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AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Wednesday 5 September 2018**

**Session 5**



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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 5 September 2018

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Finance and the Constitution

#### “Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland”

1. **Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recently published GERS figures. (S5O-02299)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** GERS provides estimates of revenue raised in Scotland and spending for Scotland, under the current constitutional arrangements. It does not report on the finances of the Scottish Government.

GERS shows that Scotland's tax revenue is rising and that its notional deficit is falling, on the back of continued economic growth, rising exports and falling unemployment. That success and wider potential are directly threatened by the United Kingdom Government's drive to take Scotland out of the world's largest single market. That poses a huge risk to Scottish jobs, investment and living standards, which is why we will do all that we can to secure the least damaging Brexit possible.

**Richard Lyle:** I, for one, welcome that Scotland's public finances are improving and encourage every member in this chamber to celebrate the news that overall revenue in Scotland is £60 billion, for the first time ever. Surely the cabinet secretary agrees that such figures underline that Scotland has a productive and growing economy, despite the UK Government's London-centric economic policies.

**Derek Mackay:** Further to the figures, it is fair to say that over the summer a number of economic indicators in Scotland have shown a very welcome trend: falling unemployment, increased productivity and the continuation of Scotland being an attractive place for foreign direct investment—second only to London. Other indicators show an increase in confidence.

That is all the more reason to build on that success, which is why I welcome so much of the economic interventions that the First Minister announced yesterday.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** I call Richard Lyle—*[Interruption.]* You do not have

another question? Okay. That is quite enough from Richard Lyle. *[Laughter.]* Sorry, Richard. I call Murdo Fraser.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Richard Lyle strangely omitted to mention that the GERS figures tell us that the union dividend in Scotland amounts to £1,882 for every man, woman and child, which leads to record higher public spending per capita in Scotland of £1,576—so we are spending more than the UK average on schools, hospitals and all the things that matter to us. Does the cabinet secretary agree that it would be reckless folly to put those fiscal transfers from the rest of the UK at risk by pursuing a policy of Scottish separation?

**Derek Mackay:** On the contrary, as Murdo Fraser will expect me to say, small advanced economies around the world are doing better than Scotland. What is the one thing that they have that we do not have? It is independence. If we had the full levers of independence, we would be able to stimulate our economy even further and have a more prosperous and fairer society.

Murdo Fraser referenced the notional deficit. That notional deficit is a product of the current constitutional position, not Scottish independence.

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** Given the £13.4 billion deficit that is reported in GERS, will the cabinet secretary and author of the cuts commission report say what areas of public spending he would propose to cut in his plan to sever Scotland's links with the rest of the UK?

**Derek Mackay:** James Kelly has had a number of months in which to read the growth commission's report, but it appears that he still has not read it. The report sets out a way in which we can grow the economy and our public services and reduce the notional deficit at the same time. The deficit would be reduced while public spending increased in real terms. That is the reality of what the growth commission proposed.

#### Onshore and Offshore Revenues

2. **Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what Scotland's onshore and offshore revenues were in 2017-18, and how these compared with the previous year. (S5O-02300)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** According to the latest figures, overall revenue in Scotland reached £60 billion in 2017-18—up more than £3 billion on the previous year—and included a £1 billion increase in offshore revenue. That growth underlines the fact that we have a productive and growing economy, despite the United Kingdom Government's London-centric economic policies.

With the limited economic powers that are currently at our disposal, the actions that we are taking to promote sustainable economic development are helping to ensure that the key economic indicators are moving in the right direction.

**Fulton MacGregor:** One important point about the GERS figures and what they mean for an independent Scotland that should be reiterated comes directly from the Fraser of Allander institute, which said:

"If the very purpose of independence is to take different choices about the type of economy and society that we live in, then a set of accounts based upon the world today will tell us little about the long-term finances of an independent Scotland."

Does the cabinet secretary agree that, with independence, the Scottish Government could design policies that would be tailored to Scotland and not UK Government circumstances?

**Derek Mackay:** Of course we could. That is the essence of what the growth commission said about how, with control of people, productivity and participation, we could make a substantial difference to Scotland's economy. If we had all the levers of control, we could make different choices about, for example, UK Government expenditure in Scotland on defence, and not invest in Trident nuclear missiles on the Clyde. That is one substantial example of how we could make different choices from those that the UK Government makes about how it spends resources in Scotland.

We could do better if we had control of more economic levers to grow our economy.

**Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):** Offshore revenues might be up but, last year, they were at their second-lowest level ever, after the 2013 independence white paper told us that an independent Scotland would be dependent on estimated oil revenues of around £7 billion a year by now. How does that prediction compare to the real figures of today?

**Derek Mackay:** In fairness, nobody—no economist—predicted the international downturn in the oil and gas sector that affected the UK and Scotland. It has been a major contributor to the subdued performance of the Scottish economy.

Recognising that point, is it not to be welcomed that there are signs of growth and recovery for jobs, income and revenues from the North Sea sector? Is it not worthy of some reflection that North Sea revenues have contributed £333 billion to the chancellor's coffers? We should continue to support the sector to ensure the growth in the offshore industry and the onshore supply chain. Onshore revenues have increased by a substantial £2 billion during the past year.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I think that the cabinet secretary has already touched on this, but can he advise members how much revenue has accrued to the UK Treasury at current prices from the Scottish sector of the North Sea since oil and gas were first discovered?

**Derek Mackay:** I can confirm that the figure of £333 billion accruing to the UK Treasury that I have just given is at today's prices. That is a substantial contribution to the Chancellor. Of course, should we choose to seek it, there are as many barrels of oil and gas still to come, if we make the right interventions in tax, exploration and innovation.

All that is part of a wider economic strategy to grow our offshore and onshore economies.

### **Austerity (Impact on Public Services)**

3. **Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what impact 10 more years of austerity could have on public services in Scotland. (S5O-02301)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** The Scottish Government has repeatedly highlighted the devastating impact that the United Kingdom Government's austerity agenda is having on Scottish families and public services, and has called for the UK Government to stop causing such unnecessary hardship.

In contrast, the Scottish Government's innovative approach to income tax policy has reversed this year's real-terms budget cuts imposed by the UK Government, ensuring that the majority of Scottish taxpayers will pay less tax than the rest of the UK, while continuing to provide certainty and stability for Scotland's public services.

Prolonged austerity is damaging for us all and it is vital that the Chancellor uses his autumn budget to change course.

**Neil Findlay:** The SNP cuts commission says that we would see eye-watering levels of cuts of up to 11 per cent of gross domestic product, which would impact desperately on public services. It would also mean a £5 billion solidarity payment to the UK Government and introduce something called flexicurity, which is the ability to sack people more easily. Does the cabinet secretary, the co-author of the report, agree with and sign up to all the proposals within it?

**Derek Mackay:** As a member of the growth commission, which Neil Findlay has just referenced, I am proud of the recommendations, which show how we can grow our economy, deliver a fairer society and engage around

productivity, participation, gender issues and inequality in a way that is good for society in the round.

Austerity and continued austerity are products of the union that is so loved by Neil Findlay. The growth commission rejects austerity. The deficit would be reduced while public spending increased in real terms. The way to deliver for our society is to accelerate that inclusive economic growth, not to continue austerity under successive UK Governments.

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the chaos that is emanating from Brexit—which Mr Findlay supports—is having a devastating effect on the Scottish public sector and the Scottish public finances and that, therefore, it is imperative that this Parliament gets the powers to protect this country?

**Derek Mackay:** Yes, I agree with that. There is a consensus that Brexit started off as a Tory gamble, then became a guddle and now is just a clear act of economic self-harm. It is harmful to our communities and businesses and to the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK. That is why we are trying to get to the least worst Brexit possible. We know just how damaging it is.

**Neil Findlay:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. What opportunity is there for members who deliberately mislead the chamber to correct the record? Could you provide some guidance on that to the member who has just spoken?

**The Presiding Officer:** I note Mr Findlay's comment but, as he knows, all members have the opportunity to ask further questions, submit written questions or write to members who they think may not have provided accurate information.

**Neil Findlay:** Do members have the right to tell lies about other members?

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Findlay is aware that that language is not acceptable in this Parliament. I ask him to withdraw that term.

**Neil Findlay:** I withdraw the word "lies" and replace it with the word "misleading".

#### **"Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland"**

**4. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I will give the cabinet secretary another chance to reconsider his answer.

To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the recent "Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland" figures. (S5O-02302)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** GERS provides estimates of revenue raised in Scotland and spending for Scotland, under the current constitutional arrangements.

We are seeing a strengthening Scottish economy. Scotland's economy grew twice as fast as that of the United Kingdom at the start of this year, productivity is increasing and the latest EY attractiveness survey showed that Scotland remains the top UK region outside London for foreign direct investment projects.

**Edward Mountain:** To me, the GERS figures show that, as Murdo Fraser has already said, the union dividend delivered £1,882 for every person in Scotland, up from £1,400 the previous year. Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is thanks to the on-going co-operation of the UK Government that Scotland can continue to spend more to support our vital public services?

**Derek Mackay:** Scotland has more than paid its way within the United Kingdom. We have contributed substantially. The point of the work that is being done around what independence could do for Scotland is to show a path that rejects austerity, can grow our economy and can create a more inclusive society by using all the tools that are at our disposal. That is the kind of vision that we have for Scotland.

I say again that the current national deficit is a product of the current constitutional position rather than the opportunity that would come with Scottish independence.

#### **Brexit (United Kingdom Government Technical Notices)**

**5. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the potential impact on Scotland of the United Kingdom Government's recently published technical notices to prepare for leaving the European Union without a withdrawal agreement. (S5O-02303)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell):** The UK Government's technical notices lay bare the risks that Scottish businesses, the economy and public services would face as a result of a no-deal situation. From the bureaucratic burden that will be imposed on EU imports and exports to the need to strike a wide range of no-deal deals before the end of March, the notices only add to the uncertainty and chaos surrounding the current Tory Brexit.

**Gordon MacDonald:** Will the cabinet secretary join me in calling again on the UK Government to rule out a disastrous no-deal Brexit and focus

instead on securing the best outcome for us all, which—short of staying in the EU—is to remain part of the single market and the customs union?

**Michael Russell:** There is no doubt that staying in the EU is the best option. We have constantly argued that, if that option is not to be taken, the only acceptable change would be to stay in the single market and the customs union. All opinion and research support that and it is extraordinary that the UK Government is now talking openly about a no-deal situation. Mervyn King commented on that Government's incompetence today, and we should all think about that. How is it possible that we have got to this stage? It can only be because Brexit is now a Tory civil war.

### **Local Taxation and Local Government Finance (Reform)**

**6. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what approach it plans to reform local tax and local government finance. (S5O-02304)

**The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes):** The Scottish Government will set out its financial settlement for local government later this year as part of the 2019-20 Scottish budget and welcomes constructive engagement in that process from all political parties, including Mr Harvie's.

**Patrick Harvie:** The Government welcomed constructive involvement when it created its commission on local tax reform, in which we all took part in good faith. One simple way in which it could return to the stalled agenda of local tax reform relates to the creation of a power for local government to introduce a transient visitor levy—a tourism tax. To be super clear, I am not asking the minister whether that would be a good or a bad policy, but I want to know what possible reason there is that the decision on whether to introduce such a tax should be a Scottish Government choice rather than a local government one.

**Kate Forbes:** The Scottish Government has made clear its position on local discretionary tax powers, but the door is open on negotiations as part of the budget process. I believe that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work has already been in touch with Patrick Harvie to take forward those negotiations. That is the most appropriate forum for all discussions, not least those on local taxation. I do not intend to pre-empt those budget discussions.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** On a similar note, the minister will be aware that the City of Edinburgh Council voted for a tourist tax, which could raise £11 million a year to be invested in areas where tourism puts pressure on the city's infrastructure and to improve public services. I

note a slight move in the Government's position. Does that mean that the Government has confidence that Scottish councils can establish and could deliver effective tourist tax schemes for their areas?

**Kate Forbes:** The member heard my answer to Patrick Harvie. If the Labour Party, along with other parties in the chamber, can make credible proposals for local discretionary tax powers, among other tax powers, I am sure that the cabinet secretary will listen to them. From what I saw of its engagements last year, finding a credible position on tax powers will be difficult for the Labour Party, but the cabinet secretary remains open to negotiation.

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the minister guarantee that any reform to local taxation will not increase its complexity or be used simply to increase taxes on hard-working families?

**Kate Forbes:** As part of the budget process, there are discussions between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on next year's local government finance settlement. Those are already under way and the outcome will be announced later this year as part of the normal budget process. The current local government finance system is kept under constant review by the Scottish Government and COSLA, which ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

### **Non-domestic Rates Reform (Implementation)**

**7. Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what level of engagement there has been on the Barclay implementation consultation on non-domestic rates reform. (S5O-02305)

**The Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy (Kate Forbes):** We are consulting extensively on those important reforms. We have established the Barclay implementation advisory group to advise on the implementation. The group includes representatives from all the key non-domestic rates stakeholder groups including the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry, the Scottish Property Federation and the Scottish Retail Consortium along with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Assessors Association. It has met five times since the start of the year and its views were instrumental in the design of the consultation document.

The consultation closes on 17 September and I encourage all stakeholders to engage in it and submit their views. My officials have continued to consult a range of stakeholders and I plan to meet in the next few weeks representatives from



business organisations, local authorities, sports clubs, the charitable sector and independent schools.

**Gordon Lindhurst:** It seems clear from the programme for government that the domestic rates bill will take forward most of the Barclay review recommendations apart from, for example, the key recommendation that the large business supplement should be reduced and made more competitive. Is it still the intention to ignore that key recommendation? If so, on what basis is it being picked out?

**Kate Forbes:** That is certainly a matter for the budget process. I have encouraged other parties to put forward credible proposals for inclusion in the budget and I know that the cabinet secretary's door is open if the member wants to discuss things such as the large business supplement recommendation, which the Barclay review said should be considered only when it is affordable to do so.

In the meantime, we have focused on supporting small businesses and we have measures that are unique in the United Kingdom—such as the growth accelerator, which applies to large and small businesses—to ensure that Scotland is a good place to do business.

## Economy, Jobs and Fair Work

### Manufacturing (Renewable Technologies)

**1. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how many contracts for the manufacture of renewable technologies have been awarded to Scottish-based companies in the last five years and what the total value is of these. (S5O-02309)

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** The information, which relates to commercial discussions between developers, tier 1 contractors and the wider supply chain, is not collected centrally by either the Scottish or the United Kingdom Government, and difficulties remain because of the use of standard industrial classification codes for estimation of employment impacts.

However, there is increasing published evidence concerning the scale and value of renewable energy development to Scotland's economy. That comes in the form of economic impact studies capturing activity and jobs in manufacturing as well as in operation and maintenance, research and innovation, and environmental and other services. The Office for National Statistics has produced estimates of low-carbon and renewable energy sector jobs, with some detailed breakdown by technologies. However, those details require refinement.

**Alex Rowley:** Is the minister aware that, in the 1970s, the Offshore Supplies Office was established with the objective of securing 70 per cent of the North Sea supply chain for UK companies? Hundreds of companies provided thousands of jobs as a result. When it comes to renewables, I note the recent comments from the former energy minister, Brian Wilson, who said:

“As the windiest country in Europe, we should be angry and embarrassed that every single turbine around us has been imported.”

When is the minister going to introduce a manufacturing strategy for Scotland? When is the Government going to accept that if we are to get the economic benefits and jobs from the renewables sector, we need the state to play a role? We need a Government that will stand up for Scotland, and a Government that will bring jobs to Scotland.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** When Richard Leonard, Mr Rowley's party leader, was standing outside Burntisland Fabrications taking selfies, it was this Government that was helping to save the business; a little bit of recognition by Mr Rowley of the efforts that have been made by the Government to support the supply chain in offshore wind would be welcome.

I have respect for Mr Wilson as a former minister. However, Mr Wilson has predicted the death knell of the offshore wind industry in recent years and he is obviously not aware of the work that is in the pipeline. In Scotland, we now have 4GW of offshore wind consented and 1.4GW of offshore wind projects under construction, in addition to the 588MW Beatrice field that is being developed in the Moray Firth at this moment.

This Government takes the needs of the supply chain very seriously. Before the UK Government established the offshore wind industry council, we established the offshore wind industry group. We have a detailed supply chain working group, which I would be happy to share details of with Mr Rowley. The group works closely with industry to maximise the supply chain benefits for the Scottish economy, and I am happy to meet Mr Rowley any time to discuss our work in that respect.

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Figures that were published by the Improvement Service in collaboration with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities earlier this week show that the number of Scottish businesses that sell to their local councils has almost halved nationwide over the past decade, with more contracts being awarded to companies based outside Scotland. What action will the minister take to reverse that worrying trend?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** As I said earlier, with respect to the renewable energy sector, we are

working with developers, Scottish Renewables and other key stakeholders, such as the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, to maximise develop supply chain opportunities for Scottish businesses. We monitor closely as best we can the economic impact of projects, and useful contributions have been made by Scottish Power and SSE and tidal generators such as Nova Innovation, which provide detailed information about the supply chain impact for the Scottish economy. The position is not perfect, and the UK Government would agree with that. Both Governments work closely together to maximise the supply chain opportunities for the Scottish economy and, in the case of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the UK economy as a whole. I reassure Dean Lockhart that we take the issue very seriously and that developers know that economic impact is a key material consideration in planning applications, in which we look for detail on supply chain benefits.

### **Temporary and Seasonal Workers' Rights (Edinburgh)**

**2. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve and protect temporary and seasonal workers' rights in Edinburgh. (S5O-02310)

**The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn):** The Government is committed to fair work and we want Scotland to be a world-leading fair work nation. Scotland performs best of the four United Kingdom countries for paying the living wage; we have published statutory guidance on fair work in procurement and we work constructively with the Scottish Trades Union Congress through a memorandum of understanding and biannual meetings with the First Minister to promote fair work across Scotland. There is more to do. Although employment law remains reserved to the UK Parliament, I have committed to publishing a fair work action plan before the end of this year, which will set out the steps that we will take using the powers at our disposal.

**Kezia Dugdale:** Is the minister aware of the fair fringe charter? It is a voluntary scheme, much like his business pledge, which encourages employers to promote decent wages and trade union recognition. What can the minister do between now and next year's Edinburgh festivals to ensure that employers pay a decent wage and look after workers at such an important time of the year?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I agree with the tenor of Ms Dugdale's question. I go back to the point that employment law is reserved, so we cannot impose these things. On the basis of operating voluntary schemes, I am aware of the terms of the fair fringe charter and commend the efforts of the people

involved. Earlier this year, I discussed with the better than zero campaign the issues that caused the rise of the charter. I have corresponded with the people behind the charter and look to better understand what they seek to achieve and how we can work together to ensure that fair work is a hallmark of the Edinburgh fringe.

### **Edinburgh and South-east City Region Deal**

**3. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its investment in the £1.3 billion Edinburgh and south-east city region deal will help to deliver inclusive economic growth across the region and benefit residents in Midlothian North and Musselburgh. (S5O-02311)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** The Scottish Government has committed £300 million over 15 years to the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal to support delivery of a programme of investment to stimulate inclusive economic growth and create jobs right across the city region. The deal was signed in August by the First Minister and we look forward to working with partners in the coming years to deliver it. The partners will use the deal to deliver a transformative impact across the whole city region and deliver new jobs, new homes and skills training. For the two areas that Colin Beattie highlighted, there will be direct investment in the Easter Bush campus of the University of Edinburgh in Midlothian, which features prominently in the data driven innovation programme; in the food and drink Innovation campus, which will be located at Craighall next to the Queen Margaret University campus at Musselburgh; and in a £120 million upgrade to the Sheriffhall roundabout to deliver benefits to all users of that part of the A720 Edinburgh bypass.

