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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 23 October 2018

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon and welcome back. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Dr Kathleen Forbes, who is the former director of the family life centre ministries at Stirling Baptist church.

Dr Kathleen Forbes (Former Director, Family Life Centre Ministries, Stirling Baptist Church): Presiding Officer, members of the Scottish Parliament and ladies and gentlemen, over the past eight years I have been involved in the establishment of a family life centre in Stirling, which is a much-needed community resource. Over those years, I have founded a play therapy service, a school counselling service, an adult listening service, a family counselling service, a community bereavement course, a third sector families and children forum and a hub of other therapeutic support.

The impact of that for me was twofold. I had enormous pleasure doing the work in the name of our church, Stirling Baptist church; for me, it was a practical demonstration of the restoring, redemptive love of our God for all that he has created. The other great impact was personal. Among the thousands of people who came through our doors, I had the privilege of being with children, young people, adults, couples and families as they used the space that we offered to pause, step back and reflect on their inner worlds. In those times, they reflected, they talked and they often felt their pain more acutely. They grieved, they forgave and they found solutions and a way forward. Their stories were heard and they were held.

I have a new role to train trainee teachers in Scotland about mental health issues in the classroom. I have immediately been reminded by a second-year student of the power of our life experiences. He commented after a seminar group, "We are all different, and we all have our stories."

I encourage members to remember today the stories of their constituents who have touched them and whose care they carry. In our aspirations to make Scotland the best place to grow up, we need to make Scotland the best place to be parented, to be taught and to be healed. We need to be able to offer God's unbreakable,

unquenchable hope into what are sometimes the darkest of places, so that those stories can change.

We can choose to trust all those stories, and our hope of making a difference, into the hands of our trustworthy heavenly father, resting in the knowledge that Jesus, with clear-sighted compassion into our hearts, sees the toil and sorrow and the weight of those upon us. He offers us, in those moments of reflection, once again the chance for our burdens to be lifted and for rest and hope to be found in the enduring truth that our

"eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms".

Thank you.

Topical Question Time

14:03

BSE

1. Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West)

(Con): I extend my sympathy to farmer Thomas Jackson and his family and thank the minister and her team for their speedy response and openness to sharing information. I note the farming interests in my entry in the register of members' interests.

To ask the Scottish Government what assurances it can provide that it has taken all required steps to protect consumers, food safety and the farming industry, following the discovery of BSE on a farm in Aberdeenshire. (S5T-01261)

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): I thank the member for his opening remarks.

It is extremely disappointing to have a confirmed case of BSE in Scotland, but I can provide full assurances that all required steps have been taken to protect consumers, food safety and the farming and food sectors. We have put in place a co-ordinated response, which has been led by Scotland's chief veterinary officer and the animal health and welfare team in the Scottish Government. The response has involved the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Food Standards Scotland and Health Protection Scotland. I can provide the following details.

First, I want to be clear that the animal that was positively diagnosed for BSE was not destined for the food chain and that its carcase was disposed of appropriately. Very strict controls are in place to protect consumers from the risk of BSE, including controls on animal feed and the removal of the parts of cattle that are most likely to carry BSE infectivity. Consumers can be reassured that those important protection measures remain in place.

Secondly, animals on the holding were put under movement restrictions to prevent their movement off the holding. A small number of animals on the holding will be culled this week and tested as a precaution, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency will conduct a detailed investigation to seek to identify the source of the disease.

Thirdly, controls to protect animal and public health that were in place before this case remain in place. That includes controls on the content of animal feed and the removal of the parts of cattle that are most likely to carry BSE infectivity.

Alexander Burnett: What progress has been made in identifying all the necessary information about the animal and, more important, about all its offspring, including where they are?

Mairi Gougeon: I assure Mr Burnett that we are taking that issue very seriously and that detailed investigations are under way. We will not see the conclusions of some of those investigations or identify the source or cause of BSE, if it is possible to discover that, for at least a month and perhaps longer.

There have been four cohorts, and one of the offspring of the affected animal will be slaughtered. As I said in my initial answer, the animals will be tested purely as a precautionary measure to help with the very limited investigations that we have been able to do so far. We await the outcome of the further investigations, which I hope will provide some more conclusive information that I will be able to bring to Parliament. We have not identified any particular problem in the feed, but we have been able to undertake only preliminary investigations. As the details become clearer, and as the investigations are completed, I will bring back that information to the member and the chamber.

Alexander Burnett: What guarantees can the Scottish Government provide that all fallen stock on Scottish farms were tested for BSE prior to this outbreak?

Mairi Gougeon: As devastating as the outbreak has been for not only the farmer involved but the wider industry, because of the shock that the case will have caused, it shows if anything that the surveillance and the measures that we have put in place since the original epidemic in the 1990s are working. We were able to identify the case quickly and, as soon as it was identified, the other precautionary measures were put in place immediately. That shows that the surveillance measures that we have in place are effective and are working. For example, we test around 20,000 fallen stock every year, which shows that our surveillance system is very good. The fact that we were able to identify the case so quickly and react in the way that we did shows that the work and the precautionary measures that we are undertaking are working.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The British Veterinary Association has said that it is

"pleased that the comprehensive and robust veterinary surveillance system was able to quickly and effectively detect this potential risk. Both the farmer and the vet involved deserve praise for their part in identifying this case, allowing the authorities to put in place appropriate precautionary measures."

What impact might the case have on Scotland's BSE negligible-risk status?

Mairi Gougeon: The recent case means that Scotland loses its negligible-risk status. That means that we have controlled-risk status, which

is the same as in the rest of Great Britain. We can reapply for negligible-risk status, but we can do so only after 11 years from the birth of the affected animal. We have seen similar situations in other countries across Europe that have been affected by BSE, such as the Republic of Ireland and France, which, shortly after gaining negligible-risk status, had isolated cases of BSE that meant that they lost that status. We could well be in the tail end of the epidemic that we saw in the 1990s. We can reapply for negligible-risk status, but we now have the same status as the rest of Great Britain.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): What implications does the change in our status have for our beef exports?

Mairi Gougeon: As far as we are aware, there will be a negligible risk—that is our determination. Other countries in a similar situation that have lost their negligible-risk status and returned to controlled-risk status have not seen any impact on their trade or on their wider beef sector, so we hope that this will not present too much of a problem for the beef sector in Scotland. We will be keeping a close watch on the matter.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Although Scotland has one of the most rigorous regimes in the world for monitoring and detecting BSE, are Government vets reviewing our processes to see whether this drives a need for that regime to be changed or tightened further?

Mairi Gougeon: As I have said, the controls and the measures that we have in place have been shown to work by the very fact that we were able to pick up this case so quickly and act on it in such a responsive way. Of course, if the investigations identify any possible areas for improvement, we will look very seriously and closely at that, and potentially take forward improvements, if there are any to be made.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest as a farmer. It is important that we all send our support to the farmer concerned, Thomas Jackson. I am reliably told that he is devastated by the case of BSE on his farm, and we must make it clear—it is important to put this on record—that he has done nothing wrong.

Will the minister tell us what extra costs and procedures are involved at slaughter because of our downgrading from negligible-risk status to controlled-risk status?

Mairi Gougeon: I completely echo the member's sentiments about the farmer involved—this is obviously no fault of his. It is understandably devastating for him and his family.

We have seen isolated cases happen elsewhere, and countries have lost their negligible-risk status. We await the outcome of the investigation into the case in this country to see whether we are in a similar situation.

We are working with the farmer, and we will do all that we can to support him.

On the question of the extra costs that could be involved as a result of the loss of negligible-risk status, I will have to look into the matter in order to give the member a detailed response.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): As the minister and others have mentioned, the discovery of BSE in one of his herds has been devastating for Thomas Jackson and his family. What support are he and his family being given? What should other local beef producers do should they have any questions about the situation?

Mairi Gougeon: I understand that the Animal and Plant Health Agency has been in close contact with the farmer and has passed him details of the Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution, which is a charity that offers practical and emotional support for the wellbeing of farmers and their families. NFU Scotland has also been in contact with the farmer, and I understand that it is also providing support and assistance. I know that Mr Burnett is also keen to provide support where that might be relevant and appropriate.

I completely understand the member's point about the wider concern among the Aberdeenshire farming community. I urge any farmer with concerns to seek immediate veterinary advice. This Friday, I will attend the Thainstone mart, where I will be on hand to discuss any concerns that farmers may want to raise with me directly. If they feel that we could be offering more support or assistance, I will listen to those concerns to see whether there is anything else that the Government can do to help support them.

A83 (Investment at Rest and Be Thankful)

2. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what investment is planned for the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful. (S5T-01259)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The member will be aware of the significant landslide that closed the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful on Tuesday 9 October. At 3,000 tonnes of debris, it was the biggest landslide at the Rest and Be Thankful in at least a decade. Further deteriorating weather conditions during storm Callum caused additional secondary landslips.

Since 2007, we have invested £69 million in the maintenance of this trunk road, including £11 million on landslide mitigation measures at the Rest and Be Thankful and on the local old military road diversion. The mitigation measures have had an impact, with some 2,500 tonnes of debris being retained by the nets on Tuesday 9 October.

In the current financial year, a maintenance programme for the A83 totalling £6 million is being delivered. That includes £1.7 million being spent on new roadside catch pit works for further landslide mitigation at the Rest and Be Thankful. That is part of a £4.4 million investment in work that started in 2017-18 and will run into 2019-20.

I have arranged for an A83 task force meeting to take place on 15 November, at which the recent incident and wider issues will be discussed with local and regional stakeholders.

Jackie Baillie: I know that the cabinet secretary visited the site of the A83 landslip during the nine-day closure and I am grateful to him for doing so. He will be aware that this coincided with the closure of the old military road, which was the usual diversionary route. As a result of the closure of both, in many cases people had to travel an extra 58 miles.

Although the Rest and Be Thankful is technically in my constituency, the impact of closure is most keenly felt by residents and businesses in Mike Russell's constituency, Argyll and Bute. I know that Mike Russell has been active in raising the issue in the Scottish Government.

Will the cabinet secretary join me in thanking the staff who worked tirelessly to return both roads to use? Will he ensure that the task force, which is due to meet soon, will draw in all interests to work on a solution?

Michael Matheson: I am grateful for the member's question and I join her in thanking the staff who worked tirelessly, over an extended period and in very difficult circumstances, to restore the Rest and Be Thankful.

When I visited the site on Friday, it was clear that a very significant landslip had taken place. In fact, when I arrived, a further landslip had just occurred on the site. The secondary landslip breached the fencing and reached the old military road, so the decision not to open up the old military road on the Tuesday was the correct one, given the events that unfolded. The staff did a fantastic job in restoring the road and getting it open on 18 October.

The task force will have a debrief on the events that took place over the past couple of weeks, and Mike Russell and Jackie Baillie have a standing invitation to attend. It is important that we get an understanding of what happened, where we are

with the mitigation measures that are being put in place at the moment and whether further measures will need to be implemented in the months ahead.

Jackie Baillie: The cabinet secretary will be aware, of course, that this is not the first time that the Rest and Be Thankful has had to close, notwithstanding the welcome mitigation measures.

The consequences of each closure for the local economy and local people are hugely significant. Many people now believe that a permanent solution is needed. Will the cabinet secretary, first, agree to meet Argyll and Bute Council to discuss the matter, and secondly, commission a full options appraisal, to deliver certainty for the local people and businesses who rely on the A83?

Michael Matheson: I recognise the significant inconvenience for and frustration of the people in Argyll and Bute who are affected by the closure of the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful, which is to be regretted.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken to implement mitigation measures, which have had an impact on the site. In the past couple of years, nets have prevented closure of the route where that would have happened in the past.

However, given the events of the past couple of weeks, we clearly need to revisit the issue. The most recent report was completed in 2013 and work on the red-corridor recommendation that was taken forward is still going on. There is also work, part of which has been completed, to install catch pits. When I was on site, I discussed with Transport Scotland's representatives whether there was other work that we could do more quickly to speed up the mitigation work. I know that they are also very close to securing the land to allow tree planting to take place. If we can speed up that process, that will also support the mitigation work. However, I am also open to looking at whether further measures need to be taken to address the issue permanently. If such measures are identified, I will make every possible effort to ensure that they are realised.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, commend the staff for their hard work following recent events on the A83. It is the main trunk road coming into Argyll, and its closure leads to people suffering fuel poverty and isolation and being unable to access vital services such as hospitals. If the most recent landslide had occurred hours later, there could well have been fatalities. Does the cabinet secretary agree that no other trunk road, such as the M8, the M74 or the M9, would be allowed to function at that level of disruption?

Michael Matheson: As I have just mentioned, I regret the disruption that was caused by the

landslide. Anyone who knows the site will know the particularly challenging topography of this part of the road, on which such issues have been long standing. The mitigation measures that are being taken are to address such concerns but, clearly, given recent events and the scale of that landslide, we need to look at whether further measures need to be taken as we consider its impact. I am committed to ensuring that we do so, and I have no doubt that the task force will want to give due consideration to that when it meets on 15 November.

The Presiding Officer: I thank the cabinet secretary and members. Apologies to John Finnie and Donald Cameron that we were not able to take any further supplementaries; we are a little bit pushed for time this afternoon.

Survivors of Child Abuse in Care (Response to Recommendations on Financial Redress)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We turn to the next item of business, which is a statement by John Swinney on the response to recommendations on financial redress for survivors of child abuse in care. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of the statement.

14:21

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Today, I will set out the Government's response to the recommendations that I received from the interaction action plan review group on the provision of financial redress for victims and survivors of abuse in care.

I am pleased to see many of the review group's members in the public gallery today. The First Minister and I met the group before we came to the chamber today, and we thanked them personally for their commitment, time and collaborative approach to that work. I recognise that, for many survivors, their campaign for justice began a long time ago, which has added to their suffering. I am keenly aware that some who began that process are sadly no longer with us. We remember them today, in this statement.

In November 2016, I made a commitment to a formal process of consultation and engagement on the matter of financial redress. I asked the review group to take that forward, in partnership with the centre for excellence for looked after children in Scotland—CELCIS. The review group oversees the implementation of the "Action Plan on Justice for Victims of Historic Abuse of Children in Care", which was published in 2014. Members of the group include survivors—some of whom represent groups, and others who are independent—a care provider representative, Social Work Scotland, the Scottish Human Rights Commission, CELCIS and the Scottish Government.

The review group reported to me on 5 September 2018. I commend it for the substantial work that it has carried out in arriving at its recommendations. Together, its members have designed and carried out a national consultation with survivors, researched redress schemes in other countries, and had engagement with providers of care services to gather their initial high-level views. The group has drawn on the findings of each of those to agree recommendations, taking the time to work through difficult issues in a collaborative and constructive

way. There has been a strong survivor voice and presence throughout the process.

In addressing the group's recommendations, the Scottish Government whole-heartedly accepts the need to acknowledge and provide tangible recognition of the terrible harm that was done to children who were abused in care by those who were entrusted to look after them. The group's main recommendation is to establish a financial redress scheme, and to pass legislation before the end of this parliamentary session. The Scottish Government accepts that recommendation and commits to doing so, subject to parliamentary approval.

The review group also recommends that advance payments are made, as soon as possible, to survivors who may not live long enough to apply to a statutory scheme due to either ill health or age. Further information from the review group indicates that, in the case of ill health, a definition of "approaching end of life" that is based on advice from medical professionals should be used. In the case of age, it is recommended that the threshold be set at age 70 and over, and be subject to review. The Scottish Government accepts those recommendations for an advance payments scheme.

The other recommendations are about important aspects of the design of the statutory redress scheme that the review group has asked to be considered in the next steps. Those aspects are important to the survivors who took part in the consultation, and we agree that they will be given further consideration in the detailed and complex work that lies ahead.

As part of that work, and with advice from the SHRC, the review group has given careful and specific consideration to the position of survivors whose abuse occurred before 26 September 1964. Despite the introduction of the Limitation (Childhood Abuse) (Scotland) Act 2017, survivors whose rights to compensation were extinguished through the law of prescription are unable to pursue their case through the civil courts.

The review group's letter states that the recommendation to establish a financial redress scheme would provide an alternative compensation mechanism to the civil courts. The letter also states that it is important that a redress compensation mechanism is open to all survivors of in-care abuse, as there are many reasons that a survivor may not be able to access civil justice.

The letter recognises that the implementation of a statutory redress scheme will take some time. In that context, the review group recommends advance payments for survivors who may not live long enough to apply to a statutory scheme, many of whom will be pre-1964 survivors.

Scotland will establish a financial redress scheme for survivors of in-care abuse, and it will be open to all in-care survivors, regardless of when that abuse took place. We will progress, without delay, to detailed design of a redress scheme, ensuring that we learn lessons from other countries. The legislation, subject to parliamentary approval, will be passed by the end of this parliamentary session.

We will also begin discussions with providers of care services to consider ways in which we can respect the recommendation that all those responsible should contribute to a redress scheme. We will move to make advance payments as soon as we possibly can. It will take some months to develop and set up the scheme, but we will do so with urgency. I will update Parliament on progress on our implementation of the review group's recommendations in January.

We set up the Scottish child abuse inquiry in 2015 to investigate the nature and extent of the abuse of children while in care in Scotland, and the failures that allowed it to happen. The inquiry is making significant progress: it has published its first findings, and opening statements for its third case study began this morning. We have heard harrowing evidence of the appalling mistreatment and abuse of children in care settings all across Scotland. In due course, the inquiry will publish its final report and will make recommendations to improve legislation, policy and practice, but we do not need to wait until then to recognise that we failed victims and survivors—it is clear that we did. We must acknowledge that and respond with compassion and humility.

In 2004, the then First Minister, Jack McConnell, offered a sincere apology on behalf of the people of Scotland to those who were subjected to abuse and neglect while in care in Scotland. Today, on behalf of the Scottish Government, I offer an unreserved and heartfelt apology to everyone who suffered abuse in care in Scotland. We are deeply ashamed of what happened.

