is available, the gender pay gap is narrower.

Digital transformation is creating jobs in all sorts of new areas. We talked a little about that in the debate. For example, women have greater representation on Etsy, very many women are taking the opportunities that are afforded by Airbnb, and Uber has a larger proportion of women drivers than traditional taxi firms have, which is to do with the flexibility that is offered. The digital economy is changing our behaviour and it is changing the labour market for women.

Although the gender gap in general IT skills and the use of software at work tends to be small in most countries, women are still greatly underrepresented in the very skilled IT jobs. For all the reasons that we have talked about, and to encourage entrepreneurialism, we must ensure that women have access to the digital economy and the best ways of working.

In the previous parliamentary session, when I was a regional MSP, I was a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. The committee took evidence from Ofcom's then chief executive, Sharon White. I raised with her that although people might think that there are no problems with meeting targets in an urban area such as mine, it is the low-hanging fruit that is picked first, so we still have gaps and issues.

Thanks to the deindustrialisation of the Thatcher Tory years, the biggest brownfield site in Europe is in my constituency—the Ravenscraig site.

Although we will get some great new road infrastructure as a result of the Glasgow city region deal, the new houses that are being built there, and the centre of excellence for building, the BRE Scotland innovation park, have really poor broadband. Given that the issue is a national priority for the Scottish Government, I wonder whether something can be done about that issue in my constituency. I would welcome further talks with the minister about possibilities in that regard.

The Government has done much to improve and increase digital capability in Scotland. Every home and business will have access to superfast broadband by 2021 as a result of the Government's £600 million investment. We can make Scotland a digital beacon, and we can improve the digital economy for all Scotland and especially for women. We should seize the opportunities that that presents.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to closing speeches. I call Mike Rumbles: you can have up to six minutes.

16:28

**Mike Rumbles:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will not take six minutes; I will be brief.

This has been a good debate, although at times it has been a little partisan. One of the best speeches of the afternoon was made by Kate Forbes, who was very positive and gave credit to both the UK Government and the Scottish Government for doing what they can to improve the situation—[*Interruption.*] I heard someone say from a sedentary position, "That's the kiss of death," so I apologise to Kate.

**Kate Forbes:** There goes my career. [*Laughter.*]

**Mike Rumbles:** In all seriousness, we could do with a lot more speeches like that. There are things that genuinely divide us and there are things that unite us, and digital connectivity is one of the most important issues that we must get right for the future development of the economy in Scotland.

I make one plea, and I hope that this is a non-partisan point. I recognise that the cabinet secretary said that he would do what he could to inform people about the roll-out, but it would be helpful if the information was in the contracts that go out. We are talking about the next three and a half years, and people—our constituents—will need and want to know.

I defy any member to say that they have not had complaints about constituents not knowing when they are going to have access to superfast broadband. Putting information into the contracts is the single biggest thing that the cabinet



secretary could do. As I said, I make that point genuinely and in a non-partisan way. Our constituents would really benefit if, in the contract process with the companies who will deliver the service, the cabinet secretary were able to do that. I do not mean that the suppliers need to tell every set of premises—every house or business—when it will be connected, but that they could just let each area know, so that they would have some idea of how they can cope over the next three and a half years.

The debate has been a good one and the subject is one that we can move forward. Of course, I would like all members to support the amendment in my name; I am always an optimist. I can be critical of the Scottish Government—I have been in the debate—but the Liberal Democrats will support the Government's motion because, as it is drafted, there is nothing in it to which we could sincerely object. However, I think that it could have been improved on.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Rhoda Grant. I can allow you a generous six minutes, Ms Grant.

16:31

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** At times, the debate has been totally unedifying, which will have done nothing for people who are desperate to get broadband and who have been sitting watching the debate—probably with their heads in their hands. I was therefore very pleased that my colleague Colin Smyth managed to pull the debate back on to the subject, at which point the speeches improved, in terms of looking very practically at what we need to do. This is not a debate for constitutional or inter-Government wrangling. We really need to build a partnership that includes both our Governments, local authorities and providers, so that we can work together to maximise roll-out of broadband, which is so important to our communities.