**Colin Beattie:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that Scottish Government investment will help the region to continue to thrive and grow and fulfil our ambition for it to be one of the fairest and most inclusive areas in the country? I ask him to set out how the Government's investment in such deals across Scotland matches that of the United Kingdom Government.

**Michael Matheson:** Inclusive growth was a key consideration in the development of the south-east Scotland city region deal. Our £25 million investment in the integrated regional employability and skills programme will maximise the synergies between the different projects within the deal and equip people across the region to benefit from the additional jobs that will be created by the investment over the next 10 to 20 years.

With city region deals across Scotland to date, we have matched and in some cases exceeded

the UK Government's commitment. So far, the Scottish Government has committed to invest £1.125 billion over the next 10 to 20 years, compared to the UK Government's commitment of £1.046 billion.

#### **Retail Representatives in Renfrewshire (Meetings)**

**4. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of retailers in Renfrewshire, and what issues were discussed. (S5O-02312)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** Ministers regularly meet and correspond with retailers and business organisations representing businesses across Scotland, including many in Renfrewshire, as part of our on-going engagement with business sectors. My colleagues and I have had several meetings recently to discuss issues such as business rates, town centre regeneration and the economy.

**Neil Bibby:** We all know what a challenge it is to attract businesses to our town centres and support our local retailers. The Paisley 2021 campaign, which was driven by the community, showed a vision of what the town centre could be, but I know from speaking to local businesses in Paisley that it has not been immune to the retail slump. What is the Scottish Government doing to support retailers in town centres such as Paisley and to help attract visitors? Does the minister agree that, against that backdrop, the decision by Renfrewshire Council to hike up parking charges by as much as 33 per cent will only make it harder to attract visitors to Paisley and is tantamount to economic vandalism?

**Derek Mackay:** Neil Bibby fairly referred to the city of culture bid, which was cross party and consensual and which energised Paisley and inspired confidence in its people. I am tempted to do some political knockabout, but I will resist that temptation and say this: the town of Paisley is a proud town that deserves our unity and joint energies to try to ensure that it is a place for the future. What kind of measures can we take? We can provide a competitive tax environment for properties and businesses in Paisley and a focus on events and investment. The Scottish Government will do everything that we can to support that. That community cohesion is really important, so let us not go back to the past in Paisley by having cheap party division on the issue; let us stay united on the big ideas that will regenerate Paisley and beyond. It is that kind of vision that will stimulate the economy and provide the attractions that will turn around Paisley's fortunes and on which there is consensus in the town.

#### **Exports (South Scotland)**

**5. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** I point members to my registered interest as a business owner.

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to promote the export of goods from the South Scotland region. (S5O-02313)

**The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee):** As outlined in the programme for government, we will work to boost the value and range of Scottish products, services and businesses in overseas markets. "A Trading Nation: Our Plan for Growing Scotland's Exports" will set out how we will achieve our export ambitions, working with industry and other partners, particularly the Strategic Board for Enterprise and Skills. The plan, which will be published in spring next year, is underpinned by over £20 million of investment over the next three years.

As part of that work, we will invest £2 million over three years to intensively support 50 high-growth businesses per year to ramp up overseas activity and we will create 100 new business-to-business peer mentorships per year for new exporters. We will also expand the network of in-market specialists to identify untapped potential in overseas markets and to support Scotland's exporting interests, and we will increase export finance support for Scottish companies that are looking to enter new markets. Those steps will benefit businesses across all parts of Scotland, including the south of Scotland.

**Michelle Ballantyne:** At present, it seems that the only support that is available to small and medium-sized enterprises that wish to export is to join the Scottish Enterprise pipeline, which then offers consultancy and market research. However, there appears to be no funding support for SMEs that want to get their products in front of potential customers by, for example, attending trade shows. With the new south of Scotland agency coming on stream, will the minister look at the issue to ensure that funding investment directly supports SMEs to grow their export markets?

**Ivan McKee:** As I outlined in my previous answer, there is a big focus on supporting all businesses to increase their exports. We are focusing on 50 high-growth potential businesses per year to help them ramp up their overseas activities. Scottish Development International already works through Scottish Enterprise to significantly support a range of businesses, including through export missions. In 2017, the Scottish Government gave £400,000 of funding to the Scottish Chambers of Commerce to launch five local regional export partnership pilots across Scotland, including one in the south of Scotland.

Such pilots provide one-to-one support through SDI's expert advisory service for business and a programme of local export events across the region.

**“Quantifying the implications of the Paris Agreement: What role for Scotland?”**

**6. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to the Tyndall centre and Uppsala University report, “Quantifying the implications of the Paris Agreement: What role for Scotland?”, and its implications for the economy. (S5O-02314)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon):** We have considered the report, which was commissioned by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and Friends of the Earth Scotland, because it adds to the already substantial body of evidence that serious and urgent action to reduce emissions is needed. That is why we have introduced the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, which includes targets that are in line with the advice of our statutory advisers, the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change. They are in line with the Paris agreement and extremely stretching, but they are also feasible and would bring Scotland to carbon neutrality by 2050. It is vital to maintain a balanced approach to our climate, economic and social responsibilities.

**John Finnie:** The report outlines the need to leave the majority of fossil fuel reserves that we already know about in the ground. The Scottish Greens' research paper “Jobs in Scotland's New Economy” outlines how hundreds of thousands of jobs can be created in the transition to a renewables-based economy. The Highlands and Islands will be integral to that transition. There is decommissioning in Lerwick and the Cromarty Firth, the European Marine Energy Centre is in Stromness and there are wind projects such as the Beatrice project. In light of that, will the minister ensure that the communities that will power Scotland's renewable energy future get maximum benefit from employment opportunities by ensuring that the proposed public energy company is headquartered in the Highlands and Islands?

**Mairi Gougeon:** John Finnie raises an important point because, as we transition to a low-carbon economy, there will be lots of job opportunities. We will establish the just transition commission to help advise on the transition to a low-carbon economy. I am sure that we can discuss where that commission will be based at some point.

We have ambitious targets, and the approach that we have taken, through the introduction of the

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill, is realistic and as pragmatic as possible. We need to balance all the considerations regarding our economy, our society and our help for the climate. I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform will be happy to have further discussions with John Finnie. We are committed to delivering on this, which will have a very positive impact on Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 7 has been withdrawn.

**Decommissioning Jobs (Dundee)**

**8. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how many decommissioning jobs have been created in Dundee in the past 12 months. (S5O-02316)

**The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse):** The Scottish Government is committed to maximising the economic benefits that are available from decommissioning, and to support Scottish industry to develop the appropriate capability and capacity to win valuable contracts. Our decommissioning action plan, which is supported by the decommissioning challenge fund, aims to leverage investment to ensure that Scotland is in a position to capitalise on market opportunities.

The Scottish Government does not hold information on specific job numbers in Dundee. However, Scottish Enterprise has provided start-up advice and support to a number of companies that are looking at opportunities to position themselves in decommissioning in the city. The Scottish Government has also supported projects in Dundee through our decommissioning challenge fund, which was launched in February 2017. That includes an investment of more than £500,000 in a permanently fixed heavy-lift crane that will facilitate the transfer of material to the quayside. That will generate cost and time efficiencies and improve the attractiveness of Dundee as a destination for decommissioning.

**Jenny Marra:** I am sure that the minister will agree that all those developments are very positive and that we want to see the best outcome. If he does not have the specific numbers for Dundee, perhaps he can tell me how many Scottish jobs have been created in decommissioning in the past 12 months. Will the minister give the Government's backing to calls that decommissioning jobs should meet the pay rates and conditions that are set out in the construction sector's blue book?

As the minister knows, the Tay cities deal has not yet been signed. Does he agree that the agreement needs to be signed as soon as

possible in order to bring an economic boost to Dundee?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson, who is, I think, sitting behind me, is leading on the Tay cities deal, and I am sure that he would agree that we have tried to push the United Kingdom Government to commit to it and that he shares Jenny Marra's aspiration for it to develop the economy not just of Dundee, but of the entire city region. I will leave it to the cabinet secretary to engage with her on the details of that.

Jenny Marra is right on the decommissioning challenge fund and the wider exploitation of decommissioning opportunities. We believe that there is up to £17 billion of value to be taken from decommissioning activity in the UK continental shelf between now and 2025. Much of that is already coming to Scotland in respect of well plugging and abandonment, but we are working on the shore-side disposal of topside structures from the North Sea. The projects that we have funded through the decommissioning challenge fund have already levered in a further £3.4 million from private funders.

I will try to get further details to Jenny Marra on employment impacts, but we have supported an estimated 200 jobs across the Scottish economy so far.

## Scottish National Standardised Assessments

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on Scottish national standardised assessments. As usual, the cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:41

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney):** I welcome this opportunity to make a statement on the Scottish national standardised assessments.

A key principle of Scottish education is that assessment is an essential part of our approach to learning. It allows teachers to understand pupils' progress and to plan the next phase of their learning and teaching. Assessment is therefore a key tool to inform teachers' professional judgment of the needs of the pupils whom they teach.

Almost all local authorities in Scotland have been making use of some form of standardised assessment for a number of years. By having national assessments, we can now ensure that a consistent approach is being taken. That greatly helps in ensuring effective moderation of standards throughout the country, which is a crucial component of our determination to deliver excellence and equity for all.

The value of assessment was set out last week by Professor Sue Ellis of the University of Strathclyde. She said:

"We know that there is a big difference in children's attainment when they start school and that difference grows and gets wider as children move through the school system, so we do need some way of tracking that and checking it".

Most councils in Scotland already had primary 1 assessments for some years. In fact, the majority did not simply carry out one assessment of P1 pupils; they did that twice, at different points during the year. The reason for that was that teachers found them to be a useful source of information for tracking and checking the progress of the pupils whom Sue Ellis mentioned and for planning future teaching and learning to meet the needs of individual pupils.

The national assessments are simply a consistent tool to provide the same information to teachers. Unlike the old assessments, they are better aligned to the curriculum for excellence, which makes the reports that teachers receive even more valuable.

On average, the P1 assessments take 22 minutes for numeracy and 27 minutes for literacy. Delivered as part of routine classroom activity, they should not place children under any undue stress.

Last week, I published our user review of the first year of the assessments, which drew on a range of comments and feedback. I want to highlight some key points.

Some 578,000 assessments were carried out across P1, P4, P7 and secondary 3. I thank pupils and staff for all their efforts. That number represents around 94 per cent of the total number of possible assessments. I think that that strikes the appropriate balance between the presumption that the majority of pupils will undertake the assessments and the exercise of teacher judgment about whether it is in the best interests of an individual child to participate.

The user review received a range of comments. We know that many teachers find the reports on how children have done to be very useful, with high-quality diagnostic information on the strengths and challenges of individual young people, and we know that many children and young people found the assessments a positive experience because they were deployed in a relaxed way as part of routine classroom activity. However, I know that that was not the case everywhere. We received clear feedback that raised a number of concerns about the assessments. That feedback is a concern, particularly where the assessment of a young pupil was not viewed as a positive experience. No one wants any child to find the assessment stressful or upsetting.

In recognising that that has been the experience for a small number—the user review recognises the concerns that have been expressed by Educational Institute of Scotland members and others—it is important to keep those matters in context. The number of responses to the EIS survey was relatively small—about 460 people responded out of a total teaching population of more than 51,500. Not all of the 460 responses raised concerns—a significant number said positive and constructive things about the assessments. I am not surprised by that. When I speak to teachers, it is clear that, when the assessments are set up and run appropriately, they are a benefit in our education system.

However, I accept that this was the first year of a brand-new system of assessments. We can enhance and improve things to make the system better for pupils and teachers, and the user review sets out a number of positive changes that are being introduced this year. I will highlight three measures.

First, the voice that was missing from the user review and the EIS survey was that of children and young people. We will address that by including, at the end of each assessment, a short age-appropriate survey for children and young people that encourages them to give feedback on their experience. Secondly, we will establish a P1 practitioner improvement forum to share practice and consider how to enhance the overall assessment model. Thirdly, as we had planned, about one third of the questions in all assessments will be replenished, to ensure that they appropriately assess how children and young people are performing. I am confident that the changes that we are making will enhance the experience for children and young people and improve the information that is available to teachers.

I want the enhancements to benefit pupils who are in Gaelic-medium education. I have decided to roll out national standardised assessments to Gaelic-medium education only once the relevant lessons from the user review have been taken into account in their development. That means that the assessments will be available in Gaelic-medium education later this calendar year.

There has been discussion recently about whether parents have the right to withdraw their children from the assessments. Earlier this week, the Scottish Government and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland issued a joint statement to provide clarity on that.

The Scottish Government and ADES see the assessments as an integral part of everyday learning in P1, P4, P7 and S3 that is delivered as part of the duty to provide education. In common with virtually all aspects of the Scottish curriculum and its delivery, the SNSAs are not explicitly provided for in legislation. That is in keeping with the long tradition of a non-statutory curricular approach in Scotland. It means not only that the assessments are not compulsory but that there is no legal right for parents to withdraw their child from the assessments.

In fact, there is no statutory right for parents to withdraw their child from any aspect of schooling other than parts of religious observance and instruction. The position on standardised assessments is therefore the same as that for literacy and numeracy. There is no explicit statutory provision that requires a school to teach them—Scotland has never had that—but the idea that that means that schools are not required to teach pupils to read and write is patently ridiculous. The same is true of standardised assessments.

In practice, any parents or carers who have concerns about their child's participation should discuss that with their child's school. It has been

the case since the assessments were introduced that a child should not undertake an assessment if doing so would not be in their best interests. It is—rightly—for teachers, in discussion with parents, to determine when that is the case.

That position is consistent with what we have said in correspondence with local authorities, schools and parents and is consistent with our joint statement with ADES. It is also consistent with the recent letter from a deputy director in the Scottish Government's learning directorate to directors of education. In relation to that letter, I make it clear that my officials sought a view from the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland on the withdrawal of children from SNSAs to confirm that our understanding was aligned with that of local authority partners.

The deputy director's letter to directors of education set out the position as he understood it and was sent in good faith. The substance of that letter on parental opt-outs from the assessments is consistent with our joint statement with ADES.

It is important, as the National Parent Forum of Scotland said last week, that there is a clear understanding of the purpose of the assessments for the benefit of parents and carers. They are not "high stakes tests" but diagnostic assessments to support learning and teaching. Data from them will not be published or used for accountability—their purpose is to inform learning and teaching. They are aligned to curriculum for excellence and, at P1, are complementary to the play-based approach that is central to the early level curriculum.

Children should not be prepared for the assessments. There is no pass or fail. Their purpose is not to determine whether a child has "mastery" of a subject but to help teachers to determine future learning and teaching. Teachers' professional judgment of children's progress is key. The role of the assessments is to provide a consistent approach across the country to support our desire to deliver excellence and equity for all.

I remain committed to the assessments at all stages. The changes that we have announced in the user review will help to improve the system to address the concerns that were raised during the first year of operation. I am confident that, as we continue to refine and enhance the assessments, they will prove to be a positive experience for children and young people, and will provide a range of valuable information for teachers and parents.

**The Presiding Officer:** The cabinet secretary will now take questions.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the cabinet secretary for making a statement

about an issue that has caused considerable confusion to parents, and for forwarding to us the most recent letter of clarification, which was signed jointly by the Scottish Government and ADES.

Last week, a letter that was sent by the Scottish Government's deputy director, Graeme Logan, to local authority directors of education stated that the Scottish Government had taken legal advice from the local authorities' legal body, SOLAR, with regard to the rights of parents to withdraw their children from primary 1 tests. However, SOLAR refuted that it had provided any such legal advice, and we learned at this morning's meeting of the Education and Skills Committee that the Scottish Government admits that it had been wrong to imply that any legal advice of that nature had been taken.

Did the cabinet secretary sign off the letter that Mr Logan issued last week in which the misleading information appeared? At what stage did he become aware that a mistake had been made?

The subsequent letter to directors of education that was issued this morning says that none of the standardised tests at P1, P4, P7 and S3 is compulsory, but that the tests are part of local authorities' duties to provide education. Given the Scottish Government's previous insistence that standardised testing is absolutely essential to raising attainment in our classrooms—a point with which I agree—are teachers now free to decide whether a class of children will sit the tests? Will the results of the non-compulsory standardised tests be used as the key measure to determine whether the Scottish Government is making progress in narrowing the attainment gap?

**John Swinney:** I did not sign off the letter that was issued by the deputy director to directors of education, but I take full responsibility for it, because I am a minister in the Scottish Government and it is right that I take full responsibility in that way.

We did not seek legal advice from SOLAR. We discussed the legal position that we hold to—which has been consistent throughout all the Government's communication on the matter—with representatives of SOLAR, but, as I explained to the committee this morning, an error was made in our handling of the matter, in that we expressed a view that we believed to have been expressed by SOLAR when, in fact, SOLAR does not express such opinions. I can only apologise to Parliament for the events that took place in that respect. I take responsibility for that, because I should take responsibility for it.

However, I stress that the key point is that the substance of the message in the letter from the deputy director has consistently been the

substance of the Government's position on the matter, which was consistent with other advice that the Government had taken at the time.

Liz Smith's final point was on the issue of whether classes will take the assessments. I have made it as clear as I can that standardised assessments are part of the routine process of learning of young people in Scottish education, just as acquiring the skills of literacy and numeracy is part of their learning experience.

The Government expects that pupils will undertake standardised assessments at P1, P4, P7 and S3, but, as the evidence that I have marshalled in front of Parliament today makes clear, not all pupils took the assessments, because teachers were able to exercise judgment on whether it was in the interests of individual pupils to do so. That reliance on teacher judgment is as it should be.

Liz Smith's last point is about the information that is gathered to determine whether we are closing the poverty-related attainment gap. As Liz Smith will know, last December, the Government published the national improvement framework, which sets out the measures by which we will be held to account on whether we have succeeded in closing that gap. The measures relate to the identification by teachers of whether young people within our education system have reached the early, first, second or third level of curriculum for excellence.

Standardised assessments will inform the teacher judgments, but the final publication does not rest exclusively on the outcome of those assessments.

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement.

The education secretary clearly missed the lesson about stopping digging when in a hole. When faced with evidence of stress among four-year-olds and five-year-olds caused by the tests, with teachers' testimony that the tests are time-consuming and of little educational worth, and with a campaign by parents to boycott them, he carries on regardless. The tests should, at least in P1, be suspended. I believe that that is the view of Parliament, which I hope we will have a chance to demonstrate as soon as possible.

The tests do not command the confidence of teachers. Will the cabinet secretary tell us how many schools have replaced the old and trusted diagnostic assessments that they were using, as he said, and how many have simply added on his national assessments because he told them to and they had to use them?

The purpose of the tests remains confused. The First Minister has repeatedly told us that the

assessments replace the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy, that they will monitor progress towards closing the attainment gap, and that they will compare school with school and authority with authority. However, if they are an integral part of everyday learning, they cannot do that statistically. Once and for all, will the cabinet secretary confirm whether the tests are diagnostic assessments or are for monitoring standards? They cannot be both.