I know that nothing can ever make up for the suffering that survivors have endured. Nonetheless, they have told us that redress is an important element of justice and that it would provide some degree of recognition and acknowledgement. That is why we will have a redress scheme in Scotland, which will treat survivors with sensitivity and respect.

As the inquiry progresses, the detailed nature of failings on the part of public and private institutions will become clearer. We as a Government—indeed, we as a Parliament—will be listening and learning. We will want to apologise again to survivors and their families when the full extent and nature of those failings are known, as the Australian Prime Minister did so powerfully

yesterday. The courage and determination of survivors to speak out for justice, and to protect children today and in the future from experiencing the abuse that they suffered, are inspiring and have been unwavering.

Presiding Officer, I want to address survivors directly and to say to them today: we believe you, and we are sorry. *[Applause.]*

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for giving me prior sight of his statement, and I restate the Scottish Conservatives' whole-hearted commitment to ensuring that we are fully supportive of all the victims who suffered appalling abuse while in care and supportive of the Scottish Government as it seeks ways to find appropriate financial redress.

I wonder if I may ask for clarification on three points. First, in establishing the financial redress scheme for survivors of abuse in care, will the cabinet secretary confirm exactly who will decide on the amount of compensation that will be paid to the victims? Secondly, will families of deceased victims be able to apply for support? Finally, in the context of his comment that there has been a strong survivor voice and presence throughout the process, the cabinet secretary will be aware that there remain some victims who feel that they have hitherto been excluded from the consultation process. Will he update Parliament on what measures he is taking to address those concerns?

John Swinney: I thank Liz Smith for her expression of the Conservative Party's support for the direction that the Government has chosen to take on the issue. In relation to her three questions, I respond as follows. First of all, in relation to the redress scheme, Parliament will decide the level of compensation that is paid. We will take forward dialogue in relation to the advance payments scheme, which will be underpinned by provisions in the Budget (Scotland) Act for 2019-20, and the legislative detail of the statutory scheme will be determined in full by parliamentary scrutiny and consent.

Secondly, the families of deceased victims will be able to apply for provision from the scheme, and the detail of the scheme will set out provisions on that.

Thirdly, on the question of survivor voice, one of my absolute priorities since taking office has been to ensure that survivors have been at the heart of the discussions on how to take this forward. Of course, there are a range of different views within the survivor community on these questions, and I want to be as inclusive as I possibly can. The action plan review group undertook a very comprehensive and engaged process of survivor dialogue, and I was deeply grateful to members of that group for doing so. One of the reasons why

they were so effective in doing that was that the group involves survivors directly in the work that it undertakes.

I and the First Minister have given the survivors we met today the clear assurance that we want to ensure their continued participation and dialogue in how we take the next steps. As I told them today, they have produced a very clear piece of policy advice to the Government, which is well considered and well researched, and we want to build on that in the stages to come.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for giving me early sight of his statement. I begin by simply and sincerely associating members on these benches with the cabinet secretary's apology to everyone who suffered abuse and neglect while in care in Scotland. We all share the shame of which he spoke. However, we cannot hide from the fact that an apology was first made in 2004, 14 years ago. Important though the inquiry is, it took us too long to initiate it, and welcome though the promise of redress is—welcome indeed—it has taken us too long to get to that commitment too.

Given that fact, even in the knowledge of the complexity of legislation, is not the end of the current session of Parliament—two and a half years away—still too far away for all those who have waited so long already? As well as introducing the advance payments scheme, will the cabinet secretary bring forward the deadline for the full redress scheme? We will do all that we can to help him accelerate the legislation through the Parliament.

John Swinney: I thank Iain Gray for associating the Labour Party with my remarks and the direction of travel.

In looking at the time period since the public apology was given by Jack McConnell in 2004, I note that a range of different steps have been taken to advance the agenda, which culminated—certainly for me—with the establishment of the abuse inquiry. As I said in my statement, we do not need to wait until the conclusion of the inquiry to realise the gravity of the findings that are going to emerge from the evidence that is being considered forensically by Lady Smith; I think that they will cause the country to have to face up to some very difficult parts of our past. It is right that we do so, and that we do so properly and comprehensively.

On the timescale for legislation, I assure Parliament that the Government will move as quickly as we possibly can. My commitment is that it will be completed during the current session of Parliament. That is what the review group asked me to commit to, and that is what I commit to. We will act swiftly to introduce the legislation as

quickly as we possibly can. We have to ensure that we get it right and that we take survivors with us in the process.

On the period taken since November 2016, when I commissioned the review group to undertake the work that I am now, almost two years later, formally responding to in Parliament, I think that the review group itself would accept that, given the complexity of the matter and the detail that it had to look at, it was essential to use that amount of time.

I hope that we can move as swiftly as possible. The advance payments provision will be in place in the financial year 2019-20, so it will be available from next April, and I want to make sure that we move to a statutory basis as quickly as we can. Obviously, the co-operation of Opposition parties in making sure that effective scrutiny is undertaken in a timeous fashion will be advantageous in that process.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement and, indeed, its content. I offer the Scottish Green Party's support on progressing these very important matters. I also thank the review group and the survivors.

With regard to the portion of the cabinet secretary's statement where he talked about beginning

"discussions with providers of care services to consider ways in which we can respect the recommendation that all those responsible should contribute to a redress scheme",

I note that those discussions could be very sensitive. Will the cabinet secretary assure the Parliament that if they are required to be robust—I hope that they will not—they will be, to ensure that the necessary justice is delivered?

John Swinney: I am grateful to Mr Finnie for his expression of the Green Party's support for our approach. I intend to pursue discussions carefully with providers of care where there is responsibility. The review group makes a very fair recommendation that those organisations should contribute to a financial compensation and redress scheme, and the Government will pursue that with vigour to make sure that we are able to be true to the recommendation that the review group has put before us.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I, too, want to reflect the Deputy First Minister's tone and the substance of his remarks and I associate my party with the recognition of the factors that led to where we are today and the shame that we all feel, as Iain Gray rightly recognised. The Deputy First Minister's remarks are ones that I entirely hold to.

I have two brief questions. The first relates to John Finnie's question about all those responsible contributing. Does the Deputy First Minister envisage that the Government will play an intermediary role in brokering how that structure will work, given the range of parties involved? Secondly, in his opening remarks, he may not have touched on the recommendation that any potential negative consequences be considered during the scheme design. How does he plan to best oversee that so as to ensure that what we achieve out of this set of circumstances achieves the right tone and understanding of the concerns expressed?

John Swinney: I am grateful to Mr Scott for the expressed support of the Scottish Liberal Democrats for our position as we take it forward.

On his first point, the Government will be actively involved in those discussions and in pursuing all the dialogue that is required to advance matters. I am sure that that will involve discussion with the providers of care that carry responsibility.

The best way for me to address Mr Scott's second question is to say that we will keep survivors closely involved in the dialogue on our next steps. Such close survivor involvement has helped enormously in getting us to where we are today and I want to make sure that we maintain that involvement for the foreseeable future.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): I will follow on from the two earlier questions. Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is only right that religious bodies and institutions, and other organisations that were meant to be providing care, also take the opportunity to step forward, work constructively with the Government and contribute to a Government-led scheme not to replace but to enhance our overall collective effort?

When, does the cabinet secretary think, will survivors be able to apply to a statutory redress scheme?

John Swinney: First, I pay tribute to Angela Constance for the work that she undertook, as my predecessor, in establishing the abuse inquiry. She ensured that the inquiry can perform the important role that it has in our society. I know that the country is profoundly grateful to her for that.

On the first of Ms Constance's two questions, I expect that there will be timeous dialogue with care providers as we develop the detailed design of our approaches.

Secondly, the timescale for individuals being able to apply to a statutory scheme will depend on the passage of the legislation through Parliament. As I said in my earlier answer to Iain Gray, I want

to do that as quickly but as robustly as possible. I am partly in Parliament's hands on that. I will also have to undertake extensive dialogue to make sure that we get the details correct.

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): I would like clarification. Will the Scottish Government adopt a dual payment system that includes a flat-rate standard payment to all survivors and another payment that is based on individual experiences?

John Swinney: I have not set out any detail on that. That is a material issue for further consideration. The review group did not make recommendations of that nature, although it established some criteria for advance payments, for which I am grateful. The review group wrote to me in early September on the general details of its recommendations and it made more specific points in its letter of 2 October, which suggested eligibility criteria for the advance payments scheme. However, the detail that Alison Harris has asked about is detail that we will have to work our way through and agree, in due course.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware that a small number of other countries are facing up to failings that have meant that children were abused while they were in care, and that some of those countries have established redress schemes. Will the Scottish Government learn from such schemes?

John Swinney: The review group has already undertaken a lot of work and looked at schemes in other jurisdictions. We will, of course, have the advantage of learning from that work and ensuring that we take the correct and effective approach in order to ensure that our financial redress scheme addresses our circumstances and, where possible, the experiences of the individuals who were abused while they were in care.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I acknowledge the work of survivors who have fought long and hard for recognition, often at huge personal cost.

In recent times, Parliament has proved itself to be fleet of foot in progressing legislation when necessary, and I am sure that Parliament will want to do whatever it can to make sure that the legislation gets on to the statute book as soon as possible.

I will ask the cabinet secretary specifically about the scheme for advance payments, which currently focuses on the needs of older people and those who are, sadly, terminally ill. Will the cabinet secretary acknowledge that many survivors who fall into neither of those categories have lived for a very long time with their suffering, and that there are people whose need is such that their lives

might be tragically cut short? Will the cabinet secretary commit to an advance payments scheme that addresses the needs of all those who are suffering right now as a consequence of the abuse that was perpetrated on them?

John Swinney: On the timescale for legislation, I reiterate that I want to move as quickly as possible, but we must go through the necessary dialogue with survivors in order to make sure that we get the details correct. We have built up a very strong and positive relationship with survivors in advancing many of the issues: I am profoundly grateful to them for their contributions to that discussion. As I said in my response to Iain Gray, I am in the hands of Parliament. If Parliament is willing to move in an expedited fashion in relation to legislation, the Government will be happy to co-operate with that aspiration.

In relation to the payment timescale for survivors, the review group wrote to me on 2 October, as I said in my answer to Alison Harris, setting out the criteria that it considered to be relevant in relation to people who are approaching the end of their life, and made a recommendation of an age of 70. The group asked me to keep that under review, which I will do as we design the advance payments scheme.

I also point out to Johann Lamont that other forms of support are currently available to individuals and can be accessed. They are not in the form of financial redress, but of support to assist people in trying to deal with the circumstances that they face. I encourage any survivor who feels the need to access a degree of support to take steps to do so, because that support—from what I have heard from individual survivors about their experiences—has proved to be very beneficial.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The cabinet secretary confirmed earlier that there will be an option for the next of kin of deceased victims and survivors to make applications for redress. Can the cabinet secretary advise how the Scottish Government will make those applications available?

John Swinney: That is one of the points that we will discuss in the detailed design that we will develop. Given the length of time that some survivors have waited, and given that some may not have seen any form of redress because they did not live long enough, it is important that we support families who will have endured a great deal of pain and suffering, along with their loved ones.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Survivors have been waiting decades for compensation. The cabinet secretary will be aware that many of the victims who have been waiting for

compensation are elderly. When can they expect to receive a first payment—and not just “as soon as possible”?

John Swinney: I encourage Mr Corry to reflect on the fact that if the Government is going to make ex gratia payments of this type, we must have parliamentary authority that will enable us to do so, which has to have some form of underpinning. The earliest time when I can possibly do that will be in the budget act for 2019-20, which is where provision for the advance payments scheme will come from. Detailed work will then be undertaken to ensure that we put in place the statutory underpinning for a financial redress scheme.

As I have said in answer to a number of questions, we will do that as quickly as consultation of survivors and the development work being undertaken, and as quickly as Parliament’s passing the legislation, will enable us to do it.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I will follow on from the questions about contributions that are to be made by responsible third-party organisations. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that compensation payments will not be contingent on the contributions that will be made by those organisations? Will there be consideration of a mechanism to compel those organisations to contribute, especially in the light of international experience?

John Swinney: No payment will be contingent on contributions from third parties. We will design and deliver a scheme that will, ideally, benefit from contributions that are made by other organisations that have responsibility.

The question of compulsion could, of course, be considered in the legislative process. I do not want to commit to anything beyond that. We will take forward discussions directly with individual care providers that we believe to be relevant. Obviously, Parliament could consider the issue of compulsion as part of the legislative process.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Most of the questions on the statement have been on financial redress. Can the cabinet secretary say whether other kinds of support that might be available, including emotional support, will be included in the legislation?

John Swinney: I made relevant points in my response to Johann Lamont, which I will draw on in answering Mr Mason.

The Government has put in place financial support through the future pathways fund, which is for people who were abused in care in Scotland. Its purpose is not to provide financial redress; it is to provide support to affected individuals. We want to ensure that that support meets individuals’

needs and that they are accessing emotional or physical support that is beneficial for them. I encourage individuals who feel that they would benefit from such interventions to contact future pathways, which is an important source of support, in advance of our detailed consideration of the wider question of financial redress.

National Health Service (Performance)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a statement by Jeane Freeman on national health service performance. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:52

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): Today, thanks in large part to Scotland's NHS, our people are living longer. That is good for all of us and for our communities, and it is a testament to our health service. However, it means increasing demand on our NHS, and that increased demand comes alongside the need to respond to medical advances, to effectively provide preventative care and to address underlying health inequalities. Those are not challenges that Scotland alone faces—they are challenges for healthcare systems across the world. However, they make it essential that we ensure that our whole system has the capacity, co-ordination and workforce to deliver the best care possible in every setting.

We do so in an uncertain environment, not least that of Brexit and the damage that it will do to our health and care services. The improvement plan that I am publishing today focuses on reducing the length of time for which people wait for key areas of healthcare. Simply put, some people wait too long to receive the care that they need. As with the recent financial framework, the plan's investment is predicated on the assumption that the consequentials that the United Kingdom Government has promised will be delivered as a true net benefit to the Scottish budget. On that basis, the plan commits total investment of £535 million in resources and a further £121 million in capital over the next two and half years to make a sustainable and significant step change in waiting times. That is in addition to the £200 million that is already being invested in our elective and diagnostic treatment centre programme.

The increased investment will support reforms to increase capacity where it is needed; to reduce the numbers of people experiencing long waits; to reshape delivery to ensure sustainable performance against targets in the future; and to achieve the necessary balance of care to support that.

Over the next 30 months, we will deliver phased and decisive action, with clear milestones, to secure substantial and sustainable improvements to performance and to improve significantly the experience of patients who are waiting to be seen

or treated. By October 2019, 80 per cent of out-patients will wait for less than 12 weeks; 75 per cent of in-patients and day cases who are eligible under the treatment time guarantee will wait for less than 12 weeks to be treated; and 95 per cent of cancer patients will continue to be treated within the 31-day standard. By October 2020, 85 per cent of out-patients, in-patients and day cases will wait for less than 12 weeks. By spring 2021, 95 per cent of out-patients and 100 per cent of in-patients and day cases will wait for less than 12 weeks, and 95 per cent of patients who are awaiting cancer treatment will be seen within the 62-day standard. In meeting those commitments, we will ensure that clinically urgent patients and those who are waiting longest are prioritised.

Our focus is on both physical and mental health so, following our programme for government's £250 million package for mental health, the Minister for Mental Health will come back to Parliament later this year to set out specific actions and targets to improve mental health performance.

Achieving all of that requires not only work to address existing targets, but a whole-system approach that spans hospital, primary, community and social care to really increase sustainable delivery. Solutions will differ across the country and across specialties, but the drive for improvement will be national in scope, and it will require national action to increase capacity. That will build on our programme of investment in our new elective centres to provide additional capacity in order to meet additional demand and to protect the scheduling of elective care from the pressures of unscheduled care.

Through the improvement plan, we will accelerate delivery of the elective centre programme, including the operation of a new computed tomography scanner at the Golden Jubilee hospital, which will come on stream from 2019. The additional capital investment will include £17 million at Forth Valley hospital, which will include putting two new theatres in operation and putting additional magnetic resonance imaging capacity at the hospital by the middle of next year. That will be followed by elective centres in Highland, Grampian, Tayside and Lothian, and a second expansion at the Golden Jubilee. We will look to bring forward where we can the delivery dates on those important new centres.

Working with the Scottish access collaborative, we will focus improvements on those clinical priorities where pressures are greatest. Across all specialties, we will improve productivity through a sustained application of state-of-the-art technologies. One example of how we can use technology to improve performance and the patient's experience is that, by this November, we

will launch a scale-up challenge to mainstream the attend anywhere video consulting platform. Work is also under way to accelerate how artificial intelligence and automation can reduce waiting times.

However, those actions alone will not be enough. We must develop new models of care that support more sustainable services, alleviate the demand on secondary care and reduce the pressures on services that come from increasing unscheduled care. Community and primary care services are playing an increasingly critical role in ensuring that patients can receive more timely care closer to home. Our commitment to changing the landscape of local health and care was reaffirmed in the recent joint statement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on health and social care integration.

Over the next year, we are accelerating the whole-system redesign of local patient pathways through integration authorities, NHS boards and clinicians. That will help to shape the front-door services of hospitals such as accident and emergency, thereby helping to further improve their performance and ensure that everyone gets access to the most appropriate care in the right place.

We are implementing the new general medical services contract and supporting the new primary care improvement plans so that local services can be redesigned to allow general practitioners extra time for appointments that require longer discussions and for building multidisciplinary teams.

At the same time, services will be improved through regional delivery and national boards' plans so that services can deliver improvements on a cross-boundary basis. The wider public discussion and engagement on those draft plans will enter a new phase next month.