It is right to say that the gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK has been narrowed, but it still exists, so we need to work on that. There is also still a gap between urban and rural Scotland. The digital Scotland superfast broadband target was for coverage of 95 per cent of the country, but rural Scotland's figure is much lower than that. Sometimes, looking at the numbers over a broad base hides some of the places that are really losing out.

I want to flag up a contradiction that I heard from the cabinet secretary. In his speech, he stated that R100 will not reach everybody: some will be left behind and therefore there will be a need for something like a voucher scheme for those who cannot be reached. However, I am a bit puzzled

as to what a voucher might buy somebody who has no connectivity.

I had also understood that satellite broadband had never been part of R100. However, further on in his speech, the cabinet secretary said that 100 per cent of premises will have connectivity of 30Mbps plus, so I am a bit confused. In his summing-up, perhaps he will clarify what the position is and where people will be.

Perhaps a better way to do this would be to encourage all the contractors for the three areas—

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Rhoda Grant:** I will, if it is very short.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Rhoda Grant has raised the very important point that the issue is not about just technical access; it is also about affordable access. At the moment, one of the dangers appears to be that, for some rural areas, there are very few suppliers that will actually take on customers. For example, my exchange has only three, but there are 300 in Edinburgh. That has not been part of the debate up until now, but I wonder whether it should be in the future. Furthermore, it should probably be a UK debate and not just a Scottish one.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can allow you additional time, Ms Grant.

**Rhoda Grant:** I add that some areas have no choice at all: there are no suppliers. Therefore we need to make sure that if there is to be a voucher system, there will be somewhere to use to it.

As I was saying, it would surely be better to ask the contractors to work with the community companies—the social enterprises—that are already in place. That would underpin them and help them to roll out further into their communities. If R100 were to become a partnership among all providers, such that the big companies were forced to work with the smaller ones, that would be a huge benefit.

For example, as members might know, SSE and the Ministry of Defence are laying additional fibre to Applecross on the west coast, and an additional cable is being laid to provide broadband to the community. That will be sold off to a large provider, which will supply superfast broadband to a small number of homes in that community. That will take those homes out of the community broadband system, which will totally undermine it, meaning that it will fall because it will be unable to continue with that number of houses being taken out. A small number of rural houses will get superfast broadband, but a large number will end up losing their broadband. That existing broadband is sometimes inadequate, but at least it exists. However, it will stop and those houses will

not get anything at all. We need to prevent that from happening.

We need to get communities on board. We need to treat them with respect, put them on an equal footing with the large companies and, as part of the contracts, force the big companies to work with communities and give them access to backhaul as well, at a reasonable cost, because communities cannot compete with the larger companies.

Access, which Colin Smyth and James Kelly talked about, is important not just in rural areas. It is also important in deprived communities in urban areas, where it can be unaffordable. It is interesting to match up roll-out of broadband with areas that have traditionally been disadvantaged or deprived. On the broadband map, there are areas missing even in the big cities—Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Inverness. The big providers have not enabled broadband in some areas because they know that people in those areas cannot afford to buy it. They are being left behind, but they are also the biggest service users. They are losing out because they are unable to access, for example, services related to benefits and local government. Arguably, the people who most need access to broadband are getting least access.

It is also interesting to note the difference in take-up between urban and rural areas. When broadband is put into a deprived rural area, take-up can be phenomenal and much higher than would be expected in a deprived urban area. When it is put into a deprived urban area, there can be not much take-up at all. That is to do with the cost. In a rural area, it saves people a fortune to have broadband because they can shop and do a number of other things without having to use the car and travel, whereas in an urban area it represents a cost rather than a saving.