**John Swinney:** On Iain Gray's last point, the purpose of the standardised assessments is to ensure that teachers are able use them to enhance the learning experience of young people and their experience of teaching, and to identify where young people individually have deficiencies and face challenges and where they need support.

The difference between that approach and the survey approach that Mr Gray argued for over the summer is that survey information can give us only a general picture and not a specific picture of the needs of individual young people. I want to make sure—this is the fundamental issue—that our education system is equipped with information that is effectively moderated around the country so that we can be confident that the right standards are being applied, and ensure that when young people have access to an education system that is driven by excellence and equity in one part of the country, a guarantee that they will get the same can be given to children, young people and their families in another part of the country.

The purpose of standardised assessments is to focus on young people's individual needs in order to enhance learning, and to give teachers confidence about moderation of standards around the country. Only through that device can we have confidence that levels of achievement are being delivered by young people that demonstrate that we are closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

That is the purpose of standardised assessments. They are vital because they help to inform the interventions that are required to support learning and teaching for young people in Scotland.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** As other members have done, I thank the Deputy First Minister for advance sight of his statement.

The weight of international evidence is not behind the Deputy First Minister and his standardised assessments. In the case of P1 tests, it is quite clear that a majority in Parliament wants to see them go. Sooner or later, that is what we will vote for. Will the Scottish Government just cut its losses and scrap testing of P1 children?

**John Swinney:** I have set out my position, which is that I remain committed to the assessments at all levels in Scottish education. I



do not want a situation in which we do not have the chance to identify at the earliest possible opportunity in a child's formal education where the child might face particular learning challenges. The assessments produce sophisticated diagnostic information about the educational challenges of young people. I want such information to be available so that we can, at the earliest opportunity, act to close the attainment gap.

I do not want to preside over an education system in which the needs of children are left unmet. Mr Greer consistently argues his position on ensuring that every child's needs are met in our system. I respect him for that. I am simply trying to apply that in relation to this issue as well, such that when young people come into our education system, they come into a play-based curriculum at the early stage. I want them to be assessed on the basis of that curriculum. If they have educational requirements, I want them to be addressed pronto, and not left unaddressed so that the gap between their performance and that of other children increases. That is why I want standardised assessments at P1. It is an educational rationale that is supported by significant international evidence, into the bargain, which is why I ask Parliament to consider carefully the issues that I present today as justification for ensuring that we have the assessments to protect the educational opportunities of children and young people.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of his statement.

I must say that I profoundly disagree with the contention that testing five-year-old boys and girls is consistent with play-based learning. Far more important than my view is the fact that many educationists, experts and—more to the point—teachers do not agree. I therefore disagree with the assessment that Mr Swinney has just given to Ross Greer. Also, in the weight of evidence that we have all read on the usefulness of data—Mr Swinney earlier referred to the marshalled evidence—there is quote after quote after quote about whether such data is of any merit whatever.

I therefore politely suggest that the cabinet secretary reflect on that. Will he reflect on the fact that he has not made the case for testing four-year-old and five-year-old girls and boys? The majority of the arguments say that it does not add to teachers' experience and that—more to the point—it will do nothing to close the gaps that we know exist in education and which desperately need to be addressed.

**John Swinney:** On Tavish Scott's final point about whether the assessments help us in our efforts to close the attainment gap, I take a different view. All the evidence that I have looked

at—and which drives Government policy in a wide variety of areas in early intervention—indicates that the earlier we identify and address challenges that young people face, the more quickly we will take steps to close the attainment gap.

With teachers, I looked at the assessments when they were at development stage. I was struck by the teachers' reaction to the diagnostic information that was being presented as a consequence of the tests. The information demonstrated clearly areas where young people required support to enhance their educational performance. The assessments are therefore an integral part of trying to address the challenges and issues that young people face.

Opinion will, of course, be divided on those points. We can all marshal quotations that say that tests are a good thing, or that they are not. I appeal to Parliament to look at the role of the assessments in informing improvement of learning and teaching in Scotland, with a view to ensuring that teachers are equipped with all the information that they need to judge the educational opportunities of children and young people.

I hope that Parliament will consider those issues in the manner in which I have set them out today, because they represent a strong opportunity for us to ensure that we work with schools around the country to take all possible actions to close the attainment gap in Scottish education.

**The Presiding Officer:** The opening questioners have had the opportunity to set out their parties' positions. I will welcome shorter questions and appropriately shorter answers as we progress with consideration of the statement.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** We have heard a lot of talk from Opposition parties about why the assessments are not a good idea. Will the cabinet secretary outline some of the suggestions that he has received from Opposition parties on how we can close the stubborn attainment gap without clear and consistent evidence on children's learning?

**John Swinney:** The Government is making a range of interventions to close the poverty-related attainment gap, including work that we are undertaking on the Scottish attainment challenge and pupil equity funding. Schools are taking a variety of approaches to close the gap—some are enhancing literacy and numeracy approaches, some are supporting a nurturing approach to overcome challenges that young people face in their education, and others are introducing outdoor learning to the curriculum and strengthening the experiences of young people in the outdoors.

There is a debate to be had about the measures that we can take and interventions that we can make to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

I am interested in having that debate in Parliament. It is in the interests of us all to make sure that the education opportunities of young people are fulfilled as a consequence of the actions that we take.

**Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con):** On behalf of parents, I ask the cabinet secretary to clarify whether the tests, as he has previously described them, for P1 students are tests as we have known them to be. Where do they stand in the context of the Scottish Government being able to decide whether Scottish schools' attainment has improved?

**John Swinney:** First, they are called Scottish national standardised assessments. They are not tests—they are assessments of the educational issues and experiences of young people, and they are used to inform enhancements to learning and teaching practice. That is their purpose. From the assessments, teachers will make a judgment about whether a young person has reached the early, first, second or third level. That information flows into the performance framework that I talked about in my answer to Liz Smith's question, and which will determine whether we are closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Teachers' judgments inform the decision about whether a young person has reached a particular level, and the standardised assessments will assist teachers in forming judgments in a way that is consistent around the country.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary have any information, or plans to gather information, regarding how confident schools are in dealing with situations in which parents or carers have concerns about their child taking part in the assessments? Is there any guidance from the Government for the teachers on the best way to approach that?

**John Swinney:** The Government has made available to individual schools guidance that sets out that the assessments should be undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the educational experience of young people in schools. The P1 assessment, for example, should be undertaken as part of the routine approach to learning. I saw some assessments being undertaken that were consistent with the use of iPad technology in classrooms, which is a relatively routine element of the educational experience for P1 pupils, and teachers deployed the assessments in exactly that fashion.

If a parent is in any way concerned about their young person's experience with the standardised assessment, my advice, which has been consistent, is that they should raise issues directly with the individual school.

As I demonstrated with the data that I set out to Parliament, 94 per cent of all the possible assessments have been undertaken. Teacher judgment is being deployed to ensure that assessments are not being undertaken where it is not appropriate for young people to undertake them, which is an example of us relying, as we should do, on the appropriate judgment of teachers.

**The Presiding Officer:** I want short questions and short answers, please.

**Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** When discussing the pedagogic method in the Education and Skills Committee this morning, Larry Flanagan, the general secretary of the EIS, said:

"if we spent half the time and energy on promoting formative assessment practice in our schools that we have spent on promoting the Scottish national standardised assessments we would be in a much better place in terms of assessment practice in our schools."

Given Mr Flanagan's comments, does the cabinet secretary agree that more support and resourcing should be given to teachers to use the pedagogic method, rather than testing?

**John Swinney:** Scottish national standardised assessments are formative assessments. That is what they are—they are designed to inform teacher judgment. If they were the other type of assessment, they would be summative. If they were summative, they would be high-stakes testing. That is not what they are.

The fundamental point is that the assessments contribute to teacher judgment, and teachers across Scotland have been supported to deploy the assessments effectively in the classroom.

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** Can the cabinet secretary outline how often assessments like the SNSAs were used previously? If, as he mentioned in his statement, the majority of councils did their own assessments, did that lead to different councils using different assessments and, therefore, creating an unclear picture of attainment levels across the country?

**John Swinney:** Obviously, different forms of assessment will apply different standards. The key point about the Scottish national standardised assessments is that they are aligned with curriculum for excellence levels. As I have just said in answer to Alison Harris, curriculum for excellence levels are judgments about whether we are closing the poverty-related attainment gap, as part of a wider suite of information.

We need to have teacher judgment informed by the assessments to ensure that we have consistent standards across the country, so that, whether a young pupil is going into a school in Paisley in Mr Adam's constituency, or one in Perth

in my constituency, we are operating to the same standards and can confidently say that we are delivering a system that is driven by the values of excellence and equity for all, in all parts of the country.

**Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** Can the cabinet secretary set out what he thinks are the exceptional circumstances in which it would not be in a child's best interest to do the assessment? I know that he places high importance on teacher judgment, but, given that teachers and parents did not ask for the tests, it would be useful to know some examples. Also, has any assessment been made of the 6 per cent who have not taken part this year, in order to understand why not?

**John Swinney:** Mr Mundell put forward the proposition that teachers and parents had not asked for these assessments. I remind him that the Conservative Party did. That has rather been missed in this whole debate. The Conservative Party argued for a considerable length of time that we needed standardised assessments across the country. *[Interruption.]* Mr Mundell is saying, "Not for P1", which obliges me to say that when the First Minister set out the programme for government in 2015 she said:

"We will introduce new national standardised assessments for pupils in primaries 1, 4 and 7, and in the third year of secondary school."

In response to that statement by the First Minister, Ruth Davidson said:

"I am pleased that our repeated and sustained calls for standardised assessments to be introduced in schools have been heeded."—*[Official Report, 1 September 2015; c 18, 31.]*

Then, in its manifesto in 2016, the Conservative Party said:

"Over the last parliament, we have pushed the SNP to accept standardised testing for pupils".

Mr Mundell is not in a strong position to say to me that nobody wanted these assessments, because his party argued for them.

However, having said all of that, it is important that I say that teachers should be left free to exercise their professional judgment on whether it is appropriate for a pupil to be involved in standardised assessments. The data that I have shared with Parliament today makes it clear that, in 6 per cent of the total number of possible assessments, that judgment was exercised and pupils did not participate. We can certainly have a look at the 6 per cent to see what underlies it, but what that demonstrates is that the necessary flexibility to respond to the circumstances of individual children and young people that should exist in a system of this type is implicit in the system.

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** I welcome the statement from the cabinet secretary, particularly the commitment to ensure that our young people's voices are heard. Will he expand on when the primary 1 practitioner improvement forum will be established and what work it will carry out?

**John Swinney:** We will establish the forum during this school year, to ensure that we understand, hear, appreciate and respond to the issues that P1 practitioners raise through their experience.

Obviously, there has been a lot of experience in the first year, and in my statement today I set out a number of changes that we have made in recognition of the experience of the first year of operation. My mind is not at all closed to making further changes, if they are required, in response to practitioner feedback. I would be happy to engage with members of the Parliament on exactly how we ensure that the Government takes forward any improvements and enhancements that can be made.

**The Presiding Officer:** Thank you. I am afraid that that is all that we have time for—we have already run five minutes over time. I apologise to Johann Lamont and Willie Coffey; we will not be able to take their questions.

## Programme for Government 2018-19

*Resumed debate.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** We continue the debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government 2018-19.

15:16

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** This year's programme for government is focused on the wealth and wellbeing of our communities. As economy secretary, and having engaged comprehensively over the summer months, I relish the opportunity ahead.

The PFG has a strong emphasis on boosting our economy. We will increase investment in Scotland's infrastructure so that it is £1.5 billion per year more by the end of the next parliamentary session than it is in 2019-20. That increased investment, which is the most ambitious long-term level of infrastructure spend that Scotland has ever seen, will drive connectivity, create jobs and deliver a long-term boost to productivity. In total, that means around £7 billion of extra infrastructure investment over the period, to help us to support faster broadband, improved transport and more low-carbon energy.

In a further, transformational move, we now embark on the legislation for and capitalisation of the Scottish national investment bank. Today, I launched a consultation on how the bank can support Scotland's economy. We will listen to views from across Scotland on the bank's objectives, purpose, priorities for investment and governance. This is a game changer in the provision of patient capital to finance innovation and growth, which will be pivotal in our ambitions for a future-proofed, high-tech, low-carbon Scottish economy.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I managed to have a very quick look at the cabinet secretary's consultation. Something like £30 million seems to be set aside for staffing and the Scottish Government has not excluded the payment of bonuses. Will the cabinet secretary do so now?

**Derek Mackay:** It would be wrong to prejudge every element of the consultation; naturally, we want to hear from stakeholders. However, I will not follow the worst practices of the banking sector in that regard. We will build a bank of which Scotland will be proud.

This year, we will also begin our reaching 100 programme, delivering a £600 million investment

to make superfast broadband available to every home and business in Scotland and ensure that the whole country can reap the benefits of the digital revolution.

Our investment for the future will make Scotland an even better place in which to live, work and invest. It will be more competitive internationally and it will attract talent and investment from around the world. There will be investment at home and a determination to boost export opportunities. That is why we are investing £20 million to help more of Scotland's businesses to engage with e-commerce for export, to support existing exporters to ramp up overseas activity, and to set up a new scheme that creates business-to-business peer mentorships, so that new exporters can learn from established exporters.

Businesses across Scotland told us that they want a more streamlined business support system, which is why we are developing a single digital point of entry for business support, along with quicker, technology-driven decisions on financial support. We are also introducing criteria to ensure that business support grants such as regional selective assistance deliver on our ambition to be a world-leading fair work nation. In the coming months, our enterprise and skills agencies will also be stepping up their support for businesses to navigate through Brexit.

We moved swiftly to implement the Barclay rates review recommendations and will now introduce a non-domestic rates bill to implement the remaining legislative elements, such as moving to a valuation cycle that better reflects property values and delivers incentives for growth.

Our economic actions will touch every part of Scotland. We have committed to investing more than £1 billion in city region deals, which will create thousands of jobs and upskill local labour markets across Scotland. Beyond our cities, we will legislate to establish a south of Scotland enterprise agency that supports a diverse and resilient economy in the region.

Despite the United Kingdom Government's Brexit bungling, Scotland's economy has proven to be resilient, and is benefiting from the Scottish Government's progressive initiatives. During the past year, economic growth, or gross domestic product has been higher than in the rest of the UK, and I look forward to the Opposition parties welcoming that.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Derek Mackay:** Of course. This must be the welcome.

**Murdo Fraser:** Did the cabinet secretary note the Scottish Fiscal Commission's report that came out this morning? It talks about GDP growth in Scotland. The commission says:

"These revisions don't in our view affect the subdued outlook for trend growth."

Perhaps the cabinet secretary is getting carried away with his enthusiasm a bit too soon.

**Derek Mackay:** I am just enthusiastic because we are outperforming the United Kingdom.

**Jackie Baillie:** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Derek Mackay:** One is plenty for the moment, thank you.

Our economic growth outperformed that of the United Kingdom over the past year and specifically in the last quarter. We outperformed the UK in reducing youth unemployment. Women's unemployment is lower in Scotland than in the rest of the UK. Overall unemployment remains at near record low levels. Scotland has narrowed the productivity gap with the rest of the UK over the past decade. Exports are up 12 per cent in the past year.

The measures in the programme for Government will deliver a step change in infrastructure and business support. It will deliver for the economy of today and lay the foundations for the opportunities of the future. I look forward to the debate ahead.

15:23

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** In her statement to Parliament yesterday, the First Minister started by talking about Scotland's economy. Sadly, there is very little in the programme that would help to grow Scotland's economy, but let us look at what is on offer.

Rather predictably, we heard all the usual negativity about the likely impacts of Brexit on the Scottish economy. Then, in a statement demonstrating a fairly astonishing lack of self-awareness, even for the current First Minister, she went on to trumpet the increase in the export of goods from Scotland by 12 per cent, which is a significant figure. It does not take an economic genius to understand that a principal reason why exports have grown so dramatically in Scotland and across the UK, has been the fall in the value of the pound against other currencies during the past two years. That fall is a direct result of—guess what—the Brexit vote. The very problem area that the First Minister has identified for the economy is delivering the dramatic export growth that she champions.

Another sector in Scotland that is booming is tourism, to the extent that some parts of the country are even talking about the problem of overtourism. Holidaying in the Highlands this summer, I was pleased to see the large number of overseas visitors from Europe coming to enjoy our scenery, culture and hospitality, and all benefiting from a favourable exchange rate. Similarly, more UK visitors are staycationing to take advantage of the good weather and the more competitive costs of holidaying at home.

I accept that the very Brexit that has created boom conditions in industries such as tourism has, of course, presented challenges. There are hospitality providers that are struggling to recruit staff from European countries because it is no longer as financially attractive as it used to be for those workers to come here, and the same situation applies to other industries, such as agriculture. However, to suggest, as the First Minister did, that the impacts of Brexit thus far on our economy have all been negative is simply to dismiss the evidence that we have before us.

What is in the programme for Government to help the economy? There is legislation to establish the south of Scotland enterprise agency. That is a policy that we welcome—indeed, it is a policy that was pinched from our 2016 manifesto. There is to be a new bill on non-domestic rates to implement some of the recommendations of the Barclay review, and much of that is welcome. The relief for new-built properties and property improvements will help to grow the economy. The exemptions for day nurseries are also welcome. Some of the process issues, such as the move to a three-year cycle for revaluations, will also be beneficial.

However, it remains our view that the Barclay review was a missed opportunity for a more fundamental review of business taxation in Scotland. In particular, retail continues to suffer as a sector, with pressure on traditional high streets. The large-business supplement, which is set in Scotland at a rate that is nearly double that which is applicable in the rest of the United Kingdom, continues to be a burden on Scottish retailers and creates a competitive disadvantage for Scottish traders. That needs to be addressed.

The non-domestic rates bill will no doubt address the issue of rates on independent schools with an intention of implementing the Scottish National Party's policy objective of removing the current exemption. It has always seemed to me to be totally illogical that the same Barclay review that proposes a new exemption from business rates for children's nurseries that provide education, many of which charge fees and are profit making, at the same time proposes removing a business rates exemption from independent schools, which are charitable institutions not

making a profit. It is an approach that is as bizarre as it is illogical.

Already, the real problem has developed in relation to the range of independent schools that provide specialist support for children with additional support needs, such as the new school at Butterstone in Perth and Kinross, which will be hit with business rates unless a way can be found to exempt it. It will undoubtedly be a challenge to parliamentary draftsmen to draw a distinction in law between independent schools that provide a general education but have some pupils with special needs and independent schools that are set up for the almost exclusive use of pupils with those needs.

This is not just an issue of education; it is also an economic issue. In Perth and Kinross, there are at least eight independent schools that I am aware of. They make a significant contribution to the local economy, supporting around 500 direct jobs and many more indirect jobs in the wider economy. Of course, the schools represent a major source of foreign revenue from students coming from overseas. To hit that important economic sector with a new tax burden flies in the face of everything that we have been told by this SNP Government.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Murdo Fraser:** I will finish this point and then give way.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are in your last minute, so you will have to be quick.

**Murdo Fraser:** Yesterday, the First Minister said:

"We will ensure that the business environment in Scotland remains competitive and that we are providing the support that businesses need to thrive."—[*Official Report*, 4 September 2018; c 16.]