We know that this action requires a supported and skilled workforce. Although NHS Scotland's workforce has grown for the past six consecutive years, there are key staffing constraints.

We are making significant investments in staffing. We have already delivered a three-year pay deal for all agenda for change staff, providing consolidated pay increases of at least 9 per cent over three years for all employees earning up to £80,000. We are creating 2,600 extra nursing and midwifery training places over this parliamentary session and are investing £3 million to train an additional 500 advanced nurse practitioners. The number of GP training places is increasing to 400 a year, and we are investing more than £23 million to increase the number of medical school places. Further, over this parliamentary session, we are training 1,000 paramedics to work in the

community, which will help to reduce pressure on A and E services.

Those are some of the workforce improvements that we are making, and the improvement plan will build on them. Over the next three years, we will invest £4 million in domestic and international recruitment for GPs, nurses, midwives and consultant specialties with the highest existing vacancy rates. Further, we will develop a fresh approach by focusing activity to help address priority specialty areas that have global shortages, in areas such as psychiatry and paediatrics.

How we plan for our workforce is crucial. Our Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill will introduce requirements to ensure the right level of staffing for the workload associated with patient need. Further, we are leading other United Kingdom nations by publishing a fully integrated health and social care workforce plan by the end of this year. That will set out how we will ensure that we have the right numbers of staff in the right place at the right time to provide person-centred, safe and effective care.

In acting to reduce current waiting times levels in key areas of care, our responsibility is also to increase the sustainability of our health and social care system. The successful future of that system is predicated on targeted investment and sustainable reforms. Patient satisfaction is high, our NHS workforce is at a historically high level and investment in our NHS is at a record level. All of that is a strong foundation for our work and for the carefully phased, targeted action that the plan sets out. Alongside the more than £850 million of investment over the next two and a half years, that represents decisive action that will deliver results for patients and for our NHS.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues that were raised in her statement. We have about 20 minutes for questions.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement, and I welcome Monica Lennon to her position.

Every MSP will have been asked for help by constituents whose operations have been cancelled or who face unacceptable waiting times. For example, one of my constituents in Edinburgh who has severe hip problems was told in June that he could be waiting until next February just for an initial appointment with an orthopaedic consultant before he would be added to the waiting list.

We hope that the action that has been outlined will result in progress, but the fact stands that the treatment time guarantee that Scottish National Party ministers legislated for in 2012 has never actually been met. Today, in this statement, SNP

ministers are publicly accepting that they have failed to deliver on past promises that were made to Scottish patients.

What is key is that SNP ministers understand that delivering a sustainable workforce is critically important. Today, the cabinet secretary stated her intention to create an additional 2,600 extra nursing and midwifery training places. Again, the fact stands that, in Scotland today, 2,812 nursing and midwifery posts are vacant, with 852 lying unfilled for more than three months, which is a 27 per cent increase on last year. Further, more than 4,300 nurses left the service last year.

Can the cabinet secretary outline what steps that are not included in her statement will look to address the growing workforce crisis that we have in Scotland? Does she understand that we need to stop the bleeding in our NHS before we put new blood into our NHS? What will she outline that will deliver a workforce plan for the future that is actually fit for purpose?

Jeane Freeman: I thank Mr Briggs for his comments and his question. Parliament has my commitment that the action that I have outlined will lead to progress. That is why my proposals are deliberately phased and targeted.

The commitment that I outlined on additional nursing and midwifery places is a Government commitment. However, as Mr Briggs will know, we look annually at the number of training places that we need to put in place across a range of areas in our health workforce. In doing so, we take into account various factors, including expected retirements and the number of staff who wish to work part time. We take into account other factors, including additional commitments that we have made as a Government, not least in the programme for government, particularly in respect of mental health nurses. We now also have to take into account staff who we will lose or be unable to recruit because of impending Brexit.

We will look annually at that commitment to assess whether, based on all the data that we have, we need to increase it year on year. Mr Briggs has my assurance that that is what we will do. We will advise Parliament and the Health and Sport Committee on the decisions that we make on the 2020 intake.

I understand the importance of our workforce. I value them above all else, because without a highly trained, specialist and, most important, committed workforce, our NHS would not deliver the significant results that it does deliver, notwithstanding all the challenges that it faces. The challenges faced by our NHS in Scotland are challenges that are faced across the world. However, this Government is the only one in the United Kingdom with a plan to tackle workforce

challenges. There are a number of plans, starting before recess with our medium-term financial framework and working all the way through. We have a plan, we have a commitment and I am determined that we will succeed.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for prior sight of her statement.

Scottish Labour will always welcome any additional support for the NHS. That support is desperately needed. Last week, an investigation by Scottish Labour revealed that, since 2015, there have been 1 million stress-related sick days in our NHS. Staff are at breaking point because this Government has mismanaged the NHS. All of us are grateful to the dedicated staff who work in our NHS. They deserve better than this, and so do patients. This Government gave patients a legal right to treatment within 12 weeks, but that law has been broken 150,000 times. Let us get this straight. Is it the Government's intention to keep on breaking its own law until 2021?

Jeane Freeman: I thank Ms Lennon for her question. I, too, welcome her to her new role and look forward to our exchanges.

It is not fair, accurate or particularly helpful to our staff in the NHS to use hyperbole such as we have just heard. According to our iMatter survey, there are pressures and strains on our health service, and our workforce absence level is higher than we would wish it to be. However, there is significant satisfaction among staff across all our health boards about their working conditions and level of involvement. They know, as I do—*[Interruption.]* If I could perhaps finish, Ms Lennon. They know, as I do, that there are pressures and challenges to be addressed. Indeed, the workforce plan and the plan that we are looking at today are the product of work with those very staff. I do not accept the hyperbole that is too often used. I am disappointed that Ms Lennon is not congratulating me on not abandoning the targets, which was a concern that I read about in this morning's press. I have no intention of abandoning our targets and every intention of meeting them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are 11 members who wish to ask a question and 11 minutes left. If everybody is to get in, that means a minute for each question and answer. I cannot say it more bluntly than that. I have no doubt that Ms White will set an example.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): As has already been stated, workforce planning and staffing are paramount. I therefore ask the cabinet secretary whether she believes that the implications of a no-deal Brexit will affect our ability to attract the specialist staff that are needed to realise the plan that has been set out today.

Jeane Freeman: Of course, a no-deal Brexit would affect our ability to attract those staff, but any kind of Brexit deal that does not involve the customs union and other freedom-of-movement arrangements will impact on our health service, because even at this stage in the proceedings, we do not have agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications from the UK Government. That means that the health service could now lose staff who want to stay, yet we have not reached that agreement on existing qualifications at a UK level.

The UK Government is not extending the pilot programme for registration to families of healthcare workers, which will significantly encourage people to feel that they are not welcome here. The Scottish Government has been very clear about the welcome in Scotland, and today, with the Welsh Government, we have offered to pilot a programme of registration support that includes the families of healthcare workers.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Do any of the proposed changes to the current targets and indicators reflect Sir Harry Burns's recommendations for a life-course approach to ensure more focus on prevention in our health system? Will the cabinet secretary assure members that the needs of children and young people in our pressurised healthcare system are adequately reflected in the plan?

Jeane Freeman: I will answer the second part of Alison Johnstone's question first. I give her the assurance that the needs of all children and young people in our population are reflected in the plan.

In my statement, I mentioned the work of the Scottish access collaborative. One of the tasks that I have given it is to consider in some detail the work of Sir Harry Burns on how we take forward the means by which we determine where our health service is successful and where improvement is needed.

However, that should not deflect us—I will not allow it to do so—from the work that we need to do to meet the targets that we currently are committed to as a Government.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The Government's improvement plan suggests that we posted our worst-ever performance against the waiting time guarantee this September. Does the cabinet secretary recognise that the cruellest aspect of that is that every one of the 31 per cent of people for whom that target was missed will have received a letter saying that they would be seen within 12 weeks? Does she agree that it is time to review the management of patients' expectations so that we can be up front with them from the outset about how long they will have to wait?

Jeane Freeman: Personally, I would not describe it as reviewing the management of expectations. However, there is a need for significant improvement in how our boards communicate with those who are seeking treatment so that they are as up front with them as possible about what the board is able to do as we work our way through this plan. We will make sure that boards review the communication that they give patients, and make sure that they consistently communicate with individuals, rather than patients having to get in touch with boards to find out what is going on.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The cabinet secretary mentioned the use of the attend anywhere programme to allow virtual attendance for patients to speak to medical professionals, which is being utilised in a number of areas, including Wigtownshire in my region of South Scotland. Will the cabinet secretary set out when that will be rolled out around Scotland? Will it reduce the need for out-patient appointments?

Jeane Freeman: We plan to commence the wider roll-out of the attend anywhere programme around the country in December. It is being implemented in a specific way to remove the need for some out-patient appointments and, in particular, to alleviate pressure on individual patients who might otherwise need to travel to meet appointments.

The pilot programme has demonstrated to us that there is a clear need to ensure that that opportunity is offered to patients where it is entirely clinically safe to do so. It is on the basis of the success of the pilot programme that we will roll out the programme from December.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The Health and Sport Committee reported that the Government has made limited progress in reporting budget allocation against the nine national health and wellbeing outcomes. Does the cabinet secretary agree with the committee that a greater link is needed between investment and delivering quality health outcomes? If so, how does she intend to address the lack of transparency?

Jeane Freeman: I agree that there needs to be greater clarity about where our investment goes and how that links to quality health outcomes and our overall approach of safe, effective and person-centred care. With respect to this plan, we will make sure that members understand how the additional investment that I outlined will be used to deliver the plan's actions. We are currently reviewing how we deal with those matters, and I hope to come back to the Health and Sport Committee and respond to the issues that it has raised in that regard.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of today's press reports that a range of targets will be withdrawn. Given her comments, what will she do to reassure patients and staff that she has no such plans?

Jeane Freeman: I say loudly and clearly, starting here, that I have no intention of withdrawing the targets and every intention of meeting them. I will say that here in the chamber, I will repeat it in any media commentary and it is very clear in the news release that we have issued. The plan itself speaks to that. We have no intention of withdrawing from the targets that we have set and that we intend to meet.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will be well aware that the well-respected economist Professor John McLaren has concluded that the NHS will face an annual black hole of up to £400 million, which will rise to £415 million a year in 2023. Does anything in this afternoon's statement fundamentally change the above analysis?

Jeane Freeman: I fundamentally disagree with the above analysis, and I will give Mr Stewart some of the reasons why. I will be brief and I will be happy to follow it up in greater detail. Mr McLaren's reference point is a publication in May, which made assumptions about what a modernised NHS would look like.

A comparable figure in the financial framework is 3.5 per cent, which is supported by the King's Fund, the Nuffield Trust and the Health Foundation and is consistent with that of the majority of independent analysts. It is based on anticipated demographic pressures that are greater than those that were included in Mr McLaren's assessment. I disagree with his assessment. Before the recess, in our medium-term financial framework I set out clearly the challenges, what we are doing to meet them and the further work that is required in that regard.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The cabinet secretary mentioned the Golden Jubilee hospital twice in her statement. Can she say any more about the investment there and what the increased capacity will be?

Jeane Freeman: The increased capacity in the Golden Jubilee from March 2019 will include an additional CT scanner, which will provide an additional 10,500 images per year; an increase in throughput of cataract operations undertaken in the mobile theatre, to provide another 600 cataract operations; an additional 600 endoscopies between last month and March 2019 and an additional 1,200 for the financial year 2019-20; additional general surgery activity, providing 250 more procedures; and an additional 4,000

ultrasound scans per year from 2019-20. In addition, NHS Forth Valley and the Golden Jubilee have undertaken at least two shared appointments for ophthalmology consultants, which is an example of working across boundaries and working in a new manner that is better fitted to the needs of our patients.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. If everyone can be brief, I will get in the last three questions. I call Annie Wells, to be followed by Mary Fee.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): The percentage of medicine places that are accounted for by Scotland-domiciled students has fallen to its lowest level in 10 years under the SNP, at just over 50 per cent. Is the cabinet secretary satisfied with that drop? Can she say how many of the additional 400 GP training places that were promised in the statement will be for bright young Scots from all walks of life?

Jeane Freeman: The Scottish Government is funding those additional training places. Therefore, those who are eligible for the funding will receive those places, provided that they meet the medical schools' requirements.

In addition, given that we are on the subject of additional medical training, I should have mentioned the Scottish graduate entry medicine programme, which is a postgraduate programme that has just begun in the University of Dundee and the University of St Andrews. The programme is an additional measure that offers specific training that is targeted at GP work in remote and rural communities. Fifty-five students are on the programme and, if it proves successful, we will want not only to continue it but to increase its size. The programme will target specific areas in which there are particular shortfalls in GPs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Mary Fee, to be followed by Stuart McMillan. I ask you to be brief, please.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): We know the impact of delayed discharge: 43,913 bed days were lost in August and there has been a 15 per cent increase in the number of patients whose discharge has been delayed due to issues with their health and social care package. Integration joint boards—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not briefly. Just get to your question, please.

Mary Fee: Integration joint boards were set up to reduce delayed discharge. Can the cabinet secretary give a realistic date for when that might happen?

Jeane Freeman: We have a number of joint boards, as the member knows. Providing a realistic date that encompasses all such boards

would remove their capacity to meet local demand, which is why they are there in the first place. At that point, I would probably be accused of providing central diktats, so I will not provide a date.

I am sure that the member paid careful attention to what I said about whole-system reform and the critical importance of increasing the pace of health and social care integration, as I have been doing since June, in order to ensure that we alleviate the pressures in our secondary and tertiary care system. We are working on that in consultation and jointly with local authorities, as is appropriate. Labour members certainly claim to want us to take that approach, so I would have thought that they would applaud it.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary indicate what steps have been taken to update ophthalmic services so that more can be done in the community rather than in acute settings?

Jeane Freeman: A number of steps have been undertaken on ophthalmic services. We now have a range of opportunities that suitably qualified and clinically approved opticians and optometrists can undertake, specifically relating to longer-term maintenance and support for people with macular disorders and other eye conditions. We are looking not only to continue those opportunities but to roll them out, because that is part of the primary care development plans that each integration joint board has now submitted.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. We have managed to get everybody in, but we have taken a little time out of the next debate because there was time in hand. Members still need to make their questions tighter.

Scottish Screen Sector

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-14400, in the name of Joan McAlpine, on “Making Scotland a Screen Leader”, the report examining the Scottish screen sector. I call Joan McAlpine to speak to and move the motion of behalf of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee.

15:24

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to open the debate on the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee’s report, “Making Scotland a Screen Leader”.

I thank the committee clerks and our Scottish Parliament information centre researcher who worked so hard over this extensive inquiry. I also thank the many individuals and organisations from across the film and television industry who gave oral and written evidence to the committee, and which hosted our visits, including Wardpark Studios in Cumbernauld, Film City Glasgow, Northern Ireland Screen, BBC Scotland and Below the Radar, which is a television production company in Belfast. We are very grateful to the Edinburgh International Film Festival, which hosted the launch of our report at the Traverse theatre in June, where it received an extremely positive reception from the industry professionals who packed the theatre.

The overwhelming support that our report has received from stakeholders has made a deep impression—indeed, it is humbling, not least because the support comes from people who are experts and high achievers in their field. The Government, its agencies and important commissioners, such as the BBC, must recognise the significance of the overwhelming industry support for our recommendations not just in this debate but in the months and years ahead.

Since the publication of our report, we have seen direct evidence of the economic impact of the screen sector, particularly last week with the premiere of “Outlaw King”. That is a Scottish production, with a Scottish producer, Gillian Berrie, and a Scottish director, David Mackenzie, partnering with a global giant, Netflix. It is an £85 million production, which more than justifies the investment made in it by Creative Scotland through its production funds. The need to attract more such productions of international scale was a key theme of our inquiry.

It is certainly true that spending on film and television has increased exponentially in Scotland—it has increased by an impressive 300 per cent in the past decade. As well as “Outlaw

King”, we can point to other recent and forthcoming successes: “Avengers: Infinity War”, “Mary Queen of Scots” and, perhaps most significant of all, Sony’s investment in “Outlander”.

With all that going on, people might ask why there is a need for the inquiry, the report and this debate. Surely Scotland is already a screen leader. However, we need to take a comparative approach. The worldwide demand for high-quality screen content is, not to put too fine a point on it, insatiable. This year, Netflix alone is making 40 productions in the United Kingdom out of 700 around the world and a global investment of £8 billion. We need to attract more such investment, but we heard time and again in our inquiry that Scotland is behind other parts of the UK in doing so. Therefore, although we are growing, we are concerned that we are not growing fast enough.

This week, we heard James Cosmo—one of the stars of “Outlaw King”—bemoan the failure to capitalise on “Braveheart”, in which he also starred more than two decades ago. In particular, he criticised the failure to deliver a dedicated film studio, which is a saga that sometimes seems as ancient as the battles of Bruce and Wallace themselves.

Our report seeks to address some of the barriers that we need to overcome, which were first identified in 2015 by the Parliament’s Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. As well as the need for studio capacity, that committee highlighted the need to address the failure to set up a proper screen agency, the need for more investment, the need to address the failure of the BBC and other commissioners to support sufficiently the indigenous independent production sector in Scotland and the need to address the misunderstanding in Scottish Enterprise of how screen businesses operate.

As a result of the 2015 report, the screen sector leadership group—a group of experts chaired by John McCormick, who is the former head of BBC Scotland and Scottish Screen—was tasked with making recommendations and did so in January 2017. It found that public sector support for screen was fragmented, with a number of different bodies having some responsibility in specific areas. That meant that there was no agreed, overarching screen strategy and a lack of leadership and accountability. The group made recommendations about investment from Government and it wanted the BBC to spend more of the licence fee raised in Scotland in Scotland.