We need to look at all those things. Broadband allows access to services and the like, which is really important in rural areas. For example, e-health services save people from having to travel. One of the biggest complaints that I get from my constituents is that they have to travel miles and miles from home, sometimes with overnight stays, just for a healthcare appointment. Such things can be done by videoconference or the like, if that facility is in place. The technology exists, so such things can happen, but people need to be able to use it.

The same applies to e-care, benefits and other public services including common agricultural policy applications and even education, with e-goil being used beyond the Western Isles to get education out into smaller schools to make their curriculum more varied.

A point that has not yet been made in the debate is that the public purse has paid for fibre over and over again. If it was a road, we would be laying motorways on top of motorways. We need to own the fibre to make sure that anybody else who rolls out a public contract using fibre uses what we have already paid for, rather than laying more. What is worse, they own what they lay, although it is paid for from the public purse.

The same goes for mobile connectivity and emergency services coverage. Again, that must be made available to others so that the cost to the consumer is kept down. The gain to the public purse must be maintained, and the coverage must be kept in public ownership. We really need to look at that.

Presiding Officer, I am not sure how much time I have left. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry—I was having a private conversation with Rhoda Grant there. I apologise. You should wrap up now.

**Rhoda Grant:** Okay. Thank you.

I note that digital connectivity is not just there for its own purposes but has a huge economic impact.

This is an important debate in which speeches should not have been about a constitutional wrangle. We must all work together to ensure that people have digital access, because our constituents require it. If we get our heads together, we will be able to go much further than if we are fighting among ourselves.

16:39

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** I point members to my entry in the register of members' interests in which I include a voluntary entry on my ownership of web domains.

I start perhaps with a point of unusual consensus and a shift in the tone of the debate. I welcome the Scottish Government's connectivity ambitions. Equally, I welcome the UK Government's ambitions. Reflecting on Kate Forbes's points, I welcome any ambitions to improve the connectivity in Scotland and the wider world, whether they come from the state, the public sector, the private sector or civil society. I wonder whether, during this afternoon's tit for tat, we have perhaps missed a trick. We are coming to the end of a two-and-a-bit-hour debate, and there are still a few issues with the Government's reaching 100 per cent ambition that I am no further forward in understanding. I will touch on some of those issues in the hope that we can have a sensible and informed last few minutes of debate.

For example, from the comments that have been made, it is still quite unclear what economic

model will be used to reach some of the hardest-to-reach parts of our isles. I sit on the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. When we looked at the issue, there was wide general understanding that reaching Scotland's remote rural areas and island communities will be difficult and expensive and will require quite an open mind on how we do it. Therefore, what is the financial model that is required to reach those areas? What technological mixes do we need? We cannot always use fibre to reach some of those communities, businesses and households. Someone in a croft in a very remote part of Scotland might rely on a very different technology from somebody in North Ayrshire, who might seem close to a suburban area but is still too far from the cabinet to get superfast broadband, as is currently the case for many people.

We have not really had a discussion about how value for money will be at the centre of the entire process—by that, I mean the contract and tender process, and how the quite substantial sum of public money will be spent. Very little detail on that has come out of today's debate. How will the contracts be tendered? How will they be administered? How will we ensure that there is plurality of opportunity for not just the big well-known providers but a wide range of providers, including smaller local tech suppliers? When and how will the three lots—as described by the cabinet secretary—translate into timescales for delivery? There is still a lack of detail on that.

More importantly, once people are connected to superfast broadband—and we hope that they will be—what are we doing to address the real issues around digital skills, affordability, take-up rates and public awareness of the digital divide that we agree exists? Thereafter, what are the plans for ultrafast and full fibre? How will new and emerging technologies replace speeds of 10Mbps—or even 30Mbps—with 300Mbps or 1000Mbps.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I agree that we need to help people to become digitally aware and enabled. Does the member agree that an important role exists for public spaces—libraries perhaps being paramount among them—where people can get the education and early introduction to accessing the internet and other services? Councils should be very wary of reducing the number of public spaces, because that would touch on this policy area, as well as many others.