Apparently, however, not these businesses.

**Derek Mackay:** Is Mr Fraser aware of the proportion of the overall running costs of an average independent mainstream school that non-domestic rates relief represents?

**Murdo Fraser:** I do not have the figure at my fingertips but I can say that to add an additional burden of—I think—£5 million to a sector that is educationally and economically important flies in the face of everything else that this Government has done to set about growing the economy.

It seems that the education secretary, who has now left the chamber, recognises that there is an issue because he wrote to the finance secretary over the summer to raise the concerns. What was the response of the finance secretary? It was to suggest that the local authority, Perth and Kinross

Council, could somehow find the money in its budget—a budget that he and his predecessor had slashed—to make up the difference.

We have had to sit in this chamber month after month, year after year while SNP ministers complain that they have to use their resources to mitigate the policy choices of the Westminster Government on welfare and elsewhere. However, here we have SNP ministers having the brass neck to play exactly the same trick on local authorities that they claim that Westminster is playing on them. Was there ever anything quite so shameless?

This is an unambitious programme for government. It is indicative of a party in government running out of ideas, lacking in enthusiasm and short on ambition. The Government really must do better than this.

15:29

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** That was an interesting opening observation from the Conservative benches. It is the first time that I have heard Murdo Fraser boast that the pound in his pocket is worth less than it was worth before Conservative policies and actions affected it. I will welcome hearing what he says in two years' time when the effect of higher costs for importing components that are required for manufacturing industry in these islands hits home. There is a short-term benefit, but the long term is much more problematic. We should talk about Brexit in relation to the economy. It is a huge challenge to the Scottish economy and the economy in these islands, but it will not inhibit the Scottish Government from taking the actions that will support Scotland's further development.

I will say a few words about a few of the announcements in yesterday's statement from the First Minister. Before I talk about banking, I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests. I spent 30 years in banking and came into politics to improve my reputation.

I strongly support the establishment of the Scottish national investment bank. The way that the world of finance and cash works is changing fundamentally for businesses and will do so even more for individuals. For example, in Sweden, there are now only 25 bank branches that deal with cash because the society has, in essence, become cashless. We will get there as well. The Scottish national investment bank, which will focus primarily on investment in the first instance, could in the longer term consider how we support communities that will lose more and more local branches—as they are already—so that the right kind of financial services are available. That will

often be through technology assisted by trained people.

I welcome the proposed biometrics bill. I encourage the Government to pay close attention to what has happened in India with the Aadhaar system. That is an identity card system that has issued cards to 1.22 billion cardholders since 2009. An important point about it is that around 50 per cent of the cardholders are functionally illiterate. Therefore, it is an easy-access system and it has many lessons for what we might want to do on biometrics. The Aadhaar card is based on retinal scans.

I will say a wee thing about electoral reform. I hope that we can persuade the Boundary Commission for Scotland to give us more granular detail when it makes boundary changes so that we can see what houses are at the edges of our constituencies. It is not a big deal.

On non-domestic rates, I would like the Government to work with the assessors on how they factor empty premises into the assessment of the value of rents. In the north-east of Scotland, quite a lot of fish factories are empty. The actual rents paid are taken into account for the ones that are occupied, but no account is taken of the fact that it is impossible to let other factories at that rate of rent. The assessment should be made across the board. The valuers know about the empty factories because they consider them as well. I will talk to them about it because I realise that the Government does not control that subject, although it provides guidance.

I warmly welcome the increased investment in infrastructure. I hope that we will think about whether we can support industries that will be particularly hard hit by the absence of workers from Europe when people go back to Europe because of the immigration rules. Perhaps we can help the fish processing industry to increase its levels of automation and the soft fruit industry to develop new technologies for harvesting. In turn, that would create new products that we could sell around the world. I hope that those ideas will be considered for inclusion in the infrastructure investments. Of course, it is up to the industry to come forward with proposals and I have been talking to people in both of those industries about what they might do in that regard. That is about middle-term to long-term investments rather than short-term ones, but it is important nonetheless.

If you will allow me, Presiding Officer, as there is no motion, I will pick up on one thing that is not directly to do with the economy but which I am particularly interested in—the announcements in relation to mental health. In 1964, I worked in mental health as a nurse for eight months. My father-in-law is a psychiatric nurse and my sister-in-law is a psychiatric nurse. I am absolutely clear

about the value of investing in people's mental health and of helping people with early signs of mental ill-health in schools. That mental ill-health might otherwise develop into a real cost to the economy—to come back to that—but, more fundamentally, investing in mental health will benefit people in Scotland: it will improve their lives, not just their wallets.

15:36

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I have to confess that the First Minister's programme for government sounded to me like a bit of a shopping list. There was no story—there was no consistent thread underpinning what the Government is doing—and I was left not really knowing the big picture. There was a lot on inputs but very little on outcomes.

When we look back at the previous programme for government announcements, the charge that the SNP overpromises but underdelivers is absolutely true. Only two bills were passed last year. If ministers' salaries were based on performance-related pay, they would have them docked. I accept that it is not just about legislation but is also about what the Government does with policy and with the budget. The problem is that the SNP has been timid on all those fronts. On every measure and every target that the Government set for itself on the economy, it has failed. Just look at the seven purpose targets that relate to the economy—not one of them has been met.

I welcome the renewed focus on the economy because I have no doubt that it is badly needed. I particularly welcome the announcement that there will be a new economic strategy—not before time. Scottish Labour has asked several times for the economic strategy to be reviewed. We asked the First Minister and the cabinet secretary for the economy to review it in 2015, in 2016 and in 2017. Members might think that Brexit is a sufficiently material and significant change for the SNP to want to make sure that its strategy is fit for purpose, but no. On at least three occasions, the SNP voted against a review. I am really glad that the new cabinet secretary does not have his head in the sand like his boss or his predecessor.

The second issue for me is honesty about the state of the economy. Of course the Government will claim that everything is wonderful and the Opposition will claim that everything is dire. The truth is that our economy is fragile. I think that everyone in the chamber would welcome any rise in GDP. I want our economy to grow. I want us to generate jobs and generate wealth and then to redistribute that wealth to those who need it most. However, members should not expect me to jump up and down at marginal rises that are fractions of a percentage point. Forecasts by the Scottish

Fiscal Commission show growth sitting at less than 1 per cent for a year longer than it originally thought—to 2023. That is not a good story. I want us to do much better than that.

I say as gently as I can to the cabinet secretary that, if the limit of our ambition is to compare ourselves with the UK just when the UK is performing badly, that is not very clever, nor is it very ambitious.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** Let me make progress and then you can come in.

Let us compare the state of the Scottish economy with the position of some of our European neighbours. I remember that the SNP used to talk about emulating the Celtic tiger—that was until the Irish economy tanked. However, from 2015 to the first quarter of 2018, Ireland has outperformed Scottish GDP growth in 11 of the 12 quarters.

**Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP):** Independence!

**Jackie Baillie:** I hear somebody shouting, “Independence.” Actually, this is about a significant recession and what they did in Ireland did not require independence; it required determined effort.

I will talk about Spain and the great recession that lasted until 2015. Unemployment was 20 per cent, but now Spain has outperformed Scotland in each and every one of the 12 quarters. Portugal’s unemployment reached 18 per cent and the European Central Bank had to intervene, but its growth has been higher than Scotland’s in each of the past 12 quarters. It is interesting that the Socialist Government in Portugal has explicitly rejected austerity and is turning its country round. I invite the SNP to learn a lesson or two from Portugal.

I am encouraged by the new focus on export as too little has been done in that area in the past. I note that we export more to the rest of the UK than we do to the rest of Europe and the world, so strengthening our home market is as important as looking further afield. However, where is the focus on productivity? It is a key driver for economic growth but there was no mention of it in the First Minister’s 45-minute speech. Productivity in Scotland is woeful. The Government had a target to be achieved by 2017 to lift it to the top quartile of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. We started at 18th place in the second quartile. By 2017, we had slipped to 19th place in the third quartile, which is frankly dreadful.

**Derek Mackay:** Jackie Baillie rightly said that we should not match Scotland just to UK

performance—which we are outperforming, of course. However, when we consider small advanced economies that are more successful than Scotland, we have all the economic fundamentals that they have. The one thing that they have but we do not is independence. Why does Jackie Baillie stand in the way of Scotland’s economic progress?

**Jackie Baillie:** That question is interesting, because the SNP cuts commission report spelled out the situation. With independence would come years of austerity with eye-watering cuts to public services, schools and hospitals. That is why we reject the SNP’s flawed notion of a thriving economy.

Where is the focus on workers? I think the Government would acknowledge that much of the recent rise in employment has been characterised by temporary working, low pay and zero-hours contracts. Just the other day, a report highlighted the millions that would be injected into the economy in the west of Scotland and Glasgow in particular if more people were on the living wage.

I welcome the eighth reannouncement of the Scottish national investment bank, but I am disappointed at the suggestion that it will pay bankers bonuses. I hope that that is not the case. Under Scottish Labour’s plans, we would see £20 billion invested, which is 10 times the amount proposed by the SNP, because we need to see transformational change.

On infrastructure investment, Scottish Labour has asked for many years for the Scottish Futures Trust to be reviewed to secure better value for money. We would deliver £20 billion in capital investment from a national transformation fund, in contrast with the SNP. The Scottish Government has new borrowing powers of £450 million each year, but how much of that will be used to fund the £1.5 billion that has been announced? How much will come from the private sector?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close, please.

**Jackie Baillie:** How much is assumed investment made by local authorities? We look forward to considering those questions and the funding model in further detail.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind members that they should always speak through the chair and not directly to one another.

15:43

**Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green):** It is worth reflecting, as Richard Leonard did yesterday, that next year will be the 20th anniversary of this Parliament. Despite our political differences, it is worth celebrating the fact that we have the



capacity to introduce new laws and policy for the people whom we serve. Examples of welcome legislation in the programme for government include bills on consumer protection, electoral reform and family law, and there is the welcome announcement that the Government will introduce a bill in this parliamentary year to reform the law of defamation—I commend Scottish Pen and others for their campaign on that matter.

With regard to policy, we welcome plans for a Scottish national investment bank—as many others have—and the launch today of the consultation. The bank could have a transformative impact on the economy if it is designed and implemented appropriately. We welcome ambitions for infrastructure investment, but we reiterate our calls for it to be focused on low-carbon projects, public transport and public housing.

Today's debate is themed around the economy. As a number of speakers have mentioned, we continue to have fundamental problems with the economy. As Greens, we have fundamental problems with the assumptions that underpin the Government's economic policy. Economic growth, even inclusive economic growth, is a fundamentally flawed goal, if measured by gross domestic product, which is the aggregate of monetised transactions in the economy. The founder of GDP in the 1930s was Simon Kuznets, who became one of its biggest critics. GDP does not measure goods and services that are produced in the course of daily life. It does not measure the distribution of income or wealth—in fact, it says nothing at all about wealth. It ignores environmental services from soils, oceans and forests and says nothing about energy flow. The idea that GDP growth is central to the measurement of the success of an economy is, in the words of one of the authors of the 1972 report "The Limits to Growth",

"one of the stupidest purposes ever invented by any culture",

yet it persists. Scotland's economic policy will be deemed a success if, for example, the oil and gas sector continues to extract more hydrocarbons, despite the imperative to leave the vast majority of known reserves in the ground.

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Andy Wightman:** I will.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Who are you taking, Mr Wightman?

**Andy Wightman:** Sorry—I will take an intervention from Mr Arthur.

**Tom Arthur:** Notwithstanding the points that Mr Wightman makes, many of which I am sympathetic to, will he concede that there is a correlation between per capita GDP and human wellbeing?

**Andy Wightman:** There certainly is an indication that there is such a correlation, but it is not the basis on which we need to build a sustainable economy, because that correlation is not absolute.

The economy of Scotland, like the wider UK economy, is still too heavily weighted in favour of financial services and is dangerously dependent on consumption, which continues to be fuelled by high levels of household debt, with a generation of young people facing excessive housing costs, job insecurity and lower living standards. Today, the Institute for Public Policy Research published the final report of its commission on economic justice, which contains some of the ingredients for a successful economy, and I would welcome the Government's response to the recommendations for Scotland.

Green politics are based on the four pillars of equality, peace, environmental sustainability and radical democracy. In our view, to secure the changes that the economy and society need, people need the power to make those changes. Across Europe, cities and municipalities are leading the way on sustainable transport, clean air, affordable housing and tackling climate change. By and large, they can do so because they have the required legislative and fiscal power. They are drivers of economic activity, innovation and sustainable futures.

That is why it is so disappointing to see the programme for government perpetuate an unambitious agenda to reform the way that Scotland is governed at a local level. We need to provide a more local and participative local democracy with commensurate fiscal powers to create genuine local autonomy. Out of 118 pages, there is a quarter of a page on the local government review, with no ambition or ideas about how Scotland can become a normal European country in respect of how we are governed locally. Modest proposals for the tourist tax, which are commonplace across Europe, are kicked further down the road, although there was welcome confirmation today from Kate Forbes that such powers will be considered as part of budget negotiations.

Taxation is a critical part of economic policy, and the programme refers to that on page 61. Given that the second-highest-yielding tax in Scotland is non-domestic rates, we welcome the proposal for a bill on that matter. However, the thorough and comprehensive review of the business rates system that Derek Mackay

promised as far back as 2013 was never delivered; instead, we had the Barclay review, which asked one question and was told to make its recommendations revenue neutral. In practice, that meant that any proposals that were made to reduce liabilities in a sector had to be balanced by measures that would make up for the lost yield, which is why we have proposals to raise liabilities in other sectors. That is not the way to do tax reform.

Earlier this week, we lost the Nobel prize winner Professor James Mirrlees, who was one of the Scottish Government's economic advisers. In his Mirrlees review of 2011, which was a comprehensive look at the tax system, he said among other things:

"The business rate is not a good tax."

He went on:

"Taxing non-domestic property is inefficient, and should not be part of the tax system."

However, he also said:

"The economic case for taxing land itself is very strong".

On stamp duty, he said:

"There is no sound case for maintaining stamp duty and we believe that it should be abolished."

The Government might ignore those wise words from one of its advisers, but Greens will not. We look forward to working with parties across the chamber to secure some of the changes to fiscal policy that James Mirrlees advocated. We also look forward to working with the Government and other parties to take forward some of the very good ideas in the programme for government.

15:49

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** It was interesting to listen to the First Minister deliver her statement yesterday. Partly, that was because of what she had to say, which I will come to in a minute, but it was also because of the way that her statement seemed to be received on her back benches. Those of us who have been members of Parliament over the past 11 years have got used to the raucous adulation that normally greets such first ministerial set pieces—the oh-so-spontaneous rounds of applause in response to carefully crafted clap lines and the pantomime booing of those deemed unworthy of the people of Scotland. It was not so, yesterday; it was all rather muted, a bit low key and something of an anticlimax.

That is not to say that there were not positives in what the First Minister had to say and things that I warmly welcome. Guaranteeing the voting rights of European Union citizens in this country was an early and obvious example, and so too was the confirmation that the principles of the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are to be incorporated into Scots law. I was on the Education and Culture Committee in the previous parliamentary session, when the SNP Government used its parliamentary majority to frustrate any attempts to move in that direction during consideration of what was to become the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Nevertheless, the rethink by the First Minister is welcome, significant and potentially far reaching.

That same description applies to the additional funding that was announced yesterday for mental health. That the announcement came on the same day as figures showing the staggering scale of how far we currently are from meeting the needs of people of all ages—but particularly children and young people who are suffering from poor mental health—only served to underscore how vital that long-overdue investment is. The funding must now prompt a substantial increase in the training of specialist practitioners. Just expecting the teaching profession to pick up the pieces will not do. Ensuring improvements in provision across the whole country, including in rural and island areas, will also be essential. However, the funding lays a good platform and it must now pave the way for treatment of mental ill health to be put on the same statutory footing as treatment of physical ill health.

Therefore, there were positives in what Nicola Sturgeon had to say yesterday, but sadly there were too few in a statement that went on for 40 minutes or more—not that I was desperate to hear her go on any longer.

I was struck by some of the bills that were conspicuous by their absence. The good food nation bill appears to have been boiled down to a mere programme. Richard Lochhead might be flavour of the month again with the First Minister, but the bill that he spent so much time evangelising has been dumped in the compost bin. With major challenges such as food poverty, childhood obesity and even biodiversity loss, it is hard to understand why the Government has scaled back its ambitions in that area.

There was no sign of the much-needed crofting reform bill to address the growing frustration and anger at the current regulation, which is not fit for purpose and is holding back individuals, businesses and communities, including those in places such as Orkney. Also missing in action yesterday was any mechanism for undoing the mess that the Government has got itself into over the dismantling of the British Transport Police. Those are just some of the examples of where the First Minister's programme for government fell short and represents a missed opportunity.

We did, however, get some signs as to what we might expect from the Government's forthcoming

budget bill, though we will have to wait a bit longer for the full reveal. In the remaining time that I have available, let me gently remind the finance secretary of other commitments that he has made that will also need to be accommodated when that bill is introduced.

Much was made yesterday of plans for investment in infrastructure, which have been repeated by Derek Mackay. However, it was difficult to identify much of direct relevance to more rural and island areas. Last year, the Scottish Government finally agreed to begin honouring the promises that it had made—through successive transport ministers, including Derek Mackay—on funding for Orkney and Shetland's internal ferry services. That principle has now been accepted. There cannot be any rowing back. Any attempt to do so would be seen by those in Orkney and Shetland as an act of betrayal by the Government.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Does the member agree that a huge majority of the £600 million that will be invested in the reaching 100 per cent broadband coverage programme is directed at rural areas? I will be a personal beneficiary and I am looking forward to it.

**Liam McArthur:** I agree, although there are serious questions about deliverability in parts of my constituency. I appreciate the engagement that there has been through the digital Scotland team in trying to answer those questions, but serious questions remain.

The principle that I mentioned has now been accepted, but there is a recognition that the current arrangements for running those ferry services are not sustainable. I was pleased that the finance secretary accepted the need for urgent action on a longer-term solution. In Orkney, that means replacement vessels. The current fleet is no longer up to the standards to operate on many of those routes. The boats cost more to run, more to fix and more to keep at sea. Delays in replacing them are increasingly a false economy, which comes at a cost to the communities that rely so heavily on them.

As a matter of urgency, the new transport secretary must now get round the table with the local council and agree a programme for fleet replacement. That is being done on the west coast, where multimillion pound vessels are at least being procured, even if the building and delivery are not necessarily going according to plan.

The recent passing of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 is not job done. Communities such as the ones that I represent expect it to be backed by action, including action on investment in infrastructure, such as our lifeline ferry services.

In passing, I urge the Government to sort out the road equivalent tariff mess on northern isles ferry routes. I appreciate that the dispute with Pentland Ferries is not entirely of its making, but the deafening silence from ministers over the summer is not encouraging. Those who travel between Orkney and Shetland and the Scottish mainland are still being forced to pay over the odds for using those services, and that cannot be allowed to continue.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We will have to be a wee bit stricter with the time from now on.

15:56

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I am very happy to speak in this debate at the start of the new parliamentary year.

I say to Liam McArthur that some of us do not do "raucous adulation" at all.