My committee set itself the task of ensuring that the recommendations that had been made by John McCormick’s expert group were taken forward. I think that it is fair to say that the Government pre-empted our inquiry and the leadership group’s report by announcing

significant new money for investment in production. It also committed to setting up a screen unit in Creative Scotland, which was seen as a significant step forward.

Initial proposals for the new screen unit were published last December, and our committee began taking formal evidence in February. We heard from more than 50 witnesses—from directors and producers to regional screen officers and educators. The new screen unit in Creative Scotland is intended to bring strategic focus and leadership by promoting Scotland as a place to make films, attracting international investment, supporting the indigenous industry, including through training, working with television commissioners to ensure that more productions are made here and, crucially, addressing the fragmentation among public agencies whose job it is to support the sector.

It became clear early in our inquiry that the model that had been set out in the proposals for the new screen unit did not command confidence among those working in the screen sector in Scotland—the people whom it was supposed to support. The governance arrangements of the proposed new screen unit introduced additional bureaucratic complexity, with five different public agencies sitting on its management committee. There was a distinct lack of industry expertise at executive and board level, and the convoluted system of governance involved multiple levels of accountability, with no clear lines of decision making. The screen unit was also behind schedule. The long-promised online portal for the industry—a place where anyone in the screen sector could go to look for support—had not materialised at that point and key appointments had not been made.

As we were wrestling with that evidence, the committee visited Northern Ireland Screen in Belfast, which had been instrumental in supporting the delivery of a film studio and in attracting “Game of Thrones”. It was completely industry focused and, of course, independent. The contrast with Scotland could not have been more stark—if you will pardon my “Game of Thrones” pun. Therefore, in May this year, we published an interim report, which recommended that, rather than pursuing an interagency model, Scotland should work towards an autonomous stand-alone agency, led by the industry, with clear lines of accountability. I understand that our interim report, “The Bigger Picture”, may have provoked some initial frustration in Government. However, we believe that it was both necessary and effective, as are the recommendations of our final report.

It is clear from subsequent decisions that the evidence that we gathered has, to some extent, been influential, although a stand-alone screen

agency has not been set up. Screen Scotland has now launched, albeit later than planned, and its governance arrangements seem to have been streamlined. Recent appointments have bolstered industry experience at board level—indeed, they include David Strachan, the founding manager of Tern Television Productions, who gave evidence to the committee's inquiry and played an important part in influencing our report. The committee also welcomed the appointment of Isabel Davis, formerly of the British Film Institute, as executive director, with responsibility for the screen unit.

In September, Creative Scotland published a memorandum of understanding, to formalise the partnerships between the agencies that are responsible for the delivery of screen Scotland—something that the committee called for. We still await the detailed business plan that will underpin the operation of screen Scotland. In a recent letter to the committee, Creative Scotland indicated that the business plan and recruitment of business development staff will be completed by March 2019.

The committee remains concerned that the MOU that sets out the partners' responsibilities sets out a role for Scottish Enterprise that is broadly similar to the agency's previous role, in that the agency provides business development support only for businesses that are identified as having high-growth potential. Time and again, the committee heard persuasive evidence that the Scottish Enterprise support model is unsuited to most screen businesses. The model bases investment on the number of full-time salaried employees, whereas the industry model is based on freelance workers. The making of a film or TV production is, by its nature, a short-term undertaking. Companies expand and contract, and that does not fit the Scottish Enterprise model.

We are pleased that business support professionals will work inside the screen unit, but we do not think that Creative Scotland should shoulder the entire financial burden in that regard, given that Scottish Enterprise, too, is funded by Government to support and grow our creative industries. The committee therefore recommended that part of the Scottish Enterprise budget be transferred to a stand-alone screen agency for business development.

A significant part of our report addressed the long-running sore of the need in Scotland for a film studio and more adequate infrastructure, which I mentioned. Since our report was published, Netflix has spoken of the "overcrowded UK studio market". There is a demand, so why cannot Scotland meet it? Other areas in the UK, most recently Birmingham, have done so.

At present, Wardpark Film and Television Studios, in Cumbernauld, where "Outlander" is

filmed, is Scotland's only dedicated large-scale facility. Members of the committee saw at first hand how beneficial a production facility on such a scale can be. Much of Wardpark's success can be attributed to the passion and drive of "Outlander" producer David Brown, who was able to bring a world-class production to Scotland with minimal support from the agencies.

In 2013, the Scottish Government established the film studio delivery group, which brought together multiple agencies, with the purpose of delivering studio capacity. However, the group has not delivered.

In a recent letter to the committee, Creative Scotland announced that a business case for such a studio had received the cabinet secretary's approval in principle in July. While the committee welcomes that announcement, we await being convinced, given the many previous decades of unfulfilled promises.

Although enhanced studio infrastructure plays a pivotal role in supporting growth, particularly when it comes to attracting large-scale productions, it is important that we do not lose sight of the role that indigenous productions play in the industry. Scottish producers told us that public sector broadcasters do not commission enough content from Scottish companies. In its report, the committee says, quite clearly, that it expects to see more work commissioned from Scotland by such broadcasters. We also want Ofcom to tighten up the definition of what constitutes a Scottish programme under the nations quota, and we want more robust reporting in that area. We also recommended that ITV, like the BBC and Channel 4—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that you will need to—

Joan McAlpine: —should have a nations quota as part of its existing out-of-London quota.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please stop for just a second, convener, and sit down for a moment. You have already had an extra minute. I can give you only one more minute.

Joan McAlpine: I will just finish up now.

Creative Scotland's recent letter to the committee sets out a progress report with regard to research work and the gathering of data, which was one of our other recommendations.

As I said in my opening remarks, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the future of the Scottish screen sector, and we are convinced about its potential benefits. However, we want to ensure that we reach our potential, and we want Scotland to be a screen leader.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee's 6th Report 2018 (Session 5), *Making Scotland a Screen Leader* (SP Paper 366).

15:36

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I welcome this opportunity to focus on our screen sector and to highlight the visible progress that we have made in supporting our screen businesses. I thank the convener of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee and all its members for playing their part in that.

The decisive steps that we have taken to strengthen and streamline support for the sector mean that we are now seeing real momentum for success. What unites us in this chamber is a genuine good will and a shared ambition for our screen sector. We agree that Scotland has the talent, the skills, the settings and the stories. We also agree that there are opportunities, an avid global demand for content, and an escalating broadcasting spend in the nations, along with the prospect of a new BBC channel for Scotland and Glasgow's bid for Channel 4's creative hub. Now, with the right support in place, Scotland's film and television businesses are showing just what we can do together. I firmly believe that this is just the start.

Let me begin with some highlights, because it is important to record how far we have come. On Friday, in Edinburgh, we celebrated the Scottish premiere of "Outlaw King", which is a feature film, shot in Scotland, about Robert the Bruce. It was conceived and driven by top Scottish creative talent, by its writer and director David Mackenzie and producer Gillian Berrie. The film will soon be screened by Netflix in more than 190 countries around the world. It is important to note that when "Outlaw King" was chosen to open the Toronto international film festival, it was only one of four features backed by funding from Scotland: "Wild Rose", a country music drama; "Tell It to the Bees", set in rural Scotland; and the documentary "Freedom Fields", which also premiered there, which illustrates the wide range of work that is now being produced. As for television, we are seeing the gripping prime-time BBC drama "The Cry", which was produced by a Scottish company and filmed in Scotland and Australia. It is great to see network drama from Scotland back on our screens and getting such high audience ratings.

Those are just a handful of the productions that are breaking through. Overall production spend in Scotland has risen to record levels, hitting £95 million in 2017, which was up by £26 million on the previous year. Film-makers are seeing Scotland as a great place in which to film, with "Avengers: Infinity War", "The Wife" and "Mary Queen of

Scots" having been here recently. "Outlander" is now in its fourth season and is firing imaginations and drawing tourists to stunning locations across Scotland.

The committee's recent report is anchored in the thoughtful recommendations of the screen sector leadership group. We welcome that report and commend the sector for making the evidence sessions at committee stimulating, informative and valuable. The Scottish Government listened to the committee debate carefully, and I am pleased to report on the progress made both prior to the committee's publishing its report and since then. The steps that have been taken already largely address what the sector was asking for and says that it needs.

The sector asked for increased funding: this year, we made an extra £10 million available for screen development production and growth, doubling the budget for screen. That is in addition to the £12.8 million that we already provide for BBC Alba and one-off funding such as the £475,000 that we spent to support the National Film and Television School in setting up a base in Scotland.

The sector asked for public sector support to be focused, visible and joined up, and to have clear leadership. We backed the creation of a dedicated screen unit—screen Scotland. We believe that there is now a coherent partnership between Creative Scotland and our enterprise and schools agencies. In August, this came together publicly when screen Scotland launched its website, which offers clear pathways to support in film and television.

We were asked for expert leadership and Isabel Davis, formerly of the BFI, is now heading up Creative Scotland. Three new members with extensive screen experience have also joined the board of Creative Scotland. The advisory screen committee also has industry representatives, and screen Scotland is planning to concentrate the screen sector leadership group into an industry advisory group. That will give the sector a voice in advising its executive on the direction and delivery of screen Scotland.

We were also asked for a broader range of funding. Screen Scotland has launched expanded production growth funding of £2 million and a new broadcast content fund of £3 million. Although the creation of screen Scotland may have been slower than I would have liked, I am greatly encouraged by recent progress.

Memorandums of understanding have been agreed among partners and, working with business gateway, partners are developing a new approach to general business development support. Two programmes of specialist business

support that are also under way are supporting screen companies and selected senior executives to expand their expertise, networks and knowledge. Screen Scotland partners have carried out an in-depth skills review of staff and freelancers to enable targeted investment in building talent and skilled crews.

Work on increasing studio facilities is well advanced. Creative Scotland is finalising a business case for a new permanent studio and it plans to launch a tender for a studio operator shortly. Screen Scotland currently markets 136,000 square feet of full-time converted stage space and 335,000 square feet of build space.

We understand the frustration that can result from delays to studio projects, and we continue to work with the private sector to find constructive and appropriate ways to help increase facilities.

The first £3.7 million allocated by the production growth fund resulted in an estimated £60 million spend in the Scottish economy. Given the effect that funding can have, I have high expectations for the outcomes of increased support.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): Why does the cabinet secretary think that the screen sector in Scotland is doing relatively badly in comparison with the screen sector in other parts of the United Kingdom? She has painted a very rosy picture, but does she have any analysis of why we seem to be going backwards rather than forwards?

Fiona Hyslop: I do not think that we are doing badly and I do not think that we are behind. I understand the point as it relates to the spend at Pinewood and some of the traditional studios around London, but compared with the amount of spend in other countries, the spend in Scotland is very competitive. We are very advanced when it comes to production and production spend. We should be talking our screen industry up rather than down.

I know that the committee has proposed the creation of a stand-alone agency, but I am not persuaded that current circumstances justify diverting funds that could go to the screen sector to setting up a new body. As it is now established, screen Scotland has the necessary capabilities and resource to achieve the outcomes that we and the committee desire to achieve, and it should be given the opportunity to show what it can do.

Big strides are also being made in broadcasting, and there are big opportunities there, too. I do not have time to set out all of those now, but extra funding has been pledged by the BBC, which has promised £20 million a year for network funding and £19 million for the new Scottish channel. We welcome that funding and urge that it be delivered quickly, along with the commitments that have been made by other broadcasters, such as

Channel 4's commitment to increase spend in the nations.

The Scottish Government has already helped to improve delivery for Scottish audiences and industries through its work to strengthen the royal charter to ensure that the BBC must support the nation's creative industries. We continue to work to support that by insisting to broadcasters and to the regulator, Ofcom, that a tougher test must be set for what constitutes a Scottish production. Meanwhile, screen Scotland will work with new strategic partnerships and content producers to build a sustainable system to further enhance the quality of our productions and bring on talent.

We welcome the committee's work to seek greater transparency and rightly increase opportunity for the Scottish sector. All too often, we have—as Johann Lamont did—focused on what is missing in Scotland. Today, I have highlighted all that we have helped to create and all the support that we have put in place to go on making more of the opportunities ahead. The story of our screen sector is one of mounting success, and I look forward to working with everybody in the chamber to generate even more concrete results and a long list of productions that are made in Scotland that we can be proud of.

15:44

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I thank the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee for the publication of its report, "Making Scotland a Screen Leader", and I thank all those who submitted evidence for the valuable insight that the committee got from them. I was lucky enough to be on visits to the BBC at Pacific Quay, Film City Glasgow, Wardpark Film and Television Studios and Northern Ireland Screen in Belfast, which gave us a specific insights into those organisations.

It is great that the ball is finally rolling, according to the cabinet secretary, with regard to a new screen unit, and we welcome the increase of £10 million from the Scottish Government, but it has taken a long time to get here. We know that Scotland's film industry generates £95 million a year, but it currently lags behind comparable nations when it comes to film studios. Wales has multiple studios, including the new 250,000 square feet Wolf Studios Wales in Cardiff. Northern Ireland already has the fantastic 110,000 square feet Titanic Studios, which has attracted productions from HBO, Universal and Playtone, and is now developing the 120,000 square feet Belfast Harbour Studios. We heard recently that "Game of Thrones", the successful television fantasy drama that Joan McAlpine mentioned, was eager to film in Scotland but was lured to Belfast

by Titanic Studios, which is now one of the largest film studios in Europe.

Although it is not part of the committee report, I must stress the vital role that the UK Government plays in creating an attractive business environment for film production with a package of measures—namely, the significant tax breaks that set the foundations for investment in this fantastic industry.

We have to consider the time that it has taken to get to this stage. Although Conservative members welcome the establishment of a new screen unit in Scotland, I am glad that the committee also acknowledged the lengthy delays. As we know, the screen unit was promised back in the 2016 budget, but the SNP has failed to deliver since that point. The 2017-18 draft budget promised that

“a dedicated screen unit will be set up within Creative Scotland in the next year.”

However, the 2018-19 draft budget also promised

“the creation in 2018 of a dedicated screen unit to support the screen sector.”

We have heard nothing but broken promises. The question remains: can a public sector collaborative approach deliver the studio, and will the Scottish Government accept the stand-alone approach that has been suggested by the committee? It does not sound as if the cabinet secretary is likely to take that on board.

Fiona Hyslop: I think that Rachael Hamilton is confusing the establishment of screen Scotland, which is the dedicated screen agency that is up and running and is staffed at the highest level, with the opportunity to have a film studio. In my opening remarks, I gave members an update on the tender that is going out for a studio operator for a film studio. Those are two distinct and separate but related issues.

Rachael Hamilton: I thank the cabinet secretary for that intervention. If we look back to the film studio delivery group that was set up by the Scottish Government in 2013, we can see that it demonstrates that the multi-agency approach has a weakness. That is why the committee ultimately expressed its wish for a stand-alone unit.

It is not just the Conservatives and members of other parties who have expressed frustration: industry figures and bodies have done so, as well. We are all disappointed by the timescale for setting up the studio facilities. The Association of Film and Television Practitioners Scotland said:

“For decades, Scottish film-makers have had a nomadic existence using buildings that have been discarded by other industries. Ten years ago, Scotland had the largest screen industry outside the home counties, it is now far behind Northern Ireland, Wales and the English regions.”

Scotland’s film potential is currently not being realised.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention.

Rachael Hamilton: I am sorry, but I do not have enough time.

We must see action. Talent and investment have been driven elsewhere because of lack of movement on the matter. Moreover, James Cosmo, who was quoted earlier and who starred in “Braveheart”, lamented the lack of progress, and said:

“I’m making His Dark Materials just now—a long-running series for HBO and BBC Worldwide. It’s being filmed in Wales, where they have four studios.”

He even acknowledges that it “doesn’t look ... good for” Scotland, when that production could have taken place right here.

There are challenges presented by state-aid rules. I understand that, and I am glad that the committee considered it unacceptable that although other areas of the UK have developed enhanced studio infrastructure in line with state-aid rules, Scotland has continued to fall behind.

I want to make a couple of other points on things that the report highlights. The Scottish locations network said that retaining and nurturing domestic talent is really important. The development of a film studio would allow a more sustainable pipeline of production in Scotland, which would mean that crew could consider working in Scotland as a career instead of as a short-term stopgap. The network also pointed out that higher and further education are not set up for production training, and it gave examples. Atlanta has created a film production training campus, and there is a commitment by the National Film and Television School to open a focused training centre in Scotland specifically for screen production skills.

“Outlander” has been a huge success in taking on Scottish trainees. When we visited Wardpark Studios in Cumbernauld, where the blockbuster is filmed, we met trainees including costume designers, set designers, plasterers and joiners. Furthermore, the EKOS skills survey is now complete, and we look forward to a skills plan for the industry.

Joan McAlpine touched on public sector commissioning, which will also help with regard to building skills and capacity in the sector. That is essential in order to attract work from other sources.

We have a wonderful opportunity in front of us. I am glad that in the past few days the announcement has been made on construction of

a new studio, which has been welcomed by industry leaders and Conservative members. We look forward to further progress on the matter.

15:51

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Three years on and a committee of this Parliament is once again calling for action to turn the potential for a world-leading Scottish screen industry into reality. I was a member of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee when its inquiry began this time last year, and I was a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, which reported on the economic potential of the Scottish film and television more than three years ago. A glance at that committee's report shows that much of what it felt was important then is what the current report highlights today, and a look at today's report shows what has changed—and what has not—in that time.

In 2015, the first three recommendations focused on the need for a world-class film and TV studio in Scotland. The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee called for a Government decision on existing proposals “as soon as possible”, for Government evaluation of what more could be done

“as a matter of urgency”

and for Government direction of public agencies, because their failure to work together was “acting as a barrier” to effective support for

“the economic and cultural needs of the film industry”.

Three years on, there have been changes in those key areas, but not enough. Scotland lacked a world-class film studio then and we lack one still. We were told then that the Government had to be cautious about its approach, that it was up to others to make things happen and that the private sector would come up with a solution. However, that has not happened yet, and simply saying that action will come is no substitute for action on the ground.