**Jamie Greene:** I am happy to align myself with Stewart Stevenson's comments. I frequently hold surgeries in libraries, which are good locations to hold them. Every library that I have been to has had a space where people go to access computers and high-speed internet. There is free public wi-fi in many such spaces. They make a

real difference in allowing people to do activities such as creating CVs, applying for jobs, connecting with businesses and paying bills. The spaces provide people with opportunities that they might not have at home, and I will touch on that later.

In the ping-pong of today's debate, we might have missed an opportunity to demonstrate that, as a Parliament, we are willing to work together to progress the agenda of how Scotland can be a leading digital nation.

The "Digital Disruption and Small Business in Scotland" report by the Federation of Small Businesses said that, although there is a growing recognition of the need for businesses to transform digitally, there is

"a gap between the current use of digital technology by Scottish firms and the pace of change"

and that

"The majority of businesses in Scotland remain unprepared for the coming digital onslaught."

I say yes to digital connectivity and also yes to digital ambition.

Valid questions have been asked today around issues such as why the procurement process for phase 2 took so long and why suppliers will not be signed up until 2019, as we learned today. There are also valid questions to be asked about how the £600 million that was promised by the cabinet secretary for phase 2 will be introduced into the Scottish budget, given that it was notably absent from this year's budget. Further questions can be asked around the total cost of what it will take to deliver broadband access to 100 per cent of premises and how much of that cost will be met through a mix of state intervention, recouped revenue from commercial take-up as people access commercial services and investment directly from the commercial sector, which we have not heard much about..

Among some of the faux outrage this afternoon, some valid points were raised. Edward Mountain was right to question the timescales for the Government's ambitions and any ambiguity that exists in that regard. James Kelly was right to talk about the fact that, although we see telecommunications almost as a utility these days, they are one that many cannot afford. Willie Coffey was right to talk about the importance of participating in a worldwide digital market. All those are important points. However, what struck me as notable was the lack of detail from the front benches in today's debate.

Before taking on the role of spokesman for transport and infrastructure, I was my party's digital economy spokesman. One of the most challenging aspects of that was being a shadow

spokesman without anyone in particular to shadow. What I mean by that is that, when one tries to dig beneath the surface to find out who is leading on Scotland's digital future, there is a confused picture of governance. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution is responsible for overall digital strategy; the Deputy First Minister is responsible for cybersecurity and skills; the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, who is here today, is responsible for improving connectivity, which is no easy task; the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs is apparently in charge of digital participation; and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work is in charge of promoting Scotland's digital businesses. I mean no disrespect to the cabinet secretary who is representing the Government here today, but there is clearly an issue with digital leadership, responsibility and accountability at the heart of the Scottish Government.

In focusing solely on connectivity, the discussion is not focusing on what we do with that connectivity. What are we doing as a Parliament to ensure that society is equipped with the skills that it needs to take advantage of this newfound connectivity when it arrives? What are we doing to ensure that every fibre—pardon the pun—of Government's being is focused on supporting the digital potential of every business in Scotland? Nowhere in today's debate did I get a glimpse of the Government's strategy on how it plans to plug the gap caused by the inadequate levels of science, technology, engineering and mathematics teachers in our schools, and nor did I hear about what it can or should do about affordability, which is an important issue because, for many households, the cost of connectivity is simply too high. Further, I heard nothing about how connectivity will be used to help us access public services.

Like everyone, I want 100 per cent of Scotland to be connected to superfast or ultrafast broadband speeds, with full 5G connectivity all over. I want investors to come to Scotland, see it as an international hub of connectivity and bring their businesses here, and I want them to be met by a skilled workforce that is waiting for them, ready to help them expand, and a Government that has a clear strategy and vision to help them grow their businesses. However, today's debate simply reinforces the view that I have long held, which is that, if we focus solely on how much, how fast and when, we are collectively failing our constituents in their attempts to make Scotland the digital country that it could and should be.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Fergus Ewing. Could you take us to decision time, Mr Ewing?