The programme for government looks very positive to me, and it seems to build on last year's plans. Last year, one bill that I was heavily involved in was the Islands (Scotland) Bill. Some Opposition members have suggested that we could push through more bills or push through bills faster and that the present system is perhaps too slow. However, the Government did a lot of work in preparation for that bill, and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, which I am a member of, spent a huge amount of time here and visiting the islands to take it through. We did some of that work during recess, and we had a lot of good input from all six councils that were involved. I would be very reluctant for us as a Parliament to churn such bills through faster and end up with a more slapdash approach, such as that at Westminster.

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** Does John Mason remember the number of times that the Opposition complained about the amount of legislation that the SNP pushed through Parliament when it could in the period from 2011, when it was a majority Government?

**John Mason:** Yes. That is a fair point. It is clear that the Opposition says one thing one day and another thing another day.

I am particularly interested in the economic side of things. The idea that there will be more focus on infrastructure strikes me as extremely good. That can mean more jobs. Just yesterday at the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, we heard that gross value added in the construction sector was £52,900 per head in 2016, which is higher than the figures for many other sectors. Therefore, that is a good place to invest in. We have to accept that there has been a tradition of construction jobs going to men, so we need to

continue challenging such gender stereotypes and to break down traditional barriers in society.

As yet, we have not seen the details of how all the extra money will be allocated. As others put in their bids, I, as a co-convenor of the cross-party group on rail, would be very happy to see more money being spent on rail. The Perth to Inverness line, for example, is an opportunity and a challenge. Dualling the A9 is absolutely great and fabulous, but a side effect could be putting rail travel at a disadvantage. I hope that that will be one area that the cabinet secretary will look at.

We also think about how the other two main parties view the economy. The Conservative Party would like us to think that it is the realistic party. The Conservatives realise that we have to live within our means and that expenditure cannot outstrip income year after year, and they want to see growth and an increase in productivity. I can agree with many of those things, but there is a problem with the Conservative vision for the economy. The Conservatives do not seem to care how the growth comes about or who suffers in the process, as long as the economy grows. If the rich got super rich and the poor got super poor, that would still be success in the Conservative world, as long as the economy was growing.

On the other hand, we have Labour, which does not do realism. Richard Leonard and Jeremy Corbyn are probably well-meaning people, in a bumbling sort of way. They say that we should spend more and more; they do not really have a plan for where the money would come from—perhaps they would start a new tax tomorrow or raise an old one, but why bother planning such things?

**Neil Findlay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**John Mason:** No—not from Mr Findlay.

**Neil Findlay:** What a surprise.

**John Mason:** Absolutely.

Perhaps we could borrow and borrow and hope that somebody will repay the money one day.

In contrast to those two flawed models, we have a party of government—the SNP—that the people of Scotland clearly trust, because we have been in government for 11 years. It is a challenge to be in government and to be forced to be realistic but aspirational at the same time. The programme for government strikes a good balance between being more progressive than the UK has been—we are raising income taxes a bit more and investing for the future—and being realistic about what we can borrow and afford to pay back in the future.

Brexit is a huge aspect of any programme for the coming year, and a number of members have

mentioned it. Many of the public and many of us are getting fed up with the endless bickering at Westminster and with the myriad of potential scenarios. Perhaps our Conservative colleagues could tell their London masters that it is about time that we had definite plans and actions, and not just contradictions, claims and counterclaims.

One of the Conservatives' favourite lines is that Scotland does more trade with the UK than with the EU—61 per cent of Scotland's trade is with the UK and 17 per cent or thereabouts is with the EU. That is well and good—it is true—but the Conservatives' idea that we can forget about the 17 per cent, which I presume would mean a 17 per cent hit on our economy, is absolute madness.

Scotland cannot afford to lose either of those important markets. Our farmers, fishing boats and businesspeople need both the UK market and the EU market, so will the Conservatives please put the country's interests ahead of their narrow party squabbles?

It was Jack McConnell who led a lot of activity on the population and immigration. We cannot grow the economy if we are not allowed to have a growing population, which is key to growing our internal markets, our taxpayer base and our workforce.

I hope that the Opposition parties will take the opportunity to engage constructively with the budget and sit down to seek to reach a compromise. We have a minority Government in a Parliament with proportional representation; we all need to compromise and no one will get exactly what they want. I appeal to Labour and the Tories to think a bit more seriously than they have in previous years.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** Thank you—that is fine, Mr Mason.

16:02

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I have not yet had the chance to formally welcome the new Cabinet Secretary for Justice to his role and I am pleased to do so in general and in the context of the programme for government. Some might consider his inheritance to be something of a poisoned chalice, as violent crime is up, drug crime is up and robbery is up, while the detection rate is down. That is in the context of police officer numbers having been cut to a nine-year low. It would be a big ask for anyone—let alone someone from a completely separate brief—to pick that up cold, which is why I reiterate Ruth Davidson's point from yesterday and encourage the new justice department to work with those who have the experience and the policies.

The early signs are promising. Unlike the cabinet secretary's predecessor—who, in the face of repeated criticism from the Scottish Conservatives, train operating companies, trade unions, most of the other Opposition parties and the public, railroaded through the unwanted, unnecessary and dangerous BTP merger—the new cabinet secretary has climbed down. However, railway policing is—oddly—not mentioned at all in the programme for government.

The programme for government makes an unequivocal and unambiguous promise to introduce Finn's law. It is clear that the efforts of the Finn's law campaigners, the petition with 40,000 signatures, the correspondence from kids at Mossneuk primary school, the members' business motion that had cross-party support and my demands on Monday for Finn's law to be included in the programme for government worked.

Then there is restorative justice. In the debate on last year's programme for government, I said that the Government should

"introduce a genuine restorative justice programme to tip the balance back in favour of victims who too often experience a justice system that offers them nothing."—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2017; c 66.]

I also led a members' business debate on the subject about six months ago. The result has been a commitment to publish a restorative justice action plan by spring 2019. That is good.

We demanded a commitment to crack down on drug-driving, and I welcomed last year's programme for government, which promised to implement that. Unfortunately, the SNP is yet to lay the statutory instrument to get it done, but at least—as on many other aspects of last year's programme—the commitment has been reheated, which is welcome.

There is much in the justice brief that is less encouraging. I noted the cabinet secretary's recent statement in a magazine that

"Victims' rights will be strengthened",

but the programme for government does not do it. The measures for victims that have been announced fall far short of what is required. Bluntly, the programme for government offers to ensure that victims and their families will have

"better information and greater support ahead of prison release arrangements",

but there is no commitment to give victims and families any meaningful input.

Victims and their families have asked that it be explicitly required that their safety and welfare be taken into account. They have also asked for increased use to be made of exclusion zones for offenders and for the victim notification scheme to

be revised so that they are given reasons for release and can make representations in person. That would represent meaningful input into a process that currently treats victims as little more than an afterthought. That is Michelle's law, which will form the subject of my members' business debate tomorrow, to which I am very much looking forward.

I have two final points. Yet again, the ill-thought-through extension to the presumption against custodial sentences from three to 12 months has reared its head. I understand that the SNP wants to save money by emptying our prisons, but compromising the safety of the people of Scotland by allowing serious criminals out on to the streets is not the solution.

Last year, 10,000 offenders were sentenced to 12 months or less in prison. That figure includes two offenders who were convicted of homicide, 99 who were convicted of serious assault or attempted murder and 60 who were convicted of robbery. The SNP's plan will let some of the most dangerous criminals back out into society and will make life even more miserable for victims of crime across Scotland.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** Just yesterday, Liam Kerr's UK Government colleague the minister of state for prisons, Rory Stewart MP, said:

"It is of course true that we have evidence that shows clearly that there is a higher incidence of reoffending from people in short prison sentences than from people who serve community sentences. That is why the example from the Government of Scotland is very relevant."—[*Official Report*, *House of Commons*, 4 September 2018; Vol 646, c 47.]

Is the member similarly critical of his UK Government counterpart?

**Liam Kerr:** Is it not interesting how the SNP is so focused on what is happening in England and Wales? It is almost as if the SNP does not know that we have a separate justice system. I am interested in Scotland's justice system, and from the evidence that we have, it is clear that, as it is currently constructed, the SNP's community sentencing model is not working.

The cabinet secretary mentioned Rory Stewart. I remind him that Rory Stewart also said that he would resign if he did not sort out the prisons within a year. I look forward to the cabinet secretary making a similar promise.

I turn finally to prisoner voting. I note that the references to consulting on that issue are buried on two separate pages out of 118. Each reference comprises eight words. I am not surprised that the SNP is a bit embarrassed about giving prisoner voting any profile. The SNP has been criticised for being too distracted by its own troubles to deal

with the things that really make a difference to communities, and here is a great example of exactly that—a consultation about a reform that is unworkable, unwanted and not morally justified. As well as being a waste of time, because when prisoners are sent to prison, they surrender their right to choose the Government, the consultation is little more than an insult to victims and their families.

The SNP needs to get back to the day job and start putting victims and communities first. I look forward to helping the cabinet secretary to retain that focus.

16:09

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in and to welcome today's debate on the programme for government. I absolutely endorse the programme that the First Minister set out yesterday. I would like to focus on two key aspects of it. One is health-related and one is economy-related.

The first aspect that I want to discuss is the announcement of an additional £250 million investment in mental health, which will deliver 350 dedicated counsellors in schools, an additional 250 school nurses and an additional 80 counsellors to work in further and higher education. Extra funding will also be provided for teachers. The objective of the investment is to provide our young people and their families with a high standard of emotional and mental health support, guidance and advice, which will enable them to proceed effectively and efficiently with their education.

First as a nurse and former clinical educator, but also as a member of the Health and Sport Committee and as the new co-convener—along with James Dornan and Annie Wells—of the cross-party group on mental health, I am extremely proud to support a Government that not only takes mental health seriously, but is the first Government in the UK to have a dedicated mental health minister. I wish Clare Haughey well in her new role as the Minister for Mental Health.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of scrutiny of progress towards implementation of the programme for government. Just before the summer recess, I sponsored a reception for the Scottish Eating Disorders Interest Group in the Parliament. We heard many inspiring stories from experts, parents and—most important—people who live with eating disorders. A key message from the people who attended the SEDIG event was that early diagnosis and treatment are key, so that the most effective management and recovery can occur. I ask the Scottish Government to consider an approach that would support young

people who may be experiencing eating disorders, including diabulimia, that negatively affect their health.

The second point on which I will focus relates to my South Scotland region: the creation of the south of Scotland economic partnership. The partnership is being led by Professor Russell Griggs, ahead of the First Minister's announcement yesterday to legislate to create a south of Scotland enterprise agency. The south of Scotland economic partnership has been operational for the past 12 months. Its board members have been holding engagement meetings across South Scotland and there has been strong engagement and interest. The partnership is key to the development and ultimate sustainability of the economy and, indeed, to the economic development of the region, so I am pleased to report that the meetings have been well received, and that there has been predominantly positive feedback from people who have attended.

Although the south of Scotland enterprise agency will be crucial in supporting investment in the south's economy, we must also recognise that digital, road and rail infrastructure are also key to attracting business, tourism and people to the south. Therefore, I am happy that the programme for government includes a commitment to improving the infrastructure of the south of Scotland by carrying out and implementing major infrastructure projects across the region, including the Maybole bypass, broadband infrastructure and publication of the south of Scotland strategic roads and rail review. I look forward to that review's completion. The review is under way and will identify infrastructure projects that are required across the South Scotland region and will inform projects, going forward.

Along with my colleagues Jeane Freeman and Joan McAlpine, I will continue to lobby the Government for investment in the A75, A76 and A77, and I look forward to future announcements about those major arterial routes, which are necessary for business, tourism and daily travel.

While attending agricultural and cattle shows over the recess, I took the baby box on tour. The chance for folk to look inside and get in about the contents proved to be worth while, and many positive comments were made. In the south-west of Scotland, about 4,000 baby boxes have already been delivered, which means that there have been about 4,000 babies delivered, too. The feedback that I have received indicates that the baby box has significantly helped parents by allowing them to focus their finances on other necessary products.

While the UK Government continues its boorach Brexit bungling or—to use John Mason's word, "bumbling"—I support the Scottish Government,

which is getting on with the day job by delivering and, indeed, standing up for people in Scotland.

I am done, Presiding Officer, so you have a wee bit of time in hand.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** How very kind of you, Ms Harper.

16:14

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** Families throughout Scotland who were looking at yesterday's programme for government announcement for measures that would provide a much-needed boost to household income would have been sadly disappointed.

As Jackie Baillie pointed out, the economic outlook is bleak. The Scottish Fiscal Commission records that forecast growth will not exceed 1 per cent until 2023. The problem is not just with the figures, but with what they actually mean on the ground. The reality is that far too many people in Scotland's economy are working in low-paid jobs. We still have 467,000 people who earn less than the living wage. For example, a person in Rutherglen who works in a fast-food restaurant on the minimum wage of £7.38 per hour will earn only £258 per week. As someone recounted to me earlier in the week, that means that people are doing three jobs in order to make up the gaps in their household incomes. As we move forward, and fuel and food bills increase at a greater rate than inflation but wages struggle to keep pace with it, and as the Fiscal Commission has pointed out, household income will continue to be under pressure, which will, potentially, have a detrimental effect on economic growth.

Added to that, we have had a sustained SNP programme of cuts to public services, which have drained economic growth. One example is that, since 2010, £400 million has been cut from education, which means that there are fewer teachers—3,500 fewer since 2007—and fewer classroom assistants. Ultimately, that has an impact on results. The recent batch of exam results show that the pass rates for highers, which are key qualifications for university entrance, declined for the third year in a row.

Not only that, but not enough people are taking up some key subjects. For example, there have been serious declines in languages including French and German. I assume that when Brexit happens we will still want people who are qualified in foreign languages so that we can interact with companies abroad. The facts that we do not have enough students taking such subjects and that there are also declining pass rates are of real concern.

On university entrance, restrictions on places for home-based students have resulted in reductions in key areas. For example, in medicine, uptake of places by Scottish students in the year 2000 was 63 per cent of all places, but in 2017, the figure was down to just over 50 per cent. That comes when the chair of the British Medical Association in Scotland tells us, as he did this morning, that the crisis in the national health service is at "tipping point" and we are not training the same number—

**Derek Mackay:** I know that the Opposition is perfectly entitled to give a critique of Government performance and policy. We could argue about it all day, but let us cheer the chamber up. I ask Mr Kelly what is the single big policy idea coming from the Labour Party right now?

**James Kelly:** The big idea is to stop the cuts. *[Interruption.]* We must stop draining £400 million from Scotland's education sector. Mr Mackay, if you continue to cut—as you have done repeatedly since 2011, and all the meek back benchers press their buttons to vote for those budgets—you take resources out. *[Interruption.]* As I have explained, the results then deteriorate, we do not have enough qualified doctors coming through and we end up with the BMA telling us, as it did on the radio this morning, that the NHS is at "tipping point". That is a direct result of your policies.

Added to that, we have had real inaction from the SNP. You have tinkered around the edges on tax powers that you demanded for years but have not been able to use effectively, just as you have done nothing to target top-rate taxpayers. Also, when the outturn figures were reported, we found out that you had underspent the budget by £454 million. Nearly half a billion pounds had been stuck down Derek Mackay's sofa in St Andrew's house instead of providing help to Scotland's public services. *[Interruption.]*

In addition to that, you were not prepared to give any much-needed assistance or support to councils on issues including the tourist tax, which would have raised a lot of money during the Edinburgh festival.

I am delighted that I have cheered up the chamber and got a bit of atmosphere going. *[Laughter.]* I am also delighted to be cheered by SNP members.

On a serious note, we need a programme that stops the cuts, and we need a proper economic and industrial strategy that has skills as its priority. We also need to prioritise providing proper well-paid jobs. That is the difference that we need to make in order to move Scotland's economy forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr Kelly. I did not want to halt you in the middle of

your speech, and I understand that you were passionate, but I remind all members not to use the word “you” when referring to other members.

16:21

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** I congratulate the First Minister and her Government on the programme for government.

Recent analysis of Scotland's economy makes for encouraging reading. Last month's quarterly national accounts showed an updated gross domestic product growth estimate of 0.4 per cent for the first quarter in 2018, which was revised from June's estimate of 0.2 per cent. That compares well to the equivalent growth rate figure for the whole of the UK, which stands at 0.2 per cent. Output in the services and production sectors grew in the first quarter by 0.4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. The construction sector contracted by 1.4 per cent, but we should remember that the weather—specifically, the beast from the east—played a major role in that.

When compared to the same quarter last year, the indications are that Scotland's GDP has grown by 1.3 per cent in real terms, which is revised from a first estimate of 0.8 per cent and comparable to the equivalent UK growth of 1.2 per cent.

That evidence clearly shows that, despite the global financial uncertainties that are affecting all economies and after a decade of Westminster's austerity measures that were supposed to cure the UK's financial ills but have merely promoted poverty and hardship, the measures that the Scottish Government is taking to protect and promote the Scottish economy are fundamentally the right ones.

There should be no doubt that Scotland is a rich and successful country with many assets that other countries covet. We stand in the top 25 global economies in terms of income per head, and rank behind only London and the south-east of England in terms of most long-term indicators. Our goods exports have increased by 12 per cent over the past year—the fastest growth of any nation in the UK—while the latest EY attractiveness survey showed that, outside of London, Scotland remains the top UK region for foreign direct investment projects.

However, despite that positive background, we face many challenges in the years to come. Unsurprisingly, foremost of those is Brexit. Our export success is directly threatened by the prospect of removal of access to the single market and customs union, which I do not need to remind my fellow MSPs is a market that is around eight times bigger than the UK market alone. As it stands and including the European Economic

Area, Scotland's exports to Europe accounted for more than 52 per cent of our exported goods in 2016.

A major part of those exports is oil and gas, which are our largest export by some margin, standing at around 17 per cent of our total exports to the EU. The oil and gas sector has seen its troubles in past years, but it is beginning to consolidate. Recent analysis by the Oil and Gas Authority shows that production this year is expected to be 18 per cent higher than in 2014. Meanwhile, the latest Fraser of Allander institute oil and gas survey shows that net confidence of oil and gas contractors is at its highest level since spring 2013.

Leaving the European Union without any kind of plan in place is almost certain to jeopardise the cautious growth and optimism that the oil and gas sector is reflecting. Given that oil represents less than 5 per cent of total UK exports, it is unsurprising that the Conservatives have chosen not to emphasise the sector in the Brexit negotiations, despite its crucial importance to Scotland. If we were free to negotiate our own deals, we would have the opportunity to focus on what truly matters to our economy and would not have to rely on others who do not care to hear Scotland's voice.

Perhaps that behaviour is to be expected from the Tories. Figures that were released in May under freedom of information showed that, in my constituency alone, cuts to disability payments meant that East Lothian lost out on £1 million and Midlothian lost £1.1 million. The sum that was lost across Scotland's communities came to a staggering £56 million. For many local people and economies that money is a lifeline, and to have it taken away displays not only a callous attitude towards the people of this country but a short-sightedness in how to support communities from the ground up.

At the same time, Labour cannot get away from accusations of short-term thinking. The morally questionable endeavours known as private finance initiatives have had major financial impacts in my constituency. Midlothian Council is now spending 11 per cent—more than £10 million—of its annual school budget servicing PFI debts left by the Labour Party a decade ago. East Lothian Council is spending a similar percentage of its school budget, equating to around £8.9 million, on PFI debts.