In 2015, the Government said that Creative Scotland, the enterprise agencies and Skills Development Scotland really could work together to improve support for the screen industry, despite all the industry concerns to the contrary, which we have heard about today. Three years later, multiple agencies are still involved, despite the welcome establishment of screen Scotland and the cautious improvements in its focus, which Joan McAlpine mentioned. It is all the more important, in that case, that screen Scotland be empowered to make the big decisions without having constantly to seek approval from other public agencies. I see that the minister is nodding. I hope that she can give some assurances on that.

Fiona Hyslop: Any major investment of over £500,000 would need to go to a Creative Scotland board decision, as is the case for any other agency. Three screen experts are now part of that, and we have the industry advisory group. With anything less than £500,000, screen Scotland can move ahead. I give Lewis Macdonald that reassurance.

Lewis Macdonald: That reassurance is welcome but, as the cabinet secretary said, big decisions have to go to the board of Creative Scotland. That is the fundamental difference between what the Government is taking forward and what the committee recommends in its report and the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee called for three years ago—that is, a stand-alone agency that is able to make the big decisions itself.

Of course, one recommendation from three years ago has been implemented, which has led us to today's debate. The screen sector leadership group was created as a direct response to a recommendation in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's report. As the cabinet secretary said, it will continue as the industry advisory group under the new arrangements. The SSLG's report in January informed the views of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee in the lead-up to today's debate, and I hope that the leaders of the sector will agree that the report that we are debating matches the boldness of its vision.

The report calls for urgent and significant progress on a purpose-built studio in Scotland, saying that

“We need delivery, not debate.”

That means that ministers should not hang back because one particular project has fallen, but should redouble their efforts to ensure that projects come forward that can be delivered.

The committee has also warned that screen Scotland must not be

“burdened by cumbersome and overly bureaucratic governance arrangements.”

The production of an interim report in May, which emphasised the case for a strong and autonomous Scottish screen agency, was unusual. It marks the difference in today's debate. The committee report that we are debating today builds on that interim recommendation and makes the case. It is the logical culmination of the process that was begun in 2015 to have a separate and autonomous screen agency in the future.

As we have already heard, the Scottish screen industry was second only to London 20 and even 10 years ago. It has now fallen behind other

nations and regions in the UK. I hope that ministers will devise the business plan for screen Scotland as a step towards the creation of an autonomous agency on the model of Northern Ireland Screen, as the committee recommends.

I also hope that ministers will take a proactive and imaginative approach to providing public support for the establishment of a world-class studio in Scotland—again, as the committee recommends. If ministers take both steps in those two areas, during the next session of Parliament the relevant committee will be able to publish a report that is about achievement, and not just about potential.

15:56

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank the committee for its welcome report. As the French-Swiss filmmaker, Jean-Luc Godard, said:

“A story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.”

During the past few years, we have seen a range of plot twists, drama and suspense in the story of the screen sector.

When I look back at the history of film in Scotland, and think of watching films such as “Whisky Galore”, “Local Hero”, “You’ve Been Trumped” and, more recently, “T2 Trainspotting”, which had scenes filmed in this very building, it is clear that we have a huge potential for film and TV production. It is a growing creative industry that is attracting talent and investment, including in the “Outlander” series and the recent Avengers movies.

Yet, for all the showcasing that has been done by a few high-value productions, we continue to fail to capitalise fully on the many opportunities. The committee’s report makes that clear.

Scottish Screen was an independent screen agency that ran successfully of its own accord until Creative Scotland subsumed it in 2010. As long as a new body such as screen Scotland is contained within Creative Scotland, it is hard to see how it will be able to properly drive the screen sector as effectively as is done in many other countries and, indeed, other parts of the UK.

We need to think about how we can facilitate and support a thriving sector. As many in the film sector have made clear—indeed, the committee report makes it clear, too—we need at least one national film studio to provide the space necessary to support large-scale productions. It is also clear to us that the Scottish Government must take the lead in making that happen.

In response to a question that I asked earlier this month, the First Minister indicated that Creative Scotland will launch a tender for investors

to operate a public sector-backed film studio. That is a welcome development, but there are few actual details, and I was disappointed to learn more about that from reading the Sunday papers last weekend than I have done from the cabinet secretary this afternoon.

This is about much more than attracting investors. The Scottish Government can no longer hide behind state aid rules to justify its lack of action. In March this year, when I substituted for my colleague Ross Greer on the committee, I noted that there was a lot of confusion about state aid’s role in this matter. In part, it was evident that, if the public sector is to lead the development of the industry in Scotland, it must either operate as a municipal enterprise, as happens in Manchester, under the market economy operator principle, just as the Lothian councils operate a highly successful bus company in this city with no state aid issues, or it must be a wholly private enterprise.

That leads us to the final scene: where should this film studio be? That has in itself been a drama worthy of a BAFTA. Jim O'Donnell from PSL Land Ltd told the committee on 29 March that a site at Damhead in Midlothian was

“the best site for the studio in Scotland” [*Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee*, 29 March 2018; c 11],

and the Scottish Government granted planning consent to that site.

As members will know, earlier this month, after a long legal battle, the smallholder who occupies most of the site, Jim Telfer—a constituent of mine whose family has farmed the land for a century—successfully defeated an application to resume his two holdings. That was a welcome decision for a family that has suffered considerable stress and anxiety over the past few years. It begs huge questions about the process by which we have been attempting to identify the site for a national film studio.

In conclusion, the Scottish Government must reach out and work with the industry to develop a national film studio that benefits films in Scotland, but it should be minded that this can happen only in a location that is lawful and adaptable to the needs of a growing screen sector.

16:00

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Like Andy Wightman, I will try to have a beginning, a middle and an end to my speech. The beginning involves a Swedish couple whom I met walking down the road to the shop in Bressay, where I live, and who said to me, “Where did the murder take place?”

I looked at the couple somewhat aghast and thought about phoning the local constabulary; I then realised that they were looking for one of the murder scenes in “Shetland”, which gives the impression that there is a murder in Shetland every five minutes. I can assure members that that is not the case.

The Swedish couple were some of the 28 per cent of visitors to Shetland who now come to visit the islands because they have seen them on TV. Netflix has syndicated “Shetland”. It is shown here on the BBC, it is made by an ITN TV production company, and it is now going around the world, hence the visits of Swedes, Australians and New Zealanders—indeed, anyone we find in Shetland these days who has seen “Shetland” somewhere.

Not only that, “Shetland” is so good that it has been nominated for the scripted TV award at the forthcoming Scottish BAFTAs, Dougie Henshall has been nominated for the TV actor award and David Kane has been nominated for the film/TV writer award. We at home are a bit puzzled as to what they will do next with the plot. I am led to understand that they know what is in next year’s production but who knows where they will go with it thereafter?

I move to the middle of this speech. Andy Wightman mentioned “Whisky Galore” and Lewis Macdonald mentioned various other movies. I feel that there is a sense of “Back to the Future” about the debate, for the very reasons that the committee convener gave in her opening remarks.

Why did we, as a Government and as a Parliament, subsume the separate and independent Scottish film company organisation into a body that is for all the arts? The answer to why that has not worked is the very answer that the cabinet secretary gave to Lewis Macdonald in the earlier exchange, when she said that any big decision will be taken not by an independent body but by the board of Creative Scotland.

In fairness to Creative Scotland, it has many decisions to make over many areas of the arts, including many conflicting and tough financial decisions. That is at the nub of why the Government’s approach to this is wrong. The convener fairly pointed out the strength of the arguments around a single agency—a single organisation, a Scottish screen body—simply taking forward what is, as the cabinet secretary rightly said, one of the most exciting areas of activity in Scotland, in economic, cultural and artistic terms.

For the life of me, I am not quite sure that I have yet heard an argument from the Government as to why that is not the right thing to do—why that is not the right approach for Scotland when it

demonstrably is the right approach across many other parts of the world.

A number of members, including Rachael Hamilton, have mentioned Northern Ireland. The committee went there at an earlier stage in its proceedings and the evidence for a single agency was pretty overpowering and overwhelming. If the arguments can work for other small countries—we often hear this record played—it certainly would appear to be appropriate for Scotland.

I thought that the committee convener’s point about the separate Government agencies involved in the labyrinth that was the original proposal—I take the point that the labyrinth has, to some extent, now been streamlined—was the most compelling evidence that we heard. I do not think that the cabinet secretary has fully addressed that point yet and I hope that she will in her remarks later on this afternoon; it is about the range of organisations involved, the different agendas that some of our different quangos bring, and what more could be achieved if the approach was so much less fragmented and we were so much more clearheaded about what we are trying to do. The only logical conclusion that one can come to—and this is the end of my speech—is that there should be a separate Scottish screen organisation.

16:04

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): The committee’s report shows the exciting opportunities that are available to Scotland in film and TV. In listening to the debate, I almost feel like I am in a television show about some kind of alternative universe where I am the only one who can see the positive side of what is happening in the industry at the moment. The timing of the debate could not be better, because last week saw the premiere of “Outlaw King”, which is probably one of the biggest movies in our screen history to be filmed in its entirety in Scotland. The particularly interesting thing about that movie is how it is to be distributed. Nobody will go down to the local multiplex to see it, because it will be distributed through a streaming service, Netflix, which is now in the business of producing big-budget movies.

Given the investment that the Scottish Government has made in the Scottish television and film industry, I believe that it is aware of the issues. Last year, £95 million was invested in Scotland, which was up from £45 million in 2014 and £23 million in 2007.

Content is king in the new multiplatform world of television and film. In the not-too-distant future, BBC Scotland will embark on a new and exciting adventure as it launches its new channel. Once again, content and the use of the BBC iPlayer, or

at the very least easy access on the BBC iPlayer, will be key to the channel's potential success.

It is interesting to look at people's viewing habits. In 2017, in this multichannel and multiplatform world, viewers in Scotland spent a daily average of three hours 46 minutes watching television in the traditional manner, which was a decline on previous years. Traditional viewing declined even more among younger viewers. In 2017, four to 15-year-olds watched one hour 27 minutes of broadcast television per day, which was down 41 per cent from 2010, and 16 to 34-year-olds watched two hours 16 minutes of broadcast TV, which was down 34 per cent from 2010. However, the amount of streaming content consumed by those age groups increased. Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube and subscription and on-demand services were all regularly watched by people in those age groups. In order to have successful TV shows, movies and documentaries, we have to follow the trends and, more importantly, we have to follow the audience. That is why I come back to Netflix spending in excess of \$100 million on a Scottish historical drama.

Johann Lamont: I am not sure whether the member plans to come on to this, but I am interested in whether he agrees with the committee that there should be a stand-alone screen Scotland in order to facilitate the work that has already been done.

George Adam: I am trying to prove that some of the work that screen Scotland has embarked on and done recently, and the fact that we have had movies such as "Avengers: Infinity War" and "T2 Trainspotting" as well as the on-going production of "Outlander" in Scotland show that we are moving forward positively. All the Scottish Government support for our film and TV industry shows that that approach is the way forward.

As I said, distribution of content is the key to on-going success in the industry. Next year's BBC Scotland channel is a testing point, and I hope that it is successful. Content is king, and in this multiplatform and multichannel world, access to that content will aid any future success of the channel. That will also ensure that we have the production and everything else in Scotland. We live in a world where families no longer sit round the TV watching it in their living rooms—they have other ways of accessing content. We must be aware of that in everything that we do in relation to the industry.

16:09

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): I thank the committee members, clerks and witnesses for producing a very important piece of work on the subject. I will not be able to rival George Adam's

comments about YouTube, Netflix and the variety of media, although I certainly enjoyed listening to his speech on that. I also enjoyed Andy Wightman's comment that a film should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order—that may explain some of the things that have happened in the Parliament over the course of its history.

I was not a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in the previous session of Parliament, when it looked at the screen sector and its economic impact, but it seems that two issues consistently arise in the debate. First, there is the potential economic value of the screen sector and the significant potential for growth in Scotland. I refer to "economic value", but I readily accept that it is not just money that matters—I will come to the second aspect shortly. Scotland aspires to be a leader in the world and to be a welcoming place for business, including for film makers, and we would like to see that happen.

The second issue is the frustration that our potential is not being met as a result of shortcomings that were highlighted in 2015 and indeed long before then, and which have not yet been resolved.

Iain Smith, who is chair of the British Film Commission, said:

"on the larger issue of Scotland's image, how Scotland is seen in the world is directly linked to our participation in the media world, and that will affect how Scotland performs in all sorts of ways."—[*Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee*, 8 February 2018; c 29.]

The world knows that Scotland has the natural assets to be an attractive location for film producers, from the glorious beauty of the Scottish Highlands to the Borders, the rolling hills of Ayrshire and many other places. Here in Edinburgh alone, we have our magnificent built heritage, which includes Cockburn Street, the Royal Mile, St Giles's cathedral and Waverley station. Nevertheless, the dearth of strategy and infrastructure often prevents Scotland from capitalising on those natural opportunities.

An example is the recent shooting of the blockbuster film "Avengers: Infinity War", which is apparently one of the most expensive films ever made, with a budget of between \$300 million and \$400 million. It included a seven-week shoot in Edinburgh that was estimated at the time to have brought to the city £10 million in economic benefit. Nevertheless, without a permanent studio space with infrastructure in Edinburgh to help them to continue making the film, the producers finished shooting the scenes here, packed up and went home to Atlanta, Georgia to finish the film. Rosie Ellison, who is head of film at Film Edinburgh, has reportedly said that Scotland loses films, or gains

only parts of them, because of the lack of a large permanent film studio for indoor shoots.

Although the report acknowledges that some progress has been made in recent times, it is highly critical of past lack of progress. That may be due partly to organisational structures such as Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise not being suitable, and being inflexible in response to the needs of the Scottish screen sector. An online portal for screen is yet to be created, despite the report anticipating that that would be done before September 2018. Perhaps most significantly of all, as has been mentioned, a film studio delivery group that was established in 2013 has talked a lot about providing the necessary infrastructure of a film studio, but to date it has failed to deliver.

Scotland was once second only to London in the screen sector, and there is no reason why it should not once again become a home to many good and quality productions.

16:13

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I am not a member of the committee, but my constituency in the centre of Glasgow has been at the heart of a number of TV and film productions, so I will enjoy the chance to speak in the debate today, and I hope that other members will enjoy my contribution. I thank the committee and the clerks, and all those who provided evidence to the committee. The report on our film industry is robust, timely and welcome.

I fully support the committee's ambition for Scotland to become a global screen leader, and I understand the recommendation for a stand-alone unit, which is certainly the option that the majority of witnesses preferred. The Scottish Government has outlined its reasons for not taking that direction at present—I emphasise the words "at present"—and it has injected a substantial chunk of funding into the unit—along with its partners. I welcome that; however, I respect the committee's recommendations.

Our local economy in Glasgow has benefited from a £15.1 million boost from the screen sector in the past year alone. I am eternally grateful to those at the Glasgow Film Office, who must take some of the credit for their contributions and efforts in securing large and small productions in the city.

Viewers across the country were gripped by the recent BBC drama "The Cry", which was partly filmed in Glasgow. Filming starts today in Glasgow on "Hobbs and Shaw", the latest spin-off from "The Fast and the Furious", and "Fast & Furious 6" was filmed in Glasgow a couple of years ago. "The Wife" was also filmed in the city. It has just opened

in cinemas, with Glenn Close tipped for an Oscar for her performance.

As I said before, I welcome the positive benefits that Glasgow and the rest of Scotland receive from our vibrant and healthy screen sector, but I am about to say something that people might perceive as being negative, although I hope that they do not. As a constituency MSP for the city of Glasgow, I represent a number of constituents who live in the heart of the city, and I want to say that, when producers are filming in the city, any disruption that is caused by filming—which has happened—must be handled appropriately. Residents in the centre of Glasgow received a letter only yesterday from the producers of "Hobbs and Shaw" notifying them of the filming that is taking place. An urgent meeting was organised last night and residents discussed various issues such as not being able to get into their own homes or use their cars, gunshots being heard and not being told when there would be low-flying helicopters. As I said, I do not want to be negative, but my constituents have asked me to raise the issue and to say that, when something like that happens, the producers should speak to the local people who are affected.

As has been mentioned, Scotland has lost out on many large productions, such as "Game of Thrones", which went to Northern Ireland. It was chosen because it is able to host such a production as a result of the investment that has been made in the sector there. As producer Iain Smith said to the committee, instead of being content with the crumbs from the table, we should aim to provide all the means that are required for film production.

The screen industry provides not only financial benefits but a platform to display our fantastic talent and, in relation to Glasgow, the fantastic architecture and heritage of the city. It provides many opportunities. I fully support a purpose-built film studio, and I look forward to it being created.

I only have a couple of minutes, so I will sum up by saying that we have incredible potential but we need to provide the opportunity to realise that potential. We should not be happy with just the crumbs from the table; we should aim to have the whole cake.

16:17

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I congratulate the committee on its report. I also congratulate it on its interim report, which was proactive and sought to engage in an important debate. Those reports follow on from the serious work of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, which published a report in March 2015, when I had the privilege of serving on that

committee. The debate at that time was dominated by the issue of the film studio and the importance of having infrastructure for the sector, so I welcome the recommendations in the report that we are discussing today.

I do not say this lightly, but I feel that this saga is something of an embarrassment for the Scottish Parliament. We need to rise to the challenge. The committee has done so, and the Scottish Government must do so, too.