16:49

**Fergus Ewing:** I will endeavour so to do, Presiding Officer. I have enjoyed most of today's debate, which has included excellent speeches from across the parties, as Mike Rumbles said. I am pleased that, in the latter half of the debate, there was a shift towards recognition that Scotland's need for proper digital connectivity in the modern world is now absolute, as Kate Forbes eloquently argued—there is no disagreement on that between the political parties.

Mr Kelly gave a telling speech, and I was grateful that he pointed out that there is a lower rate of access to the internet among people from deprived communities who have lower incomes. To access benefits, as well as for most transactions, access to the internet is becoming nearly essential in this day and age, and I stress that we take that issue very seriously indeed. Already, 99 per cent of Scottish libraries offer free public wi-fi, following Scottish Government investment, but there is much more to do. In designing Scotland's new social security agency, we have been clear that we will offer support through a variety of channels and will assist those people who want to apply digitally but who lack the skills or technology so to do. I place that on the record because Mr Kelly devoted his speech to that very important topic.

Perhaps too much time has been spent on percentages. My late father was an accountant, and, somewhat mischievously or cheekily, he opined that 50 per cent of people do not understand percentages. I do not imagine that that is true here in the chamber, but we got a bit bogged down with percentages, so I will try to deal with the basic points that emerged in the debate. Everybody agrees that access to high-speed broadband is important. The Scottish Government thinks that 30Mbps—that is now the definition of superfast; it has gone up from 24Mbps—is the standard that we should aspire to and that 10Mbps is too slow.

From people in commerce, we hear that a universal service obligation in Scotland of 10Mbps would lead almost entirely to wireless solutions rather than fibre, which providers would not be able to supply. Were it not for R100, I do not believe that we would be able to complete the task. That is where there is a difference of principle. As Kate Forbes said, we believe that, in order to equip Scotland digitally, the public and private sectors need to work in partnership—one sector working alone would not work.

The private companies are investing in our towns and cities—there has been a plethora of recent announcements, all of which are welcome. We obviously do not have a preference for any individual company, so we have welcomed all the

major announcements by commercial companies over recent weeks. However, they will not cover our remote parts, including our islands, which is why public investment is necessary. The investment of £600 million is the largest investment in any single project that there has ever been in the UK, and it will focus on an outside-in approach—a point that Rhoda Grant made. Other countries, such as Estonia and Germany, decided a long time ago that the outside-in approach was necessary if their rural communities were not to be left behind. The market would not be able to do anything other than fail those communities, for very simple reasons.

I think that there is an intellectual divide between the Conservative Party and the rest, and it would not surprise me if that is how matters will rest tonight at the vote, although I very much hope that the Conservatives will support our motion.

I also consider that, as I argued before the select committee, it is essential to have a UK body such as a committee—which I presume Mr Hancock would chair—that meets on a standing basis and involves the DAs. In order to complete the task with the least difficulty and via the most friction-free pathway, we need to align the 10Mbps USO with the part of the R100 project that involves those to whom we will not be able to connect by means of fibre.

In my statement to Parliament last December, I clearly stated that £600 million is an initial investment, and I explained that it would deliver superfast access to a significant proportion of unserved premises. I also clearly stated that I did not expect it to deliver 100 per cent coverage on its own. I said:

“There will ... be further phases through which we will ensure that superfast broadband reaches each and every premises ... However, the initial phase is the key phase. Extending a future-proofed accessible fibre network to remote rural areas will provide the essential platform for delivering superfast broadband for all.”—[*Official Report*, 19 December 2017; c 15.]

We expect our record investment to deliver a fantastic coverage outcome, which will push new fibre into rural areas, but we are planning for the possibility that that may not complete the job, and we are scoping options for future phases, which may include a superfast broadband voucher scheme. However, it will be possible for us to know whether that is necessary only after the outcome of the procurement process is known. After all, until that tender process is completed it will not be possible for us to know what the commercial companies in the three segments will deliver.