In 2016-17, total PFI repayments across Scotland cost over £1 billion. That contrasts with the Scottish Government's investment in our local communities. For example, since 2009, the schools for the future programme has invested £9.5 million in East Lothian schools and £50.8 million in schools in Midlothian.



Another initiative announced as part of the programme for government is the launch of the national investment bank. The programme for government outlined how we will set aside resources of £340 million to fund the bank in the first instance. As convener of the cross-party group on industrial communities, I will put a plug in here. I am pleased to say that this evening's meeting will feature a guest speaker from the Scottish Government who will speak on that topic.

The programme for government outlines a wide range of other measures to promote and enhance our economy. For example, the Government will provide £96 million of extra support to deliver the most attractive package of business rates in the UK, with the increase to the rates poundage capped at consumer, rather than retail, prices index inflation.

The issue of housing is one that many local economies depend on, and the Government will establish a new £150 million building Scotland fund to unlock new house building, develop new low-carbon commercial property and support research and development. Transport is another sector that strongly ties into the economy, and the Government will invest £60 million in the low-carbon innovation fund, to deliver innovative low-carbon energy infrastructure solutions, including electric vehicles, while also investing £1.2 billion in the transport infrastructure.

Presiding Officer, I hope it is clear from all that we have heard from the First Minister and the Scottish Government over the past day or so that Scotland is in safe hands. The Tories willingly choose to ignore investment and support for communities, while Labour cannot be trusted to get its sums right without landing a future Government with unsustainable levels of debt. I look forward to the implementation of this programme for Scotland.

16:27

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I welcome the cultural and tourism elements of the programme for government and, on a cordial note, I am pleased to see that the Scottish Government recognises the importance of tourism and culture as a force for good.

There are several aspects of the programme for government that are positive news for the tourism sector, and I was pleased to receive reassurance from Fiona Hyslop that the so-called tourism tax has been ditched. On 22 June 2018, I received a letter confirming that

"Scottish ministers are not willing to consider requests to explore a possible tourism levy unless the tourism and

hospitality industry are involved from the outset and their long-term interests are fully recognised",

which seems to be at odds with what Kate Forbes said earlier. I also welcome the fact that there is incentivisation to promote agri-tourism which, working with farms and estates, will help to develop food tourism.

We all know that every £1 that is spent on culture and tourism generates between £4 and £6 extra for the economy. The tourism industry accounts for one job in 12 and is described as the cornerstone of the Scottish economy. It is vital for economic performance across Scotland's towns, cities and regions. The tourism Scotland 2020 strategy centres on influencing investment in the sector and supporting infrastructure, and on improving the quality of visitor experience across Scotland. That is what I want to concentrate on today.

It is a no-brainer that investment in the culture and heritage sectors boosts the economy, tourism and employment in areas where those three factors often struggle to perform well. The potential for tourism in Scotland is colossal. The exciting and diverse range of attractions that our country has to offer makes it a unique destination, not only for domestic travellers but for international visitors.

However, this SNP Government has simply not grasped the nettle when it comes to maximising Scotland's potential and helping out communities with necessary additional infrastructure. How far will the £6 million that was set aside last year for the rural tourism infrastructure fund really go to alleviate the worries of local communities? Take, for example, the world famous north coast 500 route—it is a breathtaking drive through some of Scotland's most awe-inspiring and dramatic natural landscapes, but the fact remains that the roads along the north coast are narrow, bumpy and dangerous. Motorbikes and fast cars treat them like Scalextric tracks. Why was the issue not mentioned in the programme for government? Where is the Scottish Government support for local communities that are crying out for investment in that regard?

**Derek Mackay:** It sounds as though the member is building a crescendo towards demanding more funds for investment in the tourism sector. I understand the appeal, but how does her demand match up with the only things that the Conservatives have raised in the Scottish Parliament, which are tax cuts for the richest and tax relief for independent schools?

**Rachael Hamilton:** I do not know whether you remember that we had a debate in which the Scottish Conservatives called for a £100 million

pothole fund—*[Interruption.]* It was in our manifesto in 2016, which was costed.

Derek Mackay also found £10 million for local authorities to assist with road maintenance after the beast from the east, so I am sure that you can find something down the back of your sofa again—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Hamilton, he might find something down the back of his sofa, but please stop using the word “you”. I have already reprimanded members for doing so.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I apologise, Presiding Officer.

Another example is the beautiful Glenfinnan viaduct, which has been used time and again in film and television, and which cannot cope with extra visitors, due to the lack of car parking capacity. Tourists who want to visit are turning away as a result of a lack of infrastructure.

Historic Environment Scotland, which owns many of Scotland’s most famous landmarks, is launching a Robert the Bruce trail to capitalise on the release of “Outlaw King”.

It is all very well applauding the success of tourism, but the Scottish Government needs to commit to supporting the sector, too. Rural and remote areas are struggling to cope with demand, which in turn is discouraging tourists from visiting busy areas. No member in the chamber wants that, so I call on the Scottish Government to be ambitious and to have an honest and frank conversation with communities in areas that benefit from tourism to ensure that they all have the necessary tools to take advantage of the tourism potential. I reiterate that the programme for government fundamentally misses the point about the insufficient infrastructure and shows a lack of consideration for rural areas.

The programme for government wants a vision for culture that is inclusive. I am pleased that the Scottish Government continues to allow free access to Scotland’s museums and galleries, but I cannot help but notice that there is no mention of inclusion for people with, for example, mental health issues or dementia. We need to work constructively to ensure that cultural experiences and events are accessible to and appropriate for everyone.

The programme for government rehashes old announcements and commitments, offering few new attractions. It is the same regurgitated, boring, old stuff as we heard last year—just in a different order. Vital projects are missing out on new funding, such as concert venues, galleries, and theatres, which could promote inclusive tourism, as Capital Theatres has done.

Like many members, I am looking forward to the opening of the V&A museum, which will bring

many people to Dundee. It is a fantastic example of the UK and Scottish Governments pooling resources and working together.

I am conscious of the time, but I want to make one more point. The Scottish Government is responding to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland review and, in the year of young people, it is important that we take a serious look at the provision of music education, so that such education remains accessible to all.

Some announcements in the programme will encourage cultural participation and boost tourism, but the bottom line is that this SNP Government is tired and running out of steam. Frankly, I was disappointed.

16:33

**Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** I welcome the programme for government and today’s focus on the economy. In particular, I welcome the commitment to increase by £7 billion annual infrastructure investment for hospitals, schools, housing and a range of other investment projects.

That is particularly important for Edinburgh, which is one of the UK’s economic hot spots. Many of the largest companies in Scotland have a presence in the city. I mention two areas that highlight the success of Edinburgh’s booming economy. The financial services sector has grown by 46 per cent over the past five years and the demand for staff in Edinburgh and Glasgow has resulted in Scotland being the best area of the UK for graduate pay. New company start-ups are growing at a faster rate in Scotland than in the rest of the UK—and double the rate in 2000. In Edinburgh, the business start-up five-year survival rate is higher than it is in any other UK city, including London, Manchester and Liverpool.

Tourism is booming in Edinburgh with record numbers of visitors coming to the city last year and this year also heading for record levels. The result is that hotel occupancy rates are higher than they are in most other major European cities.

To support the growing economy in Edinburgh, we need people. During the past 10 years, the city has had the highest growth in the number of households among Scottish cities. The 12 per cent increase in population during that period equates to an average of 100 new residents a week, every week.

The council is pulling out all the stops to address the housing need. This month will see the letting of the new affordable homes at Fernieflat Neuk in the Calders area of my constituency, and homes will be let in north Sighthill later this year. There is no doubt that we still need more

affordable homes, so this increased infrastructure expenditure will support the council to deliver its ambitious programme to build at least 10,000 social and affordable homes during the next five years, with a plan to build 20,000 by 2027.

Alongside the new homes that are being built, we need superfast broadband that allows households to watch television and shop and pay their bills online. Unfortunately, in the semi-rural parts of my constituency, connectivity has been poor. However, the announcement that the R100 contract will be awarded in the coming year will mean that the poor connectivity that concerns some of my constituents will be addressed so that every business and residential property in Scotland will have access to superfast broadband.

The families who have been attracted to Edinburgh to take advantage of the work opportunities need good-quality educational facilities. Across Scotland, the proportion of schools that are either good or satisfactory has improved from 61 per cent in 2007 to 86 per cent in 2017. Parents in my constituency are looking forward to the next round of funding for the schools for the future programme, as a number of high schools in my constituency were built in the 1970s and are now in need of refurbishment.

We must also protect the character of Edinburgh, and the investment in our railway network that is under way, especially on the Glasgow to Edinburgh via Shotts line, will allow people to commute from further afield where housing costs are substantially cheaper. My constituents who use Curriehill, Wester Hailes, Kingsknowe or Slateford railway stations will also benefit from the investment in our railways because of the introduction of the new class 385 rolling stock—the most modern trains in the UK—in the coming months.

It is not just the investment in railways that is helping the Scottish Government tackle congestion and air quality issues in Edinburgh; it is also the investment in other areas of public transport. The Scottish green bus fund has already supported investment by Lothian Buses in purchasing 65 low-carbon vehicles as part of a package that invested £16 million towards putting 360 low-carbon buses into the Scottish bus fleet. The eighth round of the Scottish green bus fund will see further investment of £1.7 million that will add more than 100 green buses to the fleet, and help to deliver the climate change plan commitment of 50 per cent by 2032.

My constituency is also home to Dreghorn barracks and Redford cavalry and infantry barracks, so I welcome the announcement that the veterans commissioner's recommendations will be implemented. They include providing support for individuals who are transitioning from the military

to find fulfilling civilian careers and to develop an approach that meets the healthcare needs of veterans. I also welcome the support that will help veterans and military spouses who want to run their own businesses to find space to develop their business ideas at new workspace hubs that will be located near main defence bases.

This year's programme for government is entitled "Delivering for Today, Investing for Tomorrow". For my constituents in Edinburgh Pentlands, that is exactly what the Government is doing.

16:39

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

Before recess, the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee published a wide-ranging report on the performance of the Scottish economy during the past 10 years. The inquiry lasted for six months and the committee heard evidence from stakeholders across all sectors. The main conclusions of the report include the statement that "economic growth in Scotland" in the past decade has been

"significantly below ... the performance of the UK economy",

as well as below Scottish Government targets and historical growth rates for Scotland.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dean Lockhart:** I will in a second.

The report goes on to conclude that "levels of GDP growth" in Scotland "are marginal", that "productivity is low" and that "wages are stagnant". Those conclusions are supported by what the Scottish Government's figures tell us about what is happening in the economy. We are seeing the lowest trends in economic growth in Scotland for 60 years.

Perhaps the cabinet secretary can now explain why that is the case.

**Derek Mackay:** That is not the case. The point that I was about to make is that, since the publication of that report, and with regard specifically to GDP, Scotland is outperforming the rest of the UK.

I have read the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee's report and—I am sure that Dean Lockhart will welcome this—I will try to implement as many as I possibly can of the recommendations of that very fair report. Equally, however, will Dean Lockhart welcome the fact that Scotland's economy is outperforming that of the rest of the UK?

**Dean Lockhart:** I would welcome any good news on the Scottish economy because it is such

a rare event. I say to the cabinet secretary that he should read page 14 of the committee's report, which shows that the Scottish economy has lagged behind that of the rest of the UK for nine of the 11 years during which his party has been in power. Every leading forecaster is predicting that, between now and the next Holyrood election, the Scottish economy will continue to underperform that of the rest of the UK. That is the economic reality that the cabinet secretary has to recognise.

Wages are falling across the economy, productivity levels continue to decline, record numbers of shops are closing on high streets across Scotland and, as we have heard, the latest GERS numbers show the highest ever gap in the public finances between Scotland and the rest of the UK, resulting in a record union dividend of more than £1,800 per person.

Given that unprecedented economic background, the main recommendation of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, supported by all members, was for the Scottish Government's economic strategy to be reviewed and updated as a matter of urgency. This programme for government provided the SNP with the ideal opportunity to do that and to move away from the failed economic agenda of the past 11 years and set out a new vision for the Scottish economy. However, the programme for government fails at every level.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Dean Lockhart:** I need to make progress but I might give way later on.

First, there is no new vision. Practically all the measures in the programme for government have been announced before. There is nothing new in the south of Scotland enterprise board announcement, the Barclay review, the tinkering with business rates or the establishment of trade desks in British embassies, and the Scottish national investment bank has already been debated in this chamber.

The programme for government does set out two new economic measures, but they lack credibility. First, the national export plan to help increase Scotland's exports across the world has funding support of less than £7 million a year. To put that into context, there was an announcement today of £30 million for staffing for the Scottish national investment bank. That shows how real the SNP's ambitions are for growing Scotland's exports.

Secondly—perhaps this is what Mr Mackay wants to talk about—there is the new economic action plan that was announced yesterday as a central part of the programme for government. However, when we look closer, we can see that it

is hidden in a footnote on page 46 of the programme. That shows that this is an exercise in spin and no substance from the SNP.

However, the fundamental problem with the programme for government is that people no longer trust the SNP to run the economy. The people of Scotland have seen promise after promise being broken by the SNP when it comes to the economy.

In the programme for government 2016-17, the First Minister announced the Scottish growth scheme as a £500 million vote of confidence in business. However, more than two years later, not one loan has been granted to Scottish business under the scheme. In the 2016 Holyrood manifesto, the SNP promised not to increase the basic rate of income tax. However, we now have more than 1 million people in Scotland paying more as a result of that broken promise. Yesterday, the First Minister promised that the business environment in Scotland will remain competitive, but the SNP continues to punish business by imposing the large-business supplement. Further, the SNP has promised to increase activity to the first quartile but, again, figures that were released just two weeks ago show that we are still in the third division.

The list of SNP broken promises on the economy is endless, but that should not surprise us because, in the final analysis, the SNP will always prioritise independence above everything else—above the economy, above the NHS and above education.

**Derek Mackay:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Dean Lockhart:** No; I am running out of time.

I remind the cabinet secretary that it was the First Minister herself who made it clear that independence

"transcends the issues ... of oil, of national wealth and balance sheets".

It could not be clearer what the priority is.

The people of Scotland want real change. They want an end to constitutional politics and they want a Government that is focused on the day job. This programme for government is not the answer. It is now clearer than ever that this is a tired government, out of ideas, out of its depth and running out of time.

16:45

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** The economy is not separate from public services. Over the summer, I met and dealt with constituents who want and need real change. I mean constituents who are struggling to get by, feel powerless in

their daily lives and do not see an economy or society that works for them. I mean constituents such as the families in Livingston that cannot access the children's ward at the local hospital; they want a fully funded NHS. I mean those in Seafeld whose countryside is threatened by a housing development that is outside the development plan; they want equal rights in the planning system.

I mean the families in Livingston, Addiewell, Bridgend, Dedridge, Dechmont and Stoneyburn who are isolated because FirstBus withdrew their bus services; they want a bus that takes them to work and keeps them in a job. I mean the businesses and workers who have real concerns about their jobs and futures in post-Brexit Britain; they want reassurances and confidence so that they can plan the way forward.

I mean the people in East Calder and Mid Calder who want a new health centre, those in Midlothian who cannot access a general practitioner and those in Stoneyburn who have lost their GP service altogether. I mean families in Edinburgh who see so-called market failure in social care leaving their loved ones stuck in hospital instead of being back in their own homes; the parents and partners who are taken to the brink by seeing the people whom they love disappearing before their eyes into a black hole of despair because they cannot get help for their mental health conditions; and the families and friends of the 1,000 people who have died from drugs this year.

All those people need health services, social care and a system of public services that supports them and ends their suffering. The public service failures go hand in hand with economic stagnation. People need real change. They need a Government that acts for the many and not the few. They need an economy and a system of social protection that is based on equality and justice.

I will say what Labour would do to address those issues and how we would deliver exactly such a system. We would introduce a budget to end the cuts and invest in public services with fair and progressive taxation. We would introduce a planned industrial strategy that would deliver an economy that was based on high wages, skilled jobs and a long-term plan for growth and full employment. We would establish a national investment bank that was capitalised not by £250 million but by £20 billion over 10 years, which would provide the finance to develop innovation, and a national infrastructure fund that would add another £20 billion for key infrastructure projects. That is bold and ambitious.

We would also undertake a fundamental review of procurement, including of the non-profit-

distributing and PFI deals, and would buy out project funding if it was financially beneficial to do so. We would establish a Brexit strategy that put jobs, living standards, consumer and environmental protection and workers' rights at its heart. We would invest in our health and social care system to address staff shortages and to end boarding out, bed blocking, ward closures and the crisis in social care.

We would introduce the commonsense ownership of rail services and end the waste and nonsense of privatisation, in which money seeps out the system. We would also reregulate bus services. Investment in green buses is all very well but, in my region, people just want a bus.

We would also provide a fair deal for our teachers, classroom assistants and council workers. They are at the cutting-edge of delivering the public services that civilise our society. They also play a key role in reducing inequality and providing educational opportunities for all.

People do not want a plan for Scotland that is drawn up in the SNP's cuts commission by the cabinet secretary, Kate Forbes, Shirley-Anne Somerville and corporate lobbyist Andrew Wilson because it proposes a decade of cuts, the continuation of the failed ultra-free market, neoliberal dogma and an economy based on so-called flexicurity. I will decode flexicurity for members: it means an economy in which it is easier to sack people. The commission proposes nothing to address the hoarding of wealth by the 1 per cent.

**Tom Arthur:** Will Neil Findlay give way?

**Neil Findlay:** No. The commission's plan would subject our public services—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Sit down, Mr Arthur.

**Neil Findlay:** Its plan would subject our public services to more job losses, more cuts and greater decline.

The Scottish Labour Party is serious about the challenges that we face in a post-Brexit world. Part of the solution is to bring economic power into the hands of people in communities. We need commonsense ownership and we need power to be decentralised.

It should be up to the City of Edinburgh Council if it wants to introduce a tourist tax; it should not be up to the culture secretary, nor the First Minister. The railways should be publicly owned so that we can keep fares affordable and invest in services without leaking money to shareholders—that is common sense. Powers should be devolved down to allow local models of ownership to flourish.

The choice in Scotland is now clear. We can continue with cuts and austerity, as championed by the Tories and meekly followed by the SNP, or we can choose a different path—the one championed by Scottish Labour—a programme based on hope and ambition that will deliver a progressive agenda to revitalise communities and end the attacks on the living standards of working people.

It is time for real change, not another year of tinkering around the edges.

16:51

**The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson):** This is a programme for government that basically contrasts two Governments: a Government that is committed to taking Scotland forward, modernising its infrastructure, investing in its economy, and making it a modern, vibrant nation, and a Government at Westminster that is in utter chaos and goes from one day's crisis to the next day's crisis.

I will touch on a number of points that have been raised during the debate. A number of members have made reference to the number of bills that are contained within this legislative programme. I want to deal with the misleading narrative that some members want to create, which is that we measure a programme for government based on the number of bills that have been progressed through Parliament.

In particular, Jackie Baillie made a point about the number of bills that have gone through Parliament over the year. She has been in the Parliament for as long as I have—since 1999. As a former minister, she knows very well that there are a variety of reasons for the pace at which bills go through Parliament at particular points, due to committee and parliamentary processes. She also knows that the measure of a Government's activity is not just legislation but the Government's wider policy agenda. This programme for government shows a commitment to a range of ambitious policy initiatives that we will take forward over the next year.