The work of both committees was defined by seriousness of intent, by thoughtfulness on the part of those who gave evidence and by rigour on the part of the members who drew up the recommendations. However, more than anything, the work of the committees was underpinned by the substantial and carefully argued evidence of those who work in the sector, who are fleet of foot and passionate, but whose huge frustration at the lack of progress was evident then and remains evident now. We need to take their concerns seriously. The cabinet secretary said that I was talking down the sector, but if the sector itself is speaking out, we have a responsibility to listen. When we celebrate the sector, we are celebrating what it is able to do despite the barriers that are put in its way rather than anything else. It deserves better than the current sense of apparent paralysis in tackling the problems that it faces, which is captured by the lack of a film studio.

The inquiry that I was involved in dealt with a number of themes that are as relevant today as they were then. The screen sector matters not only because we celebrate creativity; it also matters economically and should be taken seriously in terms of its economic impact. The role of the public sector not as a facilitator but as a brake on the work of the sector has to be confronted. At present, there is not a proper understanding of the challenges that are faced by those who are working in a global industry. People say that they are blocked by what the public sector is doing rather than supported by it. If I am disappointed by the lack of progress, how much more disappointed must the sector that took seriously both inquiries feel?

In 2015, Fiona Hyslop told the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee—of which I was a member—that it was perfectly reasonable to expect evidence of a studio by 2016. We are now at the end of 2018, and I am struck by the lack of progress. Furthermore, as someone who has not been paying close attention in recent months, I looked at the reporting of the issue over the weekend and was struck by the recycling of explanations that we heard two years ago. One explanation in particular related to our old friend, state aid. A terrible problem, which seems to be unique to Scotland, is that we somehow cannot do

anything because we are inhibited by state aid. Such inhibitions do not seem to affect studio development in other parts of the United Kingdom. Critically, we need to understand that recycling old explanations ensures that, instead of developing, the sector falls behind the rest of the United Kingdom. That matters not just to our creativity but to our economy.

It is now time for the cabinet secretary to respond to a reasonable request. The Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee's report is thoughtful in its analysis and solutions, and it is essential that those solutions are embraced rather than explained away. Lots of things are being done, but the fundamental issues that the screen sector persistently and compellingly asked to be sorted out two years ago and more are still there. If the screen sector's role in the economy was being taken seriously, there would have been far greater progress than there has been. I ask members to support the committee's recommendations and ensure that those who have given evidence to all the Parliament's inquiries on the issue see the progress that they demand.

16:22

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): All of us with an interest in Scottish history look forward to seeing "Outlaw King", which has been mentioned a few times. As we have heard, the film has had impressive early reviews for its portrayal of Scotland's wars of independence. Needless to say, when our stunning locations are featured in screen productions such as that one, there is an impact on our economy and on tourism. Visitor numbers to some of the locations featured in "Outlander" have increased significantly. For instance, there has been an increase of 91 per cent in visitor numbers to Doune castle since it featured in the series. There was a similar effect on Rosslyn chapel after wild claims were made about it in the "The Da Vinci Code".

Total production spend on film and TV in Scotland has increased by more than 200 per cent since 2007. "Outlaw King" is the largest feature film to have been made in Scotland, with locations that include Linlithgow palace, Glasgow cathedral, Glencoe and the Isle of Skye. The Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee has welcomed all of that, as well as the additional support from the Scottish Government.

Another theme that emerges from the committee's report is the evidence that public sector broadcasters still do not commission enough content from Scottish companies. There is an emerging consensus that we need tougher Office of Communications definitions of what

qualifies as a Scottish programme and better monitoring to ensure compliance; we also need a significantly greater proportion of the BBC licence fee that is raised in Scotland to be spent here.

On that theme, I positively welcome the BBC's new Scotland TV channel. We must keep seeking assurances about its funding and structure, particularly regarding the channel's commitment to drama, but it is undeniably a very positive step.

The production growth fund, which is funded by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery with an allocation of £3.25 million for the period to March 2018, has also contributed to the wider industry. The PGF provides a financial incentive to major international productions basing themselves in Scotland, as well as increasing the funding available for Scotland-based producers to anchor more of their production work here. The fund is helping to create significant employment opportunities for Scotland-based crew and delivers a direct and significant economic benefit to the country.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the claim that my constituency has as a spectacular film location. Some of the Hebrides landscapes would not look out of place in "Game of Thrones", and, as is often overlooked, we have many state-of-the-art studio and sound-stage facilities to go with those landscapes.

The development of BBC Alba has also proved something interesting, which is that independent production companies can flourish in our island communities. Though perhaps a location used more by television than by the big screen, the Hebrides probably first came to the attention of feature film producers in 1949, with the much-loved "Whisky Galore"—filmed in Barra and Eriskay—which introduced the culture and landscape of the islands to a wider world.

Although Brexit presently looms on the horizon as a figurative hazard to shipping, it is hardly likely to excite the salvors in quite the way that the wreck of the SS Politician did in "Whisky Galore". The key concerns about Brexit for the screen sector are: fear over loss of funding from EU sources; hindrances to free movement of artists, performers and companies; rising costs; and a damaging inward focus. However, putting those questions to one side for the moment, the report that we are debating today demonstrates the huge contribution that the screen industry makes to Scotland's cultural and economic life, and I am sure that it will make even more of a contribution in the future.

16:26

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): For decades, Scotland has

provided a spectacular backdrop for the screen sector and its reach has spanned the globe. We have punched above our weight internationally, while films and television have grown to form a major part of our domestic culture.

The screen sector has also supported other parts of our wider cultural offering. Scottish literature has often reached further, finding wider audiences, through film. Our history has been translated across borders, and the benefits to our heritage sector are clear.

There has been a resurgence in our film and television industries around the UK. The British Film Institute's report earlier this month showed the importance of the tax reliefs that were introduced in 2013 in powering the growth of the UK film sector. It has created thousands of jobs and contributed to our economic growth.

Let us consider the successes in Scotland. Only last night, "World War Z" was on television, with Glasgow playing the part of an American city. There are now a number of productions that are set and filmed in my region, the Highlands and Islands, including the extremely popular "Shetland" series on the BBC, as Tavish Scott mentioned. He asked what will happen next with "Shetland"—I imagine that a spin-off in Orkney would be good.

However, opportunities are still being missed. There are productions that are set or written in Scotland that are being filmed elsewhere.

We have one of the biggest and best screen sets anywhere in the world—our country. However, we have spoken for far too long about studio capacity in Scotland. We know that it is a problem and now is the time for action. The report describes the situation as "urgent"; that is not an understatement if we are to invest in infrastructure for our screen sector.

Another area that the report touched on is the development of skills that are relevant to this sector of our creative industries. It is disappointing that recent statistics from the Scottish Government showed that there were only nine creative and cultural apprenticeship starts in the first quarter of this year, in comparison with 62 starts in the same quarter last year. The apprenticeship route into the cultural sector must not be overlooked.

If we want growth that brings benefits to Scotland, we must build the skills that are required and have a workforce that is ready to meet demand. The screen sector should be dynamic and inspiring and it should be a sector that young people want to get involved in, yet we are struggling to bring in new entrants via the apprenticeship route.

Why is that? The committee heard that the sector is difficult to access, that there is little

awareness among young people of the available career routes into it and that there are a number of other hurdles, such as the lack of distinctive Scottish qualification structures. As the committee recommends, there needs to be a clear skills plan for the future—one that is built by the industry, but with the support of Government. That will be a vital step, which should be championed, implemented and supported.

Scotland has an uncommonly strong cultural base on which to build its screen sector. We have a resource that is, if not untapped, certainly underutilised. We have a number of annual film festivals in Scotland and one of the world's largest cultural festivals on our doorstep, and we have access to world-leading cultural organisations and the ability to communicate our ambition to the world.

I cannot do justice to the report in my allotted time, and I appreciate that I have not spoken about a number of areas. The interaction of public bodies is important, as is consideration of how they work collaboratively alongside the industry's priorities. The report also acknowledged our domestic audience and the importance of streaming services and access to superfast broadband, particularly in regions such as mine. There is a balance to be found between promoting inward investment, building a truly domestic presence for the screen sector and ensuring that support is in place for aspiring enterprises to grow and expand.

I welcome the committee's contribution and work, and I commend its recommendations.

16:30

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): As a member of the committee, I am delighted to speak in this debate. It was a pleasure and informative to take part in the inquiry. I am pleased with the report and the work that went into it, which can help to shape a growing sector in the years to come.

At the outset of the inquiry, on 8 February, we heard from Tommy Gormley, who is a first assistant director from the west of Scotland. He provided hugely beneficial evidence that was, for me, some of the most powerful evidence that I have heard in my time in Parliament. Although I do not agree with everything that he said on the record, he stated:

"Furthermore, on the larger issue of Scotland's image, how Scotland is seen in the world is directly linked to our participation in the media world, and that will affect how Scotland performs in all sorts of ways."

I asked him about training and future opportunities, and his answer was:

"There was no structure for training when I started. I am thankful that there is a structure now—it is vital. Things are much better than they used to be, with genuine skills training programmes in place with various agencies." — [Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, 8 February 2018; c 29, 31.]

That sounds like common sense, and that progress has been made.

I am thankful that progress has been made in the sector over the years, although it has been slow. A graphic on page 10 of the report provides the justification for the frustration that many people in the sector and industry have felt. With regard to Rachael Hamilton's earlier comments, when she tried to blame the Scottish Government, it highlights that much of the situation predates not only the SNP Government but the establishment of this Parliament.

It is clear that there has been a wide variety of activity since 2010, but there remains outstanding the issue of a film studio, which others have touched on. I have raised that issue before in Parliament. I believe that my constituency would be a perfect location for a studio, and I say to Mr Wightman that if the Lothians do not want it, Inverclyde certainly does. Both the former IBM site in Spango valley or the former power station site at Inverkip would lend themselves to the creation of a lawful and adaptable film studio of the scale necessary to fill the gap in the key infrastructure that needs to be filled. The location is perfect: Glasgow international airport is merely 35 minutes away, transport links to Glasgow are excellent, we are the gateway to Argyll, and Burns country is just south of us.

The crucial point is that Inverclyde has a history of programmes and films. The recent adaptation of Agatha Christie's "Ordeal by Innocence" was filmed at the Ardgowan estate in Inverkip, and parts of Inverclyde regularly portray parts of Shetland, which Mr Scott and I have discussed in the past.

Mr Gormley also told me something else that day. He told me, in a very frank manner,

"Think of the film industry just as the shipbuilding industry. Instead of launching a ship, you launch a film. As well as the actors and camera crew, you need joiners, painters, electricians, accountants"

and many other skills.

Inverclyde can launch both ships and films, and with the growing film sector and the opportunities in the country, Inverclyde can offer to fill part of the infrastructure gap by being the location of a much-needed studio.

16:34

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): In addition to being an MSP, I am wearing the hat of

a former further and higher education lecturer on the creative industries of 13 years. My colleagues know that I taught television and film production and ran my production company. Previously, albeit that it was a long time ago, I was a film and television studies undergraduate.

As a result of that background, I have a few niggles about our screen sector's ability to reach its potential. Chief among them is the lack of opportunities in Scotland for students and graduates of the creative industries disciplines to access financially supported experience opportunities in their own country. I appreciate that the committee's report had a much broader focus than that, but given that it is the year of young people, I thought that I would home in on the benefit to Scotland of using its young people. It has long been my plea that we should always consider opportunities for young talent, in particular when support decisions are made and funding is being given.

Of course, I would like all production companies to start valuing young people regardless of whether they access public funding. I call on the screen industry as a whole to rid its sector of opportunities that only wealthy individuals can access. However, given the levers that are available to Parliament, I would like there to be a commitment to giving financially supported work experience and internships to college or university film and television students whenever support is given by Government-funded agencies. Members will note that I said "financially supported". The creative industries are, to be quite frank, among the worst sectors for expecting young people to give their labour and time free—and, often, at their own expense. At the very least, travel and subsistence overheads should always be met by the company.

Yes—working for a production company "will look good on a CV" and might "lead to other opportunities", but I am tired of such phrases being used as justification for not offering young people financial support of any kind. Those well-worn phrases, which anyone who works in the creative industries will have heard many times, automatically exclude students from lower-income families from accessing opportunities that could take them out of poverty.

I note that some intern opportunities are given in lieu of credits for course work, and that many further education institutions assist with overheads that are incurred by students. However, many production companies routinely contact colleges with offers of work experience that is often just free labour, with little in the way of training and mentorship being offered, and certainly without financial assistance. If any of my former colleagues are listening to me, they will be rolling

their eyes, because I banged on about that for 13 years.

Just as Creative Scotland is required to commit to a percentage of Scottish spend, I would like there to be a commitment to ending unpaid internships in the sector and, more important, a commitment to include at least one paid internship with production companies that access funding—preferably using an intern from the area in which filming is taking place, in order to allow opportunity to be geographically spread throughout Scotland.

There would be multiple benefits to this country from doing that. Most important is that we would give access to opportunity to all our talented young people, regardless of income, geographical location or social background. We would also underpin youth opportunity as a condition of all our endeavours in promoting and cultivating a Scottish screen sector. Imagine the impact on a Scottish student if visiting foreign productions were obliged, as part of any deal, to take on a local student during production. The local knowledge of the student could enhance the visiting production team's visit, and the connections that were made could be life changing for the young person. Most important, that would be an investment in our home-grown industry and our talent base.

I hugely welcome the recent announcement of tighter collaboration between the enterprise agencies and Creative Scotland, the National Film and Television School location announcement and, of course, the amount of funding that is being put into our home-grown industry. My hope is that young people throughout Scotland, from all backgrounds, will benefit from that funding—not just in the year of young people, but for years to come. Let us be a leader in that.

16:38

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Throughout today's debate, there has been a significant theme of consensus around the opportunities that the screen sector and creative industries offer to Scotland. Everyone has made it very clear that we have always believed that Scotland has the talent and the locations to take those opportunities.

A number of members have explained quite well why those opportunities are particularly important at the moment. George Adam gave his refrain that "Content is king" and took us on a run round the new platforms through which he and others consume that content.

The committee cites Iain Smith of the British Film Commission:

"Netflix is just the beginning; beyond it, there are ... big companies ... coming in fast ... Amazon ... Apple ... Google ... Hulu ... and beyond those is Disney".—[*Official Report*,

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, 8 February 2018; c 28.]

I think that we are agreed that there is a real opportunity here, and the cabinet secretary talked about the shared ambition for our screen sector, which has been the major theme of the debate. I think that there is consensus—perhaps it does not extend across the whole chamber, but across most of it—that we have failed to grasp the opportunities that have been presented by the sector in recent years.

Lewis Macdonald was clear that we have been here many times before, but have not progressed. We have seen the opportunity and talked about what we have to do to seize it, but we have failed to do so. We have missed many boats. “Braveheart” has been mentioned: it was made in Ireland, not Scotland. “Outlander” and “Avengers: Infinity War” were both filmed here, but completed elsewhere. Indeed, Tommy Gormley, the director, told the committee:

“We have not just missed the boat in this country; we have missed an entire fleet. There has been a cataclysmic failure at every level to deliver.”—[*Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee*, 8 February 2018; c 20.]

He calls the situation a “disgrace”.

As has been mentioned in the debate, other countries have moved forward. Northern Ireland has several studios, Wales has more than one studio, and Bristol and Birmingham are coming forward as production areas, too. Johann Lamont called the situation an “embarrassment”. Iain Smith told the committee:

“If I look at a map of the UK, to my huge frustration, I have to say that Scotland is underperforming compared with the other nations, such as Northern Ireland and Wales.”

He continued:

“Scotland used to be the second production cluster in the UK ... at the moment, it is in fourth or fifth position after Wales, Cardiff and Bristol.”—[*Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee*, 8 February 2018; c 27-28.]

If we ask ourselves why that has happened, we can see that perhaps the cabinet secretary’s refusal to accept that we have fallen behind other parts of the United Kingdom is part of the problem. There has been complacency and lack of leadership in recent years.

That brings us to another theme of today’s debate: the need for an independent agency that is fully empowered to seize the opportunities. The committee is certainly convinced of the need for that, and I do not think that the cabinet secretary has explained today why the Government believes that that view is wrong.

The other symbol of failure to which many members referred is the lack of a studio facility. Andy Wightman talked about the Pentland proposal and the problems that it has run into. Stuart McMillan made the important point that the studio does not have to be in Pentland: there are lots of places that could provide the facilities for which we are looking. He made the case—as he would—for Inverclyde. I highlight that immediately following the news of the court’s decision about the Pentland site, some of my constituents in East Lothian formed a campaign to bring the film studio to Cockenzie, and the local council is looking at other sites in East Lothian, or across East Lothian and Midlothian, that would be suitable.

It is very difficult to see why we have failed to move forward on the issue. I have to be honest and say that the cabinet secretary’s rather cryptic promise today does not give us much hope of moving forward.

The final point to which I will refer briefly is the theme that was covered by Gillian Martin in her speech—the importance of providing opportunity for talent and ensuring that that opportunity is open not only to those who already know people or have family who are in the business, or who have the capacity to work for free as an intern. We need to create a skills strategy that is for the many, rather than for the few.

The report is important. This time, we need to seize the opportunity and deliver, rather than simply acknowledge the opportunity.

16:44

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I am almost tempted to say that we need a screen sector that works for everyone, but I will resist doing so.

For 15 years, when I was asked what I did for a living, I said that I worked in TV. The first thing that people would say in response would be to ask whether I worked for the BBC. I faced that question about eight times a week.

My career in the screen sector was an interesting one. I started off as a runner; I was unpaid for the majority of the first couple of years—Gillian Martin mentioned payment—while trying to make my way in an expensive city. I made tea for annoyed producers and angry directors. I worked my way through the production sector, and before I joined Parliament two and a bit years ago, I was head of sales for a technology company that delivers on-demand content technology to telephone companies and triple-play and quad-play operators. I am glad that Stewart Stevenson is not here today to tell us all about that.