In reply to Mr Greene, I point out that I am in charge of the project—the buck stops with me. I have clear responsibility. Clear lines of

responsibility are set out and there is no confusion whatsoever. I am determined to work with everyone to discharge that responsibility.

**Rhoda Grant:** Given the cabinet secretary's comments about being unsure whether R100 will reach everyone, how many people does he assume it will reach and how long will the others have to wait?

**Fergus Ewing:** R100 is designed to reach every home and business in Scotland by 2021—that is our aim, plan and determination. The question is, how many homes and businesses will we be able to deliver to through the first phase and with the £600 million funding and how many homes and businesses will receive their connection by means of fibre?

The benefits of fibre in future proofing, given the speeds at which access can be obtained, is clear. However, members may be interested to know that it is not possible under state aid rules to mandate, require or prescribe that fibre be used as opposed to alternative technologies. Therefore, it is clear that a voucher scheme will have to be considered, although only early next year will it be clear whether that will be necessary. If such a scheme proves to be necessary—which may be the more likely scenario—a fair amount of funding from the UK Government at that point would assist us in achieving that end.

**Mike Rumbles:** What does the cabinet secretary think of requiring the tendering process to state that those who want to do the work must be able to tell people when their work will be completed, area by area?

**Fergus Ewing:** The tender process that was announced in Parliament is under way. I am happy to confirm to Mr Rumbles that, as soon as the process of competitive dialogue is complete, there will be an announcement about the plans that will be put in place.

I very much hope that we can reset the relationship with the UK Government. I very much hope that Mr Hancock will acknowledge that the UK Government has the responsibility for the internet and for mobile telephony—as he admits. I very much hope that he will accept that that responsibility brings with it a financial duty, and I very much hope that he will accept a message from this Parliament that a contribution of just 3 per cent, which is around £21 million out of an estimated initial total of £600 million, is simply insufficient and unfair. Finally, I very much hope that that argument will be advanced over the coming weeks and months.

The Scottish Government is absolutely determined that Scotland's citizens and businesses will have access to superfast broadband at 30Mbps, not 10Mbps, and that

everybody should have it by the end of 2021. That is our pledge, and that is what I am determined to deliver.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Peter Chapman is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Mike Rumbles will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-12010.2, in the name of Peter Chapman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-12010, in the name of Fergus Ewing, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### For

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

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 28, Against 84, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Colin Smyth is agreed to, the amendment of the name of Mike Rumbles will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S5M-12010.3, in the name of Colin Smyth, which seeks to amend S5M-12010, in the name of Fergus Ewing, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)  
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### Against

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)

#### Abstentions

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 104, Against 2, Abstentions 6.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The amendment in the name of Mike Rumbles is pre-empted.

The final question is, that motion S5M-12010, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on Scotland's digital connectivity, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament recognises that the Scottish Government's 95% fibre broadband target does not guarantee superfast broadband speeds and that there remains a digital divide in Scotland, where many rural and deprived communities have slow or no broadband access; acknowledges that progress has been made in improving overall broadband coverage from a low base; recognises that, as well as the role played by the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme, including local authority partners, communities have also played their part in increasing access by creating their own broadband systems, which should be supported by the R100 roll-out, and calls on the Scottish and UK governments to work together to provide universal coverage that is future-proofed, where all communities have access to affordable, high-speed broadband and ensures that Scotland is a world leader in digital connectivity.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time.

*Meeting closed at 17:03.*

## Correction

The First Minister has identified an error in her contribution and provided the following correction.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):**

At col 12, paragraph 1—

*Original text—*

Let me repeat that the numbers that have been published this week show that the number of police officers in Scotland is 963 more than the number that we inherited in 2007.

*Corrected text—*

Let me repeat that the numbers that have been published this week show that the number of police officers in Scotland is 936 more than the number that we inherited in 2007.



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

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