**Jackie Baillie:** The cabinet secretary has indeed been here as long as I have and I do not think that, in any of those 19 years, the Government has produced as few as two bills. However, I think that he would also acknowledge that I recognised that this is also about policy and resources—and the Government is failing on those counts, too.

**Michael Matheson:** Jackie Baillie is wrong on that. At the beginning of the Scottish Parliament, there was a real lack of legislation from the Government that she was a member of. Anyway,

she knows that her narrative is clearly not accurate.

I turn to some of the points that were raised about bills. Stewart Stevenson raised issues of concern about non-domestic rates and how they apply to former fish factories in his constituency. As he is aware, a bill will be coming before Parliament that will provide an opportunity for those matters to be debated and considered.

Alongside that, we are introducing the south of Scotland enterprise agency bill to make sure that we are strengthening the economy in the south of Scotland. I was in Stranraer a couple of weeks ago at the invitation of Emma Harper, and there is a clear desire there that we do everything that we can to strengthen the economy in the south of Scotland. This Government is introducing legislation to help to facilitate that.

Stewart Stevenson referred to the biometrics bill. I cannot say that I know much about the Indian Government's identity card system, which he mentioned, but the biometrics bill is about modernising our legislative structure to deal with the ever-emerging new ways in which biometric data is progressing and making sure that we futureproof our approach to how that is managed in the future.

Finally, I turn to our justice system in Scotland. We should always be minded to look at how we can improve and develop our justice system and look for new ideas and approaches that can enhance how we deal with matters in that system. However, I will tell you one thing, Presiding Officer: with a cut of 20,000 to police officers, crime up across the board, prisons in meltdown and a Government at Westminster that has no idea about its justice policy, we will not listen to the Conservative Party when it comes to justice matters in Scotland.

A key part of the programme for government is to make sure that we invest in our economy and create inclusive growth as part of our economic drive, as is our investment in national infrastructure. There is no doubt that national infrastructure plays a key part in delivering inclusive growth. We have only to look at history, particularly that of UK Government, whose infrastructure investment that has lagged behind that of OECD and G7 countries. We are leaving the UK to lag behind, because we are setting out a national infrastructure mission, with increased investment of about £7 billion in Scottish infrastructure by 2025-26.

I listened to Rachael Hamilton complain in her speech that the programme for government says nothing about investment in our national infrastructure, but at the very heart of our programme for government is a record increase in

that investment, which will deliver real change to communities across Scotland—investment at the local, regional and national levels, from the health service to education, transport and other public services. It will demonstrate our ambition to grow the economy.

**Rachael Hamilton:** The programme for government did not have a specific list—it was a woolly statement. I hope that the Government will make commitments on some of the tourism problems that are happening in communities—for example, the Government ought to look at the north coast 500 and car parking at Glenfinnan. The Government needs to look at those things.

**Michael Matheson:** I know that Rachael Hamilton has an interest in those matters. I think that she will recognise that it is important to look at all aspects of our economy, including tourism, to make sure that we get the right investment to deliver the maximum economic benefit. Increasing our infrastructure spend gives us the opportunity to take that work forward. As the First Minister said yesterday, I will set out in the months ahead how we will take that programme of work forward across Government.

The very significant level of infrastructure investment that has already taken place and is still on-going in Scotland should be recognised. We have just passed the first anniversary of the fantastic Queensferry crossing, which has created greater connectivity between Fife and the Lothians and greater reliability in comparison with what we had before. The delivery of the Aberdeen western peripheral route is expected to generate £6 billion of additional income in the north-east of Scotland's economy and create some 14,000 jobs in its first 30 years of operation. That investment in infrastructure will drive the economy forward in that region. The major investment of £3 billion in the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness—the biggest infrastructure project in Scotland's history—will deliver economic benefits across the Highlands. Since 2007, £8 billion has been invested in rail infrastructure and services, increasing seating capacity and the number of services, including the delivery of the Borders railway, which has been a real success for the economy in the Borders and the people who live there.

The other major change that we have made to support our more vulnerable communities is the introduction of road equivalent tariff on our ferries—

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** I ask the cabinet secretary to bring his remarks to a conclusion, please.

**Michael Matheson:** —creating a real boost for local economies across the Highlands and our

rural communities. Alongside that is our record investment in digital. The £600 million investment in the R100 programme will make a real difference in connecting communities across the country through superfast broadband.

This programme for government is delivering for us today and it will invest in Scotland for tomorrow.

## Business Motions

16:59

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-13747, in the name of Graeme Dey, setting out a business programme. Members may recall that, following the recommendation of the commission on parliamentary reform, the Parliament agreed yesterday to vary the rule on business motions to allow any members to speak on the motion, at my discretion, although no member has indicated that they wish to do so.

I call Graeme Dey to move the motion on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 11 September 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Preparations for EU Exit

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: The Social Enterprise World Forum 2018

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 12 September 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:  
Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform;  
Rural Economy

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 13 September 2018

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm

Scottish Government Debate:  
Celebrating Scotland's Food and Drink  
Success Story

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 18 September 2018

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 19 September 2018

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:  
Transport, Infrastructure and  
Connectivity;  
Justice and the Law Officers

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 20 September 2018

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on 13 September 2018, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end "and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister", and

(c) that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 12 September, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with "Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer".—  
[Graeme Dey]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motions S5M-13745, on extension of a stage 1 timetable,



and S5M-13746, on a stage 2 timetable. I call Graeme Dey to move the motions on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be extended to 21 December 2018.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Prescription (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 5 October 2018.—[*Graeme Dey*]

*Motions agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Graeme Dey to move, on behalf of the bureau, motion S5M-13744, on designation of a lead committee, and motion S5M-13748, on parliamentary recess dates.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government and Communities Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees, further to motion S5M-12897 in the name of Joe FitzPatrick on 19 June 2018, the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 9 to 17 February 2019 (inclusive), 6 to 21 April 2019 (inclusive), 30 June to 1 September 2019 (inclusive), 12 to 27 October 2019 (inclusive), 21 December 2019 to 5 January 2020 (inclusive).—[*Graeme Dey*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Elaine Smith wishes to speak against the motion on parliamentary recess dates.

17:01

**Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I do not wish to speak against the motion, but I wish to speak on it. I seek clarification from the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans, if that is acceptable.

**The Presiding Officer:** That is acceptable.

**Elaine Smith:** Thank you.

Since the Scottish Parliament's inception, it has taken a family-friendly approach to the conduct of parliamentary business, including ensuring that our recess dates take cognisance of Scottish school holidays. That applies not only to elected members but to MSPs' staff and all Scottish Parliament staff. Indeed, rule 2.3.2 of our standing orders states:

"In considering dates of any Parliamentary recess, the Parliamentary Bureau shall have regard to the dates when schools in any part of Scotland are to be on holiday."

The parliamentary recess dates for 2019 were agreed by the Parliament when we met in June, and the motion that is before us seeks to change the agreed and publicly advertised Easter recess dates, which, for the past number of years, have been set as the first two weeks in April. I believe that the change is due to Brexit, but perhaps the minister can clarify that in summing up. If that is the case, the Brexit date is not a surprise. It was known when the Parliament agreed the dates in June and had been known for some time before that. The surprise was the minister's intention to seek to overturn the previous decision of the

Parliament on the issue. As far as I am aware, no advance notice was given to allow discussion of the decision by MSPs, staff trade unions or others with an interest in the matter.

After a decision at yesterday's meeting of the Parliamentary Bureau, it is proposed that our Parliament's Easter recess dates will now coincide with the English school holidays and those of the city of Edinburgh, but the majority of Scottish schools—*[Interruption.]* Members may wish to listen to this, because it covers their areas. The majority of Scottish school holidays are scheduled as usual for the first two weeks in April 2019.

Specifically, I ask what consultation the minister undertook with staff-side trade unions before proposing the change to the bureau. Although, at this late stage, I do not intend to vote against the motion, I want assurances that, in future, no decisions will be taken that impact on the Parliament's family-friendly framework without full consultation and enough time to fully consult.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Graeme Dey to respond on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

17:03

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey):** The decision was a unanimous one of the bureau, which reflects the huge significance of Brexit for Scotland and the Parliament. Brexit will weigh heavily on the deliberations and actions of the Scottish Parliament over the next six months and beyond. Given that, from the perspective of business managers, it was inappropriate for the Parliament to rise for the Easter recess on the eve of Brexit day, especially given the unfolding and still uncertain nature of Brexit.

I note Elaine Smith's point about having regard to school holidays, although of course Scottish Easter school holidays are variable across the country. We took the decision now, in part to avoid inconvenience to members and staff and to give ample notice of when the Easter recess will begin, to minimise the risk to colleagues of having to cancel arrangements.

**The Presiding Officer:** I thank Elaine Smith for giving advance notice of her request to speak.

## Decision Time

17:04

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S5M-13744, in the name of Graeme Dey, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government and Communities Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that motion S5M-13748, in the name of Graeme Dey, on parliamentary recess dates, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees, further to motion S5M-12897 in the name of Joe FitzPatrick on 19 June 2018, the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 9 to 17 February 2019 (inclusive), 6 to 21 April 2019 (inclusive), 30 June to 1 September 2019 (inclusive), 12 to 27 October 2019 (inclusive), 21 December 2019 to 5 January 2020 (inclusive).

## University of Stirling (University for Sporting Excellence)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-13570, in the name of Keith Brown, on University of Stirling, 10 years as Scotland's university for sporting excellence. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes that the University of Stirling is celebrating 10 years since its designation as Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence in 2008; recognises the contribution that its students and alumni have made to Scotland's sporting success locally, nationally and internationally, including a tally of 11 medals at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and three at the 2016 Olympics in Rio; considers that this excellence in performance, participation, research and academia will be strengthened further by the establishment of Scotland's National Tennis Academy and a £20 million transformation of the university's sports facilities, and believes that a thriving sport and health culture is of benefit, not just to the university, but to the community in Stirling and Clackmannanshire.

17:07

**Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** I thank members from all parties who signed the motion that allowed the debate to take place. Some of those members are here this evening and might be—I know that some definitely are—alumni of the University of Stirling. I look forward to hearing their contributions.

I am delighted to welcome to the public gallery representatives from the university: Cathy Gallagher, director of sport; David Bond, head of performance sport; Caitlin Ormiston, student union sport president; Euan McGinn, high-performance tennis coach; Maia Lumsden, tennis; Scott Duncan, tennis; and Ross Murdoch, swimming. During the height of Ross Murdoch's success at the Commonwealth games, I saw him at Queen Street railway station in Glasgow. I was going to say hello, but I was too shy—he was surrounded by admirers at the time in any event. It is great to have Ross here. I also welcome George Clough, swimming; Callum Lawrie, swimming; Cameron Brodie, swimming; Chris Purdie, performance sports co-ordinator; Matt Francis, public affairs manager; Steve Tigg, high-performance swimming coach; and Josh Williamson, assistant swimming coach.

Many people think that the University of Stirling lies within the constituency of Stirling, which is represented by my good friend Bruce Crawford, who has been happy to indulge that illusion. He

has spoken on many occasions in the chamber on behalf of the University of Stirling when it was impossible for me to do so as a minister, and he is a great friend to the university. However, the university falls within the boundaries of the fine constituency of Clackmannanshire and Dunblane, which I am privileged to represent.

I am delighted to lead the debate to highlight the university's 10th anniversary as Scotland's university for sporting excellence. That title was bestowed on the university by the former First Minister, Alex Salmond, in July 2008 to celebrate the university as a centre of excellence that provides training and support for high-performance athletes. Alongside the prestigious title, the university was awarded £600,000 from the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to act as the hub of a national network of universities and colleges, and to provide training and support for Scotland's best athletes. It is known as the winning students programme.

I pay tribute to the work of Professor Grant Jarvie, who bent my ear on many occasions about the bestowing of the title and honour to the university, and the work of my colleague Fiona Hyslop, who was then the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. The work that they jointly did recognised and supported the University of Stirling as an institution that had sport very much at the heart of its identity. I think that, long before it had the title, it was the first university to offer a degree in golf. I remember that Gordon Sherry was an early student for that degree at the university. That made the university the ideal choice as Scotland's university for sporting excellence.

Over the past decade, Stirling sport stars, including household names such as Duncan Scott, whom I had the chance to meet recently at the university, Robbie Renwick and Ross Murdoch, whom I have mentioned, have enjoyed medal success on the world stage at the Olympics and the Commonwealth games.

The University of Stirling remains at the forefront of supporting and inspiring talented athletes to fulfil their sporting and academic potential. It offers sports scholarships across seven sports, including men's football and women's football. We should, of course, acknowledge the fantastic achievement of the Scottish women's football team. *[Applause.]* If only the men could match that achievement. The university also offers sports scholarships in tennis—in which there have been tremendous achievements by local people, such as Jamie and Andy Murray—triathlon, golf, swimming and curling.

At the community level, Stirling is host to Central Athletic Club, which is one of the largest in central

Scotland and is home to Scottish champions, record holders and internationalists.

Since 2008, Stirling has produced leading athletes across a wide range of sports, such as the triathletes David McNamee, Grant Sheldon and Natalie Milne, the badminton star Kirsty Gilmour, and the tennis ace Jonny O'Mara. The Scotland hockey international Alison Bell, curling's Kyle Waddell, and the boccia star Scott McCowan, who competed for team GB at the Paralympics, also came through Stirling programmes.

I want to mention some particularly notable highlights of the past 10 years. At the 2010 Commonwealth games in Delhi, the Stirling swimmers Andy Hunter, Jak Scott and Lewis Smith won silver for team Scotland in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay. At the 2014 Commonwealth games in Glasgow, Ross Murdoch won gold in the 200m breaststroke and bronze in the 100m event. Jak Scott and fellow Stirling scholar Cameron Brodie won silver at the games, finishing second in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay.

Stirling scooped three silver medals at the 2016 Olympics in Rio, with Duncan Scott and Robbie Renwick in the Great Britain team that finished second in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay. Duncan Scott was also part of the team that won silver in the 4 x 100m freestyle relay.

A number of Scottish international women footballers have come through the ranks at Stirling, including the former Manchester City and current West Ham United striker Jane Ross. The university's women's football team currently plays in the Scottish women's premier league.

In rugby, the Stirling students Megan Kennedy and Siobhan Cattigan made their senior Scotland debuts in February 2018 against Wales in the first round of the women's six nations.

In October 2017, the university's female golf team made history after triumphing in one of the highest-ranked college tournaments in the US. It secured top spot at the Yale Intercollegiate Invitational in Connecticut. The landmark was believed to be the first time that an international team has won a National Collegiate Athletic Association division 1 tournament, which is the highest level of college competition in the US. Anybody who knows about the US system knows how high the level is in US colleges. That accolade came shortly after the men's and women's golf teams retained the European University Sports Association golf championship title in September 2017, having previously been crowned champions in Switzerland in 2015.

In December 2017, three Stirling students—Scott Duncan, Maia Lumsden and Jonny O'Mara—won the world event of university tennis

when team GB defeated the USA in the final of the Master'U BNP Paribas in Lille.

In 2018, university athletes saw the university enjoy its greatest success to date. They returned from the Gold Coast Commonwealth games with 11 medals. The number of medals that the University of Stirling won exceeds those that entire countries won at those games. An outstanding performance from Duncan Scott in particular meant that the 21-year-old swimmer from Alloa—which is also in my Clackmannanshire and Dunblane constituency; I just thought that I would mention that—took gold in the 100m freestyle, silver in the 200m individual medley and four bronze medals in the 200m freestyle, the 200m butterfly, and the 4 x 100m and 4 x 200m freestyle relay events. Scott McLay and Craig McLean were also part of team Scotland's 4 x 100m freestyle relay squad, and Ross Murdoch left Australia with a silver for his efforts in the 200m breaststroke. English swimmer Aimee Willmott won gold in the 400m individual medley final, while Marc Austin—a former sports scholar—won bronze in the triathlon.

That huge list of achievements is a lot to live up to, but I will finish by looking forward to the next 10 years, when I am sure that the university will continue to go from strength to strength. I should also mention the huge impact of the university and its facilities on the community in my constituency and in Bruce Crawford's constituency.

Earlier this year, the Lawn Tennis Association announced that Stirling would be home to one of its two national academies, and Scottish Rugby revealed that the university, in partnership with Stirling County, would have a place in its new semi-professional super 6 league. The university continues to be home to the national swimming academy, while sportscotland, Commonwealth Games Scotland, Scottish Swimming, Triathlon Scotland and the staff of the Scottish Football Association's central region are all located on campus.

The facilities are undergoing a £20 million redevelopment that will integrate an iconic new complex with the existing world-class facilities. The new building will include purpose-built studios, an innovative fitness suite, a three-court sports hall, an indoor cycling studio, a strength and conditioning area and a new state-of-the-art high-performance suite. Users of the new building will also benefit from enhanced changing facilities and communal spaces.

The enhanced sports facilities will not just support Scotland's elite athletes but bring greater benefits for the wider community. Each week, 500 children attend the university's sports classes in tennis, swimming and golf, and a further 350 children attend holiday classes each year. That

gives aspiring young swimmers and tennis players the chance to train alongside performance athletes. Capturing the interest of children at a young age works towards supporting the next generation of sporting talent while helping to foster a culture of healthy, active lifestyles among future generations of Scots.

I look forward to Stirling's next 10 years as Scotland's university for sporting excellence. I am sure that they will bring even greater success than the past 10 years have. *[Applause.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sure that every speech will be worth applauding, but I ask those who are in the public gallery not to applaud. Thank you.

17:17

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate Keith Brown on securing time in the chamber to highlight the University of Stirling's success as Scotland's centre of sporting excellence. I will highlight why the university is so important to Scottish sport across the board.

The university has a sporting heritage, but until the advent of the current approach, a lot of our talented athletes were sucked away to the American college system or down south to places like Loughborough University or Brunel University London. It is so important to have such a facility in Scotland because it allows our talented Scots to stay in their community and perhaps to remain closely attached to their own coaches and training environment. Moving to an American university is daunting, to say the least. My middle daughter looked into it, but did not do it.

Stirling differs from the American college system in that people who go to America are expected to represent their university week in and week out, which in many sports does not suit performance and medal winning at major championships. In the US, there are athletics competitions that set university against university every week throughout the winter, right through to May. By the time the outdoor season arrives, many of our athletes are burned out, which severely dents their ability to win medals at major championships.

At Stirling, athletes can do their training in a way that fits in with their academic day. The university provides a hub that makes strength and conditioning work available where they are; in general, athletes have to seek out other venues for such activities and for physiotherapy and medical support. I cannot overstate how important it is to have access to all that in one area on one campus. Removing the stress from the academic lives of young athletes by allowing them easily to fit their training in with their studies is hugely important.

Quite rightly, Keith Brown spent most of his speech telling us about all the medals that have been won in that environment. That is not a happy accident: the set-up at Stirling university has been designed specifically to allow our elite sportsmen and sportswomen to deliver at the highest level. The academic flexibility that is provided around students' sporting activity is massively important.

As well as providing membership of its sports facilities, the university provides young athletes with help in developing a media profile. In the past, such support has been haphazard, and many sportsmen and sportswomen have been caught out in that environment.

As well as highlighting the route into international sport that the University of Stirling offers, I want to make the point that we must be cognisant of the step before that—how we ensure that the funnel of talent into the university brings in people from all demographics.