So, my journey has been an interesting one. I am new to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, but my interest in the area is very personal, vested and unambiguous. My career in television was made possible only by heading to the bright lights of cities including London, Manchester and Birmingham. Unfortunately, when I was 21, there were no opportunities in Scotland, and those that existed were limited in terms of the scale and range of existing domestic production. Like many others, I had no choice, and so I sought opportunity where it existed. The question is, 15 years on, is the situation any better?

Technology has changed beyond recognition in that short time. The screen sector is now diverse and much more digital than it was. Although I have been on the committee only a few months, I have found the production of the report eye-watering. The screen sector in Scotland faces significant challenges, as the convener outlined in her opening speech.

However, there is potential: it is not all doom and gloom, and there is great work going on. Anyone who is commuting through Glasgow today will know that much of the city centre is closed for the “The Fast and the Furious” franchise, which is shooting in the city centre. We know about the success of “Outlander”, about the new channel that the BBC is launching and about Channel 4’s potential new headquarters here. We might even have a Scottish James Bond at some point.

There is a lot to be positive about, but the report unequivocally mentions problems in the sector that have been alluded to and addressed many times in previous parliamentary sessions. It saddens me that, in this short debate, we are going over so much old ground.

The studio space issue is the eternal thorn in our sides. Throughout the debate, my colleague Rachael Hamilton and I have been hoping that the cabinet secretary will stand up and make a grand announcement about studio space in her closing speech. If that does not happen today, it needs to happen soon. We do not want to read in the news a vague comment that the new agency might make an announcement at some point before Christmas.

New studio space was being talked about years ago—way before my time as a member of Parliament. In 2015, a tender went out for a public-private proposition. If space can be found and there is genuine financial buy-in from the private sector, I hope that we can see results quickly.

I am glad that Stuart McMillan mentioned the evidence that we took from Tommy Gormley, who said that

“There has been a cataclysmic failure at every level to deliver.”—[*Official Report, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee*, 8 February 2018; c 20.]

He is not the only person who has made that point. Producer Iain Smith said:

“I’ve personally been on two of these committees with MSPs, and they seem positive at the time, but nothing transpires, and I don’t quite know why.”

I was in the screen sector for a decade longer than I have been in politics, so I share people’s frustration as yet another damning report comes out of yet another Holyrood committee. It will be a complete failure of Government and this Parliament if, in a couple of years, we find ourselves sitting here again lamenting the same lack of progress. I say that not to talk down the screen sector, but because we are listening to what the sector has to say. We really need progress.

It is unfortunate that we do not have a huge amount of time to go through the committee’s recommendations. I will recap the main ones. The new agency must have true autonomy and it must be able to deliver on its budget effectively and without being held back by the complicated processes and agencies with which it works. It must be able to deliver not just for big-ticket items but for small-scale productions, too. Individual producers and people with ideas and concepts should be able to get genuine help and assistance from the agency when they need it. The executive director must focus on screen and must not be distracted by other forms of the creative arts.

We need to regard the agency as a step on a journey towards having a stand-alone agency. The committee was clear about that and the industry is clear about that. I, for one, cannot understand why the cabinet secretary does not agree. If she can say otherwise, I will be happy to hear her do so.

We really need to get on with it. The Scottish screen sector is exciting and important. My goodness! I do not want to be having, in a couple of years, another debate about why we have let the sector down. The situation is not good enough and we must do better.

16:49

Fiona Hyslop: I began my contribution by setting out the successes of our screen sector and reporting on the demonstrable progress that we have made in providing effective public sector support. On the points that were raised on my opening remarks, I can say that the MOUs have been agreed among partners, they have a new approach to general business development, there are two programmes of specialist business support, screen Scotland partners have the in-depth skills review that was called for, and work on

increasing studio facilities is well under way. We should reflect on the progress that we have made.

The debate has underlined just how great the opportunity is. It has shown enthusiasm but, of course, it has shown frustration as well. The effect that funding for screen can have on not only economic spend, but our confidence, our reputation as a creative country and our international reach in attracting tourism must not be underestimated. We are achieving, as is our screen sector, and I must underline that.

Gillian Martin made an important point about traineeships. I say to her that the funding for “Outlaw King” included support for 30 trainees, some of whom I met on set at Craigmillar castle. Jamie Halcro Johnston also mentioned issues around skills.

I share members’ ambitions. I want us to move faster and I understand members’ frustrations about such issues—especially regarding the studio—but it is important to recognise how far we have come. To give members some perspective, I remind them that, 10 years ago, the equivalent public spending for the screen unit was just £3 million for Scottish Screen, which is about a sixth of what we have committed this year. Our total investment is more than that of other nations, such as Denmark, Ireland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and it is almost comparable to England’s.

I am also encouraged by the progress that has been made by screen Scotland and by how the pace is picking up under its new executive director. A clear commitment to strong working partnerships is now in place and support on business developments, skills and forging strategic partnerships with broadcasters is moving ahead at pace. Core to the committee’s report is the fact that many members have called for the immediate establishment of a stand-alone agency. I am not persuaded that that is the imperative action and priority at this time. Today, screen Scotland has all the tools and resources that it requires to lead, support and promote our film and television sector.

Johann Lamont: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: No; I took an intervention from the member earlier and I am very limited for time.

There is no doubt that we can draw on the new expertise that we have added to Creative Scotland, with new board members David Strachan, Elizabeth Partyka and Ewan Angus bringing their records and strengths to guiding it. There are also new arrangements for the screen sector leadership group to have a strong voice with the executive. That collaboration of industry and agency will bring renewed vigour to public sector support. The new website, the portal, and

the visible focal point for seeking support that was recommended in the report have already been delivered. A suite of funding opportunities is there to be accessed. It would be premature to derail the effort that has been established over recent months by focusing on a stand-alone agency at this time. Equally, the time and effort involved in creating a new agency would divert us from the most important task, which is nurturing and growing our screen sector. The last Labour-Liberal Democrat Scottish Executive bears significant responsibility for the original merger of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish screen.

Quite understandably, a lot of the debate has focused on representations for a new, purpose-built studio in Scotland. The Scottish Government supports the wish for more infrastructure and work to provide that is clearly under way. Creative Scotland has developed a business case for additional studio facilities. Shortly, it will launch a tender for a studio operator with public sector backing.

Undoubtedly, there are success stories about private sector-led consortia and initiatives in other countries and other parts of the United Kingdom, as well as those led by city organisations. However, there are also instances in which projects have gone less well, including some that have received public sector backing. There can be the potential for legal challenge on state aid if the Government itself leads that. Northern Ireland and Wales have used available, vacant, publicly owned property for some of their studio spaces—not least, of course, the former shipyards that house Titanic Studios. Other public sector investors have brought together consortia to enable the purchase of private property for development. We must not forget that, in Wardpark, we have a permanent, successful, working studio, where the highly popular “Outlander” has filmed four series. In addition, screen Scotland currently markets 136,000 square feet of stage space and 335,000 square feet of built space.

I visited the Pyramids business park in Bathgate where “T2 Trainspotting” was filmed, and the Livingston studio where “Churchill” was based. We continue to welcome private sector initiatives for studios. I cannot say much about the Pentland Studios case due to the potential for legal appeal. We also understand that Guardhouse Studios’ interest remains live.

This has been a fantastic year for screen. On the big screen and in our homes we have started to see just what our industry can produce when the right support and the right circumstances come together.

Given the dedicated expertise of the newly established screen Scotland, backed by generous

funding and planning for increased skills and business development support, I am excited and optimistic about the future of our film and television industry.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I call Claire Baker to close the debate for the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee.

16:55

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): It has been an interesting, if brief, debate, in which we have had many insightful contributions.

Our committee's report is the second major report on the subject that the Parliament has produced. It is frustrating that MSPs who worked on the 2015 report find themselves commenting on the same issues that the sector says are holding it back.

The sector has grown in recent years. Scotland is increasingly chosen as a fantastic location, and members have highlighted our successes, but we are in danger of missing a huge opportunity. It is clear that if the sector is to meet its full potential and bring Scotland the cultural, economic and social benefits that will come with that, the Government, Creative Scotland and the new screen unit and all its partners must provide greater focus and ambition.

We welcome the establishment of screen Scotland and wish it every success, but we have made it clear in our report that we believe that it needs to be empowered to bring about that success. Our witnesses expressed a degree of frustration with their engagement with public agencies, which they said involved too much bureaucracy and decision making that was too slow.

As other members have highlighted, we continue to have concerns about the use of a fragmented approach and overly bureaucratic governance arrangements. Given the success of the model in Northern Ireland and the increasing global demand for content, the landscape has changed since the establishment of Creative Scotland, and we believe that Scotland should have an agency that is independent of any master. It is concerning that no commitment has been made that the executive director for screen Scotland will continue to have a sole focus on screen and that the business plan has still not been finalised. In addition, we continue to have concerns that partner agencies—principally, Scottish Enterprise—do not fully understand the needs and diversity of the sector.

We do not wish to hamper the work of screen Scotland, but we will closely monitor its progress. We expect to see a strong, empowered and

ambitious agency, but we remain to be convinced that the current arrangements will facilitate that to the extent that is required.

Members have emphasised the importance of having a purpose-built film and TV studio. Notwithstanding the development at Wardpark, which is exclusive to "Outlander", Scotland needs a flexible, fully equipped space that can attract international business as well as offer facilities for indigenous productions and support the sector to grow. The importance of having fully equipped studio facilities could not be emphasised enough by witnesses, and there was frustration at the lack of progress in Scotland. That is not a new issue. In May 2013, the Scottish Government said that active discussions were under way and that an announcement was expected soon. In 2015, statements were made about further discussions, and in 2016, an announcement was imminent but, so far, nothing has come to fruition. At the weekend, there was an exclusive news story that said that an announcement would be made any day now. It is perhaps no surprise that that has been greeted with a degree of scepticism.

The committee supports the efforts of screen Scotland and the Scottish Government in reaching a positive decision, but we find it frustrating that the barriers that the Scottish Government identified in evidence—state-aid rules, a lack of suitable and available buildings and a lack of private sector investment—do not seem to have hampered Manchester, Belfast, Cardiff or Birmingham, where a complex has recently been announced, in making studios a reality.

Good points have been made about public sector broadcasting and the need for robust Ofcom guidance.

There are big expectations of the new screen unit. If Scotland is to have a vibrant, growing and ambitious sector, the screen unit has an important role to play in providing the building blocks; supporting the development of new ideas and intellectual property; supporting clear pathways on skills and training into the industry; and maximising the wider benefits for the sector that international investment can bring through fair criteria in return for public sector investment. We all want the sector to do well; achieving those things is a tall order for any organisation, but we must get serious about delivery.

Part of screen Scotland's remit is overseeing skills development. In closing, I want to highlight recent figures from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. As the nominations were announced for the Scottish BAFTAs a couple of weeks ago, Jude MacLavery, director of BAFTA Scotland, drew attention to the lack of women shortlisted in the major categories, including

directing and writing. That is not uncommon at award ceremonies.

“Who’s Calling the Shots?”, a report on gender inequality from Directors UK, focuses on women directors in UK television and shows that the gender gap is widening. Gillian Martin made good points about opportunity and exploitation in the sector. During the summer I visited Screen Education Edinburgh, after being impressed by its evidence to the inquiry. Working with disadvantaged communities, it works to nurture talent and creativity and to raise attainment and aspirations among young people as well as adult learners. It provides a pathway into the sector for people who might otherwise be excluded.

Screen Scotland has a role to play here along with Skills Development Scotland. The new screen sector skills strategy for Scotland needs to have increasing diversity in the workforce as part of its outcomes, and to achieve that we need targeted, proactive provision that opens up opportunities in the sector and for employees so that all of Scotland’s talent can grow and contribute to the huge benefits that an active screen sector can bring to Scotland’s economy and its creative, social and cultural life.

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-14421, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 25 October 2018—

after

2.30 pm

Ministerial Statement: Update on Primary 1 national standardised assessment

insert

followed by

Ministerial Statement: Home Detention Curfew – HMIPS and HMICS independent reviews

followed by

Ministerial Statement: Scotland’s Place in Europe: Our Way Forward—[*Graeme Dey.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We come to decision time; there is only one question today.

The question is, that motion S5M-14400, in the name of Joan McAlpine, on “Making Scotland a Screen Leader”, a report examining the Scottish screen sector, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee’s 6th Report 2018 (Session 5), *Making Scotland a Screen Leader* (SP Paper 366).

Fife Out-of-hours General Practitioner Services (Closure)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members’ business debate on motion S5M-11786, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, on Fife out-of-hours closures. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the decision of the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership to close out-of-hours GP services in Glenrothes, St Andrews and Dunfermline; understands that this was taken without public consultation; believes that it will increase health inequalities in Glenrothes and the surrounding area and see people having to pay for transport to Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy; further believes that it will create an additional resource burden on staff at the Victoria; considers that any public consultation that retrospectively takes place during the three-month contingency closure will be compromised, and notes the calls for the Director of the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership to reverse this decision with immediate effect.

17:03

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): This year—2018—is a very important year for Glenrothes, marking the town’s official 70th birthday. We share that special birthday with our health service, a national institution, so I want to begin tonight by thanking all the staff who make NHS Fife work. To the nurses, to the ambulance men and women, to the cleaners, to the administrative staff and to the doctors, I say, “Thank you. We value you.”

I am grateful to members from across the chamber for supporting tonight’s motion. Changes to Fife’s general practitioner out-of-hours services are not happening as a result of a Scottish Government decision, however. That responsibility rests with Fife health and social care partnership. Tonight’s debate is therefore an opportunity to share in Parliament what has been happening locally, but I would nonetheless welcome the minister’s views on how we can now move forward.

Every year, more than 850,000 people will use GP out-of-hours services in Scotland. Over half of those people will be seen in some sort of primary care facility, with just one in five being visited in their own home. The people who are most likely to use GP out-of-hours services are those over 75 or under five—perhaps the most vulnerable in any society.

On 4 April this year, elected members across Fife were contacted by the director of Fife’s health and social care partnership, to inform us that services had “fallen over”. Essentially, there were

no longer enough GPs to staff out-of-hours services. That led to the start of contingency measures. In my constituency, Glenrothes hospital's GP out-of-hours services closed from 12 midnight until 8 am, and GP out-of-hours services also closed in Dunfermline and St Andrews. Patients were told to travel to the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy. What was meant to be a temporary closure has now been on-going for 197 days. Given that Fife's health and social care partnership took the decision to extend the contingency period, it will be a new year before the service is fully operational—if indeed that ever happens, because, despite a backdrop of closure, the partnership then took the decision to engage in a retrospective public consultation on transformative change.

The public consultation document, which was produced in July, some three months after the closures began, included GP out-of-hours redesign, but also community health and wellbeing hubs and community hospital and intermediate care bed redesign. That has understandably caused confusion, given that the focus is now not simply on GP out-of-hours services, and the clunky nature of analysing the provision of three separate services has meant that the partnership's vision remains unclear. Although the consultation has—belatedly—given Fifers an opportunity to voice their concerns, it is retrospective public engagement that is taking place during a closure period. In my view, that has compromised the consultation from the outset.

I am not against the transformative change agenda. I know through my work—I am a former member of the Parliament's Health and Sport Committee—that we need to work smarter. However, I continue to have concerns that Fife's health and social care partnership is using the closure of GP out-of-hours services as a Trojan horse for something quite different, particularly as, in April 2018, Fife actually had one more GP than at the equivalent time last year, so this is not simply about numbers.

In 2015, the Scottish Government commissioned the Ritchie review of primary care out-of-hours services, two of the guiding principles of which are that out-of-hours services are person centred and intelligence led. Furthermore, the review made a specific recommendation regarding health inequalities, stating that

“The design and implementation of all”

GP out-of-hours services

“should demonstrate how they are ensuring equity of access and outcome”

and that

“Quality and safety implementation and monitoring of”

out-of-hours services

“should be assessed for their impact on health inequalities.”

Fife's health and social care partnership did not complete any equality impact assessment before deciding to close GP out-of-hours services. It should have assessed how closing local services would impact on the poorest communities. Despite numerous requests from my office for that information, it was only after I raised concerns with Healthcare Improvement Scotland in July that an equality impact assessment was very quietly uploaded online and backdated.

Reducing health inequalities is, however, a key deliverable in the Scottish Government's 2020 vision for health and social care, which states:

“We will refocus our efforts on health inequalities particularly in the context of benefits cuts which will impact those most at risk of ill-health.”

Perhaps Fife's health and social care partnership should have looked at the impact of benefits cuts on my constituency. Had it bothered to do so, it would have found that welfare cuts have hit Glenrothes harder than any other area in Fife. Over £1 million has been lost in benefits payments to the vulnerable people whom I represent. My constituency is already being disadvantaged by the political priorities of Westminster. Removing healthcare access for the poorest will only make that worse.

However, it is not just about benefit cuts. It is about hard, real poverty. In 2013, the Mid Fife and Glenrothes constituency had the worst child poverty figures in Scotland outside Glasgow. Five years on, it is the year of young people and our town is 70. What value is Fife's health and social care partnership placing on the next generation and its access to healthcare?

NHS Health Scotland says that there are fundamental causes that drive health inequalities, including

“Societal values to equity and fairness”

and

“Political priorities and decisions”.

Although the closure of Fife's GP out-of-hours service was not a decision taken by the Scottish Government or indeed this Parliament, it is reflective of a decision that was taken by health and care officials locally. Fife's health and social care partnership did not complete and has not completed any transport appraisal. My constituents fear that they will be unable to afford the taxi fare to Kirkcaldy in the early hours if they need to go there. Even worse, the transport system that exists requires patients to ask for financial help if they cannot afford a taxi. That is completely undignified.

The rationale for GP out-of-hours closures back in April was predicated on clinical advice. Politicians cannot argue with clinical advice, nor do I believe that we should. The clinical advice was for a temporary closure. It said that patient safety would be compromised due to staff shortages. However, it did not assess patient safety the other way around. What about the mum who cannot afford a taxi to Kirkcaldy, the elderly man who has no car and the chronic asthmatic who cannot travel? The decision will widen health inequalities because it will be the poorest who suffer.