I reiterate what Keith Brown said, and congratulate the University of Stirling on its incredible delivery of talent. Here's to the next 10 years.

17:21

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Keith Brown on securing tonight's debate.

I am delighted to speak in support of the motion, which celebrates the fact that it is 10 years since the University of Stirling's designation as Scotland's university for sporting excellence. I am pleased to recognise the university's success—especially given that one of my daughters went there, although not for sport, but to study geography and teaching.

The training and support that the university provides for high-performance athletes is world class, so it is right that we recognise and celebrate that. Over the past 10 years, athletes from Stirling have enjoyed great success on the world stage, including at the Olympics and the Commonwealth games. Indeed, as the motion notes, Stirling students and former students won 11 medals at the most recent Commonwealth games, and three at the Olympics in Rio two years ago.

As Mr Brown highlighted, at the 2010 Commonwealth games in Delhi, Stirling swimmers Andy Hunter, Jak Scott and Lewis Smith won silver for team Scotland in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, and further success came four years later in Glasgow, where Ross Murdoch won gold in the 200m breaststroke and bronze in the 100m event. Jak Scott and fellow Stirling scholar Cameron Brodie also won silver medals at the 2014 games,

when they finished second in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay.

Stirling scooped three silver medals at the 2016 Olympics in Rio. Duncan Scott and Robbie Renwick were in the Great Britain team that finished second in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, and Duncan Scott was part of the team that won silver in the 4 x 100m freestyle relay.

Therefore, there is no doubt that Scotland's university for sporting excellence is a great success when it comes to elite athletes, but as the motion recognises, it also provides a wider benefit to the communities of Stirling and Clackmannanshire. Indeed, I would say that it provides a wider benefit for all of Scotland, because the success of its athletes sends a strong message to all Scotland's young people who have an interest in sport: that they can succeed and achieve their full potential.

This morning, I was delighted to listen to a 12-year-old girl speak on a BBC phone-in about her delight at the Scotland women's football team qualifying for the world cup. She had been to Paisley to see the team play and wanted to know how to get involved in the game through a local team. That is a great example of how the success of individuals and teams can have a strong influence on others getting involved in sport.

As a country, we need everyone to become more physically active. Just this morning, the World Health Organization issued a report that says that we are getting less active. Yesterday, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee heard from Paths for All, which is a charity in Scotland that champions walking every day. Its submission said:

"Physical inactivity has been estimated to cost Scotland £91 million annually".

Therefore, tonight's message from Parliament is "Well done" to the University of Stirling and all the athletes, because their efforts send a strong message to young people who are interested in sport across Scotland that they can achieve their full potential and that there is support for them.

17:25

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** First, I congratulate my colleague Keith Brown on bringing the debate to the chamber. It is great to see so many representatives of Scotland's university of sporting excellence in the gallery.

As a University of Stirling alumnus, I am delighted to take part in this celebration of my old university of which I have such good memories of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Well, there were no drugs and there was no sex, but there was occasional rock 'n' roll and a lot of running around.

It seems only a few weeks ago that I was running around campus and being out on cold nights going through Bridge of Allan enjoying, when possible, the spectacular scenery that Stirling and its surroundings have to offer. There could not be a more perfect setting for Scotland's university for sporting excellence.

Sport is dismissed by some people as being something to which we should not attach too much importance, or as being not worth investing in. Labelling sport as such is not only daft, but wrong.

Keith Brown named many illustrious athletes; it would be churlish to try to name them once more. However, although I will not repeat all the achievements of the countless swimmers, curlers and other international medallists who studied at the university for sporting excellence, I will say that they have done their families, themselves, the university and Scotland proud.

Given last night's result, I hope that some members will go to France next year to support the Scottish women's football team—not least because so few of us are likely to be alive by the time the male team next qualifies, given its past 20 years' history.

I will mention again former Manchester City and current West Ham United striker Jane Ross, because she is a great role model, especially considering that girls are still less likely to engage in physical activity than boys, which is a trend that continues into adulthood. Watching athletes succeed can be inspiring, and when they can identify with an individual athlete or team, it can give the young person confidence. They might think, "If he or she can do it, maybe I can, too."

Nothing is better than active participation. The chief medical officer recommends 75 minutes a week of high-intensity exercise, or 150 minutes a week of lower-intensity exercise for adults, and 60 minutes a day for children.

Such exercise comes with a plethora of benefits. Regular physical activity has been proved to reduce the chance of type 2 diabetes by 40 per cent, and the chance of colon and breast cancer by 20 per cent. It also helps to manage stress, to maintain or regain a healthy weight and more. That applies not only to top sport, but to regular exercise such as walking a dog or going for a bike ride. It all counts.

The facilities that are to be developed at the University of Stirling will not benefit just students or people in Stirling and Bridge of Allan. Neighbouring communities in Clackmannanshire, across central Scotland and beyond will be able to enjoy them.

Needless to say, Stirling's university for sporting excellence is not the only special venue that we

have in Scotland. My Cunninghame North constituency also prides itself on having two national centres—one in Cumbrae and one in Largs—where sporting talent can be accommodated. Last year, the newly refurbished £12 million sportscotland Inverclyde national sports training centre opened in Largs, helped by £6 million from the Scottish Government. The facility is unique. It is the first place in Europe where disabled athletes can stay and train at fully integrated world-class multisports facilities. It is open to high-performance athletes, sports clubs, school and education groups, governing bodies and the local community.

As part of its on-going efforts to produce a healthier nation and prioritise the development of sport in Scotland, the Scottish Government increased sportscotland's core funding by £2 million from £29.7 million to £31.7 million, which is an increase of 6.7 per cent.

In June, "A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan" was published, which presents a wide-ranging set of concrete actions across multiple sectors to encourage physical activity and reduce inactivity.

The strategy takes a holistic approach by encouraging work across transport, education, health and other sectors, in line with the "Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030" that was recently published by the World Health Organization. It sets out four objectives and recommends 20 policy actions that apply to all countries in addressing the cultural, environmental and individual determinants of inactivity, with the aim of increasing regular exercise and sport participation by people in Scotland. Scotland was hailed by Professor Fiona Bull, president of the International Society for Physical Activity and Health, as a "forerunner" in addressing those objectives.

The £20 million investment in the University of Stirling is also a strong commitment to Scotland's sporting future

I congratulate and thank all those who have been involved with and benefited from the University of Stirling as Scotland's centre for sporting excellence over the past 10 years, and I wish them every success in the future. It is important that we encourage children and adults across Scotland to keep active and fit by exercising in any way they can. Yes—if they are exceptionally talented, they may end up at Stirling. However, even if they cannot run like a deer or serve like Andy Murray, they will absolutely reap the benefits of regular exercise.

17:30

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife (Green)):** I join other members in thanking Keith Brown for bringing the motion to debate. It is good to see that he is finally free of the shackles of ministerial constraint.

I offer warmest congratulations to University of Stirling students and staff on an incredible decade of success. They have given me a constant, perpetual lump in my throat as I have watched major Commonwealth, European, Olympic and world championships and heard the university mentioned time and again as the medal tallies for Stirling students have grown and often overtaken those of entire nations.

Those successes show the peak of personal and team achievement at the elite level, but it is clear that what sits underneath such triumphs is a strong foundation of research and personal development across the university community. That success has been felt right across the campus. In 2014, I was really heartened to hear of film and media students finding career-changing broadcasting internships during the Commonwealth games. Stirling's lead on sport has really benefited the whole community and the whole of the campus.

Stirling has always had a great reputation for sport. Keith Brown reminded us that it introduced its first sport scholarships back in 1981. Sport has always been a very important part of the wider student experience on campus. I recently took the Swedish finance minister on a visit back to Stirling, where he studied alongside me in the 1990s. He talked passionately to the students—not about how politics was his main love but about how the basketball team was such a big part of his time at Stirling. Today, sport is more important than ever as part of that wider student experience, and I am sure that it is one of the reasons why the university will enter the list of the top 20 universities in the UK in the next few years.

In 2008, the launch of Stirling as Scotland's university for sporting excellence took the facilities, the research, the tailored study programmes, the headquartering of sports bodies and the success to a whole new level. The national tennis centre has been an important part of that success story, and the funds to develop a multimillion pound coaching programme at the centre will further embed that success for years to come. However, I find it perplexing that, one year ago, ministers granted the nearby Park of Keir development planning permission in principle, on the basis that it was the national tennis centre. It is not: the real one is a couple of miles down the road and the university has confirmed that it has no links with Park of Keir. Clearly, creating a Murray tennis legacy is important nationally and for the Stirling

and Dunblane area. However, I see the national tennis centre at the university as a central part of such a legacy, as is the £15 million investment in grassroots facilities around Scotland that will feed the champions of tomorrow into it.

Partnerships should be built around the Stirling area, founded on well-thought-through and sustainable facilities to build on the university's success. It was disappointing that a Stirling-wide bid to secure the £30 million national performance centre lost out to Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt in 2013. However, Stirling is now in a far stronger position to develop fresh partnerships and bid again when the next opportunity arises. I hope that, through the Stirling and Clackmannanshire city deal, stronger links can be developed for the Stirling area—and the national park—as a major venue for sporting events and a centre of excellence that can inspire and draw in locals and visitors alike.

I congratulate the University of Stirling, its students and staff. Here's to future decades of partnerships, excellence, success and inspiration.

17:34

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** Like other members, I congratulate my colleague and good friend Keith Brown on bringing this important debate to the chamber. The university is an important institution that links my constituency, Stirling, with that of Keith Brown, which is Clackmannanshire and Dunblane. Keith can be assured that I will continue to bask in the success of the university, despite the fact that it lies in his constituency. I will do that with even more vigour in future, because somebody must have given him a copy of my speech before the debate this evening. However, it was inevitable that we would cover some of the same ground and it is worth repeating, because some of what has been achieved at Stirling university is truly phenomenal.

Many students reside in Stirling city during term time and make a huge contribution to the local economy and our communities. This important debate will in particular tell us about Stirling university's experience at the Commonwealth games and the huge sporting success that its students achieved on the Gold Coast of Australia.

Since first opening its doors to students almost 51 years ago—it is even younger than me—the University of Stirling has grown immensely to become the institution that we know today, which is famed for its contribution to health and sport. In relation to its size, Stirling university's achievement in sport is unrivalled around the globe. It offers a number of world-class health science and sporting courses, which inspire even more people into careers in professional sport.

Perhaps most notable is the recent success of the university's swimming team. At the 2016 Rio Olympic games, the University of Stirling was Scotland's best performing university. The team GB swimmers took home three silver medals and Stirling university swimmers Duncan Scott and Robbie Renwick were part of the squad that sealed Olympic silver in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay. The squad achieved its best result in 108 years, setting a new record for the GB team, and Duncan Scott went on to smash the UK record for the 100m relay.

Their successes in Rio in 2016 were carried into the Gold Coast last year. The Commonwealth games were a hugely successful event for the university's sporting team. *The Herald* reported that if Stirling university had been an independent nation, it would have been fifth on the leader board at those games. Again, local swimmers such as Duncan Scott, who is now a local and national hero, Robbie Renwick, Ross Murdoch and Aimee Willmott won big for the university. There are so many fantastic athletes and it is a pity that we cannot name them all—although Keith Brown did a damned good job when trying to do that. I ask those I have not been able to mention to forgive me.

All the athletes deserve personal credit for their phenomenal performances and so, too, does the University of Stirling for providing the base that nurtured those incredible athletes. Sport is clearly part of the ethos of the university, which sets out its unwavering focus on providing the time, space and support to develop the best possible sporting performers. In the past decade, Stirling has nurtured many star athletes, including triathletes, badminton and tennis stars, and international hockey players, as well as curling and Paralympic sportspeople.

We can now celebrate Scotland's national women's football team qualifying for the world cup, and I make special mention of the contribution that the university has made to women's football. A number of Scottish international women's footballers passed through the ranks at the university, and I thank them deeply, as I might at last get to a world cup again. I was there the last time that Scotland played in France—where the women will play this summer—and saw the Scottish men's team getting gubbed by the Moroccan team in Saint-Étienne. It was not a good experience, so I am looking forward to the women making a much better contribution on behalf of our national football teams.

The University of Stirling's contribution to Scottish sport is the pride of our nation. Well done to all who have been involved—staff, students and alumni—and best of luck to all those who are still



to pass through the doors of the university in the coming years. We will continue to cheer you on.

17:39

**Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** It is a pleasure to speak in tonight's debate, which, at least until now, has been very interesting, with a number of informed contributions from across the chamber. Like colleagues, I congratulate Keith Brown on securing the debate. It is apt that he appears to have done so at near-Olympic speed, having changed roles and been given the opportunity to do such things again.

For my part, I am not some great sports person, and sports did not feature in my university experience. I will not even go into Kenny Gibson's list and speculate on anything else. However, like many people across our nation, I recognise how important sport is and how key to our national identity. Hearing Bruce Crawford say just now that Stirling would not just have outperformed many small countries, but many medium and large-sized countries, is a testament to how great a job is done there.

It is super to hear the list of all the individuals. Like many others, I have enjoyed watching and sharing in their successes, sometimes at events such as the Commonwealth games and sometimes at home on television, where people sometimes get more animated and fixated on proceedings. As others have said, it is important to remember that behind all those individuals is an excellent team and community at the university. That is what makes it so special, attracting not just elite sports people but their coaches and staff, and others in research and the associated excellence that goes with it.

It is very important, because it has put Scotland on the global map. Universities are often measured solely on their research or academic achievements, of which Stirling has many, along with many successful initiatives to commercialise research for the university, but there can be no doubt that the tremendous success of the individuals and teams that have come out of the university, including those in the gallery, has put our whole country on the map. That is the one area in which I think the motion does a slight disservice to Stirling, because its benefits are truly national and for the whole of Scotland. We can all be very proud of Stirling.

I was interested in the point made by Brian Whittle about the unique benefits that Stirling offers in terms of keeping talented young Scottish people here, which I had not previously considered. It is another attribute that we should think about carefully. Certainly, representing the part of Scotland that I do, I am keen to pick up on

some of the points that he went on to raise around ensuring that young people here have the opportunity to benefit from those facilities.

I thank Keith Brown again for introducing the debate and congratulate everyone who has been involved in making Stirling university one of the crown jewels of our Scottish education system, with its tremendous record as Scotland's university for sporting excellence.

17:43

**The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick):** I thank Keith Brown for leading the debate, and I thank members from across the chamber who have contributed. I add my welcome to the representatives in the gallery; I am sure that we will cross paths many times in the months to come. I also take the opportunity to congratulate the University of Stirling for reaching a decade as Scotland's university for sporting excellence.

This is my first speech as the minister for sport, which I will start by formally congratulating the Scotland women's football team on its fantastic performance in qualifying for next year's world cup. We all look forward to backing them all the way in France.

One of the things that folk ask a new sports minister is, "What's your sporting pedigree?" It is difficult to follow Brian Whittle, who has such an obvious sporting pedigree—I am surprised that he did not bring his many medals to the chamber today, as he has promised to do in the past. He must have forgotten them.

However, today's debate is a good opportunity for me to put on the record my sporting past. As a young member of the Scottish midland district swimming team, I remember spending many summer holidays doing intensive training at the facilities at the University of Stirling. I was there for weeks on end, year after year, of which I have many happy memories. I do not know whether Kenneth Gibson was studying at the university at the same time; I am not certain of the age difference between us.

**Kenneth Gibson:** I am much younger. [Laughter.]

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Scotland's university for sporting excellence would not have happened without the vision and advocacy of Professor Grant Jarvie, who is now at the University of Edinburgh and is currently leading the review of Scotland's sporting landscape. His vision came to fruition and meant that Scotland secured an accessible international centre of sporting excellence that could compete for the significant

public investment that was being delivered through the universities of Loughborough and Bath.

During the past 10 years, the University of Stirling has managed a sports scholarship programme called winning students. The programme is a great example of national partners and academic institutions in our sporting system working together to provide funding and academic flexibility to gifted student athletes from across Scotland.

The university has also been able to bring together specialists in research. Their shared knowledge has allowed athletes and coaches alike to develop and succeed.

**Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** First, I welcome the minister to his new position.

As the minister probably knows, there are more international students at the University of Stirling than ever before. Does he agree that part of the attraction for those students is the world-class sporting facilities that are available there?

**Joe FitzPatrick:** I am sure that that is correct. That goes two ways: all other students at the university benefit from the presence of those international students.

In 2012, the university opened its high-performance sports science and sports medicine facility, which was another great milestone. The centre was funded partly by the Scottish Government. Its assessment laboratory, biomechanical centre and sports medicine facility have benefited not just the students at the university, but the performance athletes who are based at sportscotland's institute of sport, which is also located on the university campus. The facility is open to our sports' governing bodies and clubs, and the physiotherapy service is open to the local community.

The drive and expertise at the university, along with its top-class facilities, which have benefited from national lottery investment through sportscotland, have helped to facilitate the basing of the national tennis centre and national swimming academy at the university, as we have heard. In addition, the university provides a home for Commonwealth Games Scotland, Triathlon Scotland and the Scottish Football Association's central region.

Sportscotland's institute of sport and the university enjoy a close relationship, which enables them to create high-performance environments that benefit our athletes who perform on the world stage. Scotland has certainly felt the benefits. In the recent Gold Coast games Scotland had its highest medal total in an away Commonwealth games, and we have just seen great success for Scottish athletes at the recent

European championships, as part of team Great Britain. I had not heard the statistic that Bruce Crawford quoted, but if it is accurate, it is incredible.

**Brian Whittle:** Does the minister agree that one of the main issues in relation to the University of Stirling's facilities is that success breeds success? Our winning medals sucks more people into aspiring to that level and attending the university.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** There is no question but that the sporting success of athletes from across Scotland, including the women's football team's success in qualifying for the world cup, will inspire people throughout Scotland to get involved in sport, whether they participate at grass-roots level or at the highest levels. That is really important.

During the European championships, I spoke to a number of people who had been inspired—in particular, volunteers who had watched sports that they had never seen before and were going to give them a shot. That is a really good thing. As Kenneth Gibson said, physical activity is one of the most important things that we can do to improve our health—mental as well as physical—and to carry on having success such as that of elite athletes who have come out of Stirling, including Andy and Jamie Murray.

The area has a proud tradition in the world of tennis, so I was delighted to hear that the University of Stirling being named as one of the two UK national academies for tennis. The academy will provide a new seamless pathway from grass-roots tennis to the world of elite players. It opens in September 2019 and will allow our young players to experience a holistic environment in which to stay and train, with access to the best coaching, science, medical and welfare facilities. Tennis Scotland is doing a fantastic job at the grass-roots level, and now has a clear pathway for taking youngsters forward to championships. I hope that we will see many more players being nurtured to play at the highest of levels, such as Andy and Jamie Murray are experiencing.

Of course, the university does much more than deal with only elite athletes. It is committed to providing sporting and physical activity opportunities for all its students. There is strong support for that from Scottish Student Sport, which provides opportunities for all students to participate in sports with other students. That focus chimes with our active Scotland outcomes framework and wider Scottish Government commitments to getting people more physically active and enjoying longer and healthier lives.

I again congratulate the University of Stirling on reaching 10 years as Scotland's university of

sporting excellence, and wish it the very best of success for the future.

*Meeting closed at 17:51.*



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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