From elderly residents to the parents of children with serious medical needs, worries were raised at the various public meetings that I spoke at that residents in Glenrothes and the surrounding villages would become isolated from round-the-clock healthcare. Our national healthcare service was founded in 1948, which was the same year that the first turf was cut to build Glenrothes. From the cradle to the grave, it would be free at the point of need. For Glenrothes to lose out-of-hours GP services in our 70th year would be a travesty for the people whom I represent.

I look forward to the outcome of this public consultation, with the wellbeing of the kingdom's most vulnerable in mind. I am confident that Fife's health and social care partnership will come to the correct decision.

17:10

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I congratulate Jenny Gilruth on securing the debate and on raising an important issue for her constituents in Glenrothes and all those across Fife who are similarly affected. Although Jenny Gilruth understandably concentrated on the issue in her Glenrothes constituency, the issue affects people in the whole of Fife.

Public meetings have been held in Glenrothes, Dunfermline and St Andrews, and they were attended by large numbers of local people. My Conservative colleagues have attended them all, and Liz Smith and I attended a public meeting that was hosted by Willie Rennie in St Andrews earlier in the summer. We could tell from the attendance at that meeting how important the issue is to the local community. I understand that Mr Rennie has hosted another meeting more recently and it was even better attended than the one earlier in the summer. I could not be there that evening, but press reports indicated how much public concern there is about the issue.

For people who live in places such as north-east Fife and west Fife, the problem of the distance to travel to Kirkcaldy are more acute than they are for Jenny Gilruth's constituents in Glenrothes. That is

where the real public concern lies. How do people access services, particularly out-of-hours services, when they are a long distance away from where they live?

A whole range of risks are thrown up by the proposals from the Fife health and social care partnership. Will there be more ambulance call-outs as a result of the fact that people will have to travel further to access out-of-hours GP cover? Will more people attend accident and emergency services as a result of the fact that they cannot access such out-of-hours services? I do not think that we have so far had adequate answers to those questions.

There are practical issues for those who do not have access to private transport. If someone is living in a rural part of west Fife or north-east Fife, how do they get to Kirkcaldy after 11 o'clock at night or before 6 or 7 in the morning, when public transport commences? Again, I do not think that we have had adequate answers to those questions from the local health and social care partnership.

There is a particular issue in north-east Fife. Many of the doctors who are operating out of hours in the community hospital at St Andrews have offered to continue to do their shifts but, thus far, the health and social care partnership has told them that, unless they are prepared to relocate to Kirkcaldy, their services will no longer be welcome. That is deeply unfortunate. When trained GPs are prepared to offer a service locally, a local bespoke solution should, at the very least, be explored by the health and social care partnership, rather than it simply saying that if a doctor is not prepared to be available to work in Kirkcaldy, it does not want to hear from them or use their services at all. It is unfortunate if we cannot find a solution at least for the GPs in St Andrews and north-east Fife because of the attitude of the health and social care partnership.

I want to touch on two broader issues. First, the problem that has been identified is not unique to Fife; it is happening elsewhere in Scotland and in the region that I represent. The minor injuries units in Crieff and Pitlochry are facing problems because their difficulties in attracting qualified staff mean that they have to restrict their opening hours. The issues that Jenny Gilruth raised are reflected elsewhere.

That goes back to the second, and fundamental, issue of workforce planning. We simply do not have enough GPs to fill existing vacancies across the country. The Scottish Government needs to address the issue of better workforce planning. In particular, should we be capping the number of university places that are available for Scottish-domiciled medical students when we have the demand for more doctors and more GPs? We

know that we have not met that demand in the past, and for those we are training here in Scotland, it is time to rethink the issue.

I agree with Jenny Gilruth. The health and social care partnership in Fife needs to think again. More than 6,000 people in Fife have signed a petition calling upon the partnership to do that, and it should listen.

17:15

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I thank Jenny Gilruth for securing this debate, which is on a subject that is of interest to all MSPs who represent Fife.

She has set out many of the concerns about the decision to close the overnight out-of-hours GP services in Glenrothes, Dunfermline and St Andrews, with a service between midnight and 8 am now being available only in Kirkcaldy. MSPs from various parties have shared platforms at local meetings to hear the concerns of our constituents about the decision.

To start at the beginning, I point out that MSPs were emailed on 4 April, right at the start of the Easter holidays, by the director of health and social care, to be told that, as a contingency measure in response to nursing and medical staffing difficulties, the out-of-hours services at Glenrothes hospital, Queen Margaret hospital in Dunfermline and St Andrews community hospital were being suspended. Since I was elected in 2007, NHS Fife has held regular meetings with MSPs: I may be wrong, but I cannot recall the extreme pressures on out-of-hours services being raised with us prior to the decision being made.

At subsequent meetings since the decision, we have heard how precarious the service has been in recent months, yet the possibility of contingency measures was not discussed with MSPs or the public. There was no opportunity for scrutiny.

Moreover, the decision to suspend the services is not risk free—the additional pressure at the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy, which is already the accident and emergency site, needs to be closely monitored.

The difficulties that health boards are facing in recruiting and retaining GP and primary care staff are well known. In Fife, a number of GP practices operate closed lists and a number have had to come under the control of NHS Fife. Too many practices are relying on locum cover and are described as being in high-risk situations. Work should have been well under way on solutions that would have seen the hospitals remaining open overnight. I have heard GPs say that they were not aware of the precariousness of the service and

were not consulted, so something has gone wrong in communication.

The immediate concerns that have been raised by constituents are about the difficulties that centralising of the service presents. Quite simply, the distances that are involved in travelling to Kirkcaldy in the middle of the night are significant for the majority of my constituents. For people who do not have a car, there is no public transport, and they will struggle to get a taxi at those times—never mind whether they have the money to pay for it. How is a single parent or someone who is elderly or vulnerable supposed to get to Kirkcaldy? We did not hear significant enough assurances from NHS Fife and the integration joint board that the issue would be dealt with, or that concerns about travel would not act as a deterrent to people who need to see a doctor. Jenny Gilruth's points about an equality impact assessment were fairly made.

The situation was supposed to be a contingency measure for three months. However, at the end of that period, the fundamental issues of staffing had not been resolved and the contingency measure continued, which is now consumed by the joined-up care consultation that has just closed.

I want to raise three additional issues. I attended in St Andrews a public meeting that was organised by Willie Rennie. As Murdo Fraser has described, with a commitment from local GPs, St Andrews hospital is able to run an out-of-hours service, but NHS Fife argues that it needs to deliver for all of Fife and is refusing to accept a solution that would serve only St Andrews. I would like to see NHS Fife being flexible about St Andrews. A strong case has been made that the combination of the student population, many of whom are overseas students, an elderly population, and rurality justifies continuation of out-of-hours services, so a resolution that would achieve that should be worked on.

Secondly, on governance, the IJB took the decision to suspend the services based on clinical advice. I fully accept that patient safety must be paramount and that safe staffing levels must be maintained, but NHS Fife is actively avoiding taking any responsibility for the decision, although it was based on clinical advice. The IJB has delegated powers over GP provision—it does not have devolved powers.

I understand that Audit Scotland is examining the roll-out of IJBs and that governance is a key area of concern that has also been raised by the Health and Sport Committee. The decisions of the IJB are dependent on the workforce decisions that NHS Fife has made when it comes to clinical staff, and the GP situation in Fife has been approaching tipping point for the past few years. NHS Fife cannot hide from the decisions.

Finally, I acknowledge the Government's arguments that the new GP contract will improve the situation, and I am aware of the work that is being undertaken at the University of St Andrews and the University of Dundee to increase the number of GPs through the Scottish graduate entry medicine—ScotGEM—programme. That is positive, because we need imaginative solutions to increase GP numbers, which is the issue at the heart of the situation.

However, we in Fife should never have got to a situation in which health services are being closed and we risk exacerbating health inequalities because we do not have enough GPs and primary care staff to deliver services. I have to say that all this has come about during the past 11 years of the Scottish National Party Government, which could be seen to have taken its eye off the ball while the crisis was looming.

17:20

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank Jenny Gilruth for lodging the motion and for reminding us that the changes in service delivery will take away the dignity of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. It is important that we listen to their voices in considering how to deliver a fair and equitable service. I will focus on the national context for GP out-of-hours services.

Although closure of the services in Dunfermline, Glenrothes and St Andrews is an issue of great importance and concern to our constituents, the situation is not unique to Fife. It is deeply affected by the shortage of GPs in Scotland, which was blamed for the emergency closures back in April, but it is also part of a national strategy to change how primary care emergency services are delivered.

The Ritchie review, which the Government published in 2015, warned that out-of-hours services across Scotland in their current form

"are fragile, are not sustainable, and may worsen rapidly if we do not rise to the occasion."

The review stated that patients should no longer expect to see a GP for urgent care, which instead should be delivered by a multidisciplinary team that could include nurse practitioners, community nurses, paramedics, pharmacists and other allied health professionals, as well as GPs. The review also recommended that the multidisciplinary teams be co-ordinated through a central urgent-care resource hub.

If the recommendations in the Ritchie review were delivered in their entirety, they could significantly strengthen out-of-hours provision in Fife and improve patients' access to and experience of care. We need to accept that the

status quo might not be the best option if we are to move forward in a meaningful way.

That said, I am highly critical of the options that the Fife health and social care partnership laid out in its recent consultation, as I made clear in my submission to it earlier this month, which drew on the experiences that I have heard about in public meetings. The partnership seems to be delivering only half of the Ritchie report recommendations. It is jumping at the opportunity to centralise service delivery without putting in place a multidisciplinary team to help to deliver the services in the community.

The consultation emphasises the low number of people who use the overnight services between midnight and 8 am, but it then uses that to justify complete withdrawal of the services from Glenrothes and St Andrews, including during evenings and weekends. On average, nearly 150 people a day use the weekend service. To leave people in Glenrothes and north-east Fife without any kind of local service for a full 62 hours, from Friday night until Monday morning, is simply unacceptable.

The health and social care partnership needs to go back to the drawing board, and to consider how it can use a multidisciplinary team to retain some level of local service. That might look quite different from how it looks now, perhaps with nurse practitioners delivering care during the daytime, with remote access to GPs who are based in Kirkcaldy. It could involve using ambulances as urgent-care centres in rural areas, or referring patients to a community pharmacy for consultation and prescribing. All those options were proposed in the Government's Ritchie review, but were not considered in the recent Fife consultation.

I urge my fellow members to engage fully with all the options and not just to cling to the status quo. We will not solve the crisis in GP recruitment any time soon, so in the meantime we need to understand what kind of care the most vulnerable people in our communities need, and how we can realistically deliver it. That requires further work on all sides, so I hope that Fife health and social care partnership will come back to the table soon with a workable solution.

17:24

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I, too, congratulate Jenny Gilruth on securing the debate. She set out the circumstances of the consultation very well. However, I gently disagree with her point that there has been an increase in the number of GPs in Fife. Perhaps there has been, but the whole-time-equivalent figure has certainly gone down, which has led to the problem and the

circumstance that we are dealing with. It is expected that, by 2021, we will be short of 800 GPs nationwide. Otherwise, I agree with Jenny Gilruth's analysis of the situation—we need a change of heart from the Fife health and social care partnership.

The change to GP out-of-hours services is a big issue in east Fife. About 2,300 people from the east neuk filled out postcards as part of a campaign that was led by the community council and by Daryl Wilson, who did a tremendous job. More than 6,400 people, including students and others from across the community, have signed my petition, and people from all parts of east Fife have been coming forward and offering to collect signatures for the petition. The public meetings have been packed to the gunwales; people from every part of the community have been there. There are more people at the public meetings in east Fife than there are at such meetings anywhere else in Fife. That reflects the fury and anger about the situation that exists there.

I make a special plea for east Fife. There are large numbers of students and elderly people in the area, and there are remote and rural communities. The distance to Kirkcaldy is quite a problem, and it is difficult for many people to get there. It is incredibly expensive to get a taxi to Kirkcaldy in the middle of the night. We need to consider those issues when we are considering what kind of services we should be providing in east Fife. There is, in east Fife, a strong general feeling that if a service is going to be cut, it will be cut in east Fife first. That is not acceptable, and I hope that the Fife health and social care partnership reflects on that.

We are supposed to have a back-up service from King's Cross hospital in Dundee so that people in Newport, Tayport and the north end of east Fife can nip over the Tay to receive services there. However, there are already capacity issues on Tayside, so such access is not always guaranteed. Apparently, people from St Andrews can access King's Cross at night time if there is capacity available, but in general there is confusion about where people are supposed to go—about whether they should go to Kirkcaldy or Dundee. We need clarity on that.

We are told that we can access services at King's Cross, but the GPs on Tayside will not do home visits in east Fife. GPs on such visits will have to come from further west, so the distance issue therefore also applies in those circumstances.

As Murdo Fraser rightly mentioned, GPs are prepared to step up to provide a service for east Fife. It might be a different type of service, but they are prepared to participate, and their offer should

be taken up. I know that discussions on that are under way.

Finally, the consultation process was wholly inadequate. I do not know who made the decision to wrap three consultations into one, but it was a poor decision. The document was riddled with jargon and it was difficult to find the link to complete the consultation. There are a lot of intelligent people in St Andrews, including many academics, but several of them have come to me to say that although they have two degrees—some of them even have three—they found it difficult to complete the consultation document. It is pretty clear that, despite the advice that people have received from various parts of the health service, the consultation process was inadequate.

My final plea is to the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing. If the Fife health and social care partnership does not make the right decision on the matter and does not reflect on the huge opposition that exists in east Fife and in other parts of Fife, he should step in and ensure that it does make the right decision.

17:28

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I, too, congratulate my Fife colleague Jenny Gilruth on bringing to the chamber this important and timely debate on the position of out-of-hours primary care in Fife. She set out clearly the background to the issue, so I will not go over the same ground. However, I will say that I, too, as MSP for Cowdenbeath, raised concerns when the initial announcement was made out of the blue, in April this year, that out-of-hours care would be offered only at one site—the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy—rather than over the four sites that were being used prior to the announcement.

I wrote to the director of the Fife health and social care partnership, Michael Kellet, and had several discussions with him on the matter. In those discussions, I raised a number of issues, including capacity at the Victoria and transport. I asked what arrangements were in place for those who did not have access to a car; those who are lone parents with other children at home as well as a sick child who needs medical attention; and those—to whom Jenny Gilruth referred—who have long-term conditions such as chronic asthma. The information that has been forthcoming on those points to date has not exactly been clear and, as Jenny Gilruth said, it appears that no transport appraisal has been commissioned.

The issue is all the more pressing as we look to the recent NHS Fife consultation on out-of-hours urgent care redesign in Fife, among other issues. As has been mentioned, in essence two options have been put forward, with the status quo—that

is, what was in place before April and had been in place for some years, before these contingency arrangements were introduced—being ruled out, apparently by clinicians, on sustainability grounds, we are told.

Although I can well understand the frustration of people in other parts of Fife about the approach that is being taken—we have heard that frustration tonight in clear and cogent terms—I must stress, as the constituency MSP for Cowdenbeath, the importance of maintaining the footprint of the Queen Margaret hospital in Dunfermline. In recent years, there has been a considerable expansion in the number of services that are offered at the Queen Margaret hospital, to the benefit of my constituents and those of my colleague, Shirley-Anne Somerville, the MSP for Dunfermline. I feel sure that local people would not wish that trend towards expansion to be impinged on to their detriment. Hence, in the context of the options that are being proposed by NHS Fife at this time, option 2 seems preferable to option 1. Option 2 would see the Victoria and the Queen Margaret open overnight for out-of-hours urgent care, which would represent a better service for my constituents.

However, the important issue of transport still remains to be clarified. In that regard, I note that page 18 of the consultation document says that Fife health and social care partnership will, with a view to ensuring that people have equal access to urgent care,

“develop a procedure to support people who have difficulties getting to an appointment.”

I am seeking clarification about what exactly that means, and I ask the minister to confirm that he will seek appropriate assurances from Fife health and social care partnership on the important matter of transport, which has been raised by every member who has spoken today.

Particular reference is made in the consultation to the position of paediatric services, with the point being made, fairly, about the importance of immediate and direct access to specialist support if that suddenly becomes necessary, given that children can become very unwell very quickly. That support is available at the Victoria, but not at the other sites. The consultation document does not explore in detail that issue or the impact that it might have on the viability of the health and social care partnership's position with regard to the viability of option 2. However, I would have thought that it would have been possible, if deemed appropriate, to separate paediatric out-of-hours services from services for other users, as necessary, and still allow the two sites to be used for overnight appointments in general.

I agree that the way in which the matter has been dealt with so far by Fife health and social care partnership has not been optimal, to say the least. However, we need to see longer-term out-of-hours arrangements in place, and, as far as my constituents are concerned, it is vital that the excellent role that the Queen Margaret hospital plays in the community is not diminished in any way.

17:33

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): I, too, congratulate Jenny Gilruth on securing the debate on this vital issue. We have heard many members speak passionately about the process, which is important.

We have already heard that the primary care emergency services in Glenrothes, Dunfermline and St Andrews were suspended due to the lack of GPs and other staff, and we have heard about where we are with regard to the process of ensuring that we have enough cover for the growing communities across the Mid Scotland and Fife area. At the meeting that I attended in Dunfermline, there were some passionate individuals who articulately expressed their opinions about the health and social care partnership, and the representatives of the partnership gave what I can only call lip service to those views and opinions, which did not go down very well. The people did not feel that the views that they were expressing in the consultation were being listened to. I found that very disappointing.

I have heard that similar views were expressed at the other meetings that took place across the region. People felt that the situation was more of a fait accompli than a process that was being looked at and challenged. Those meetings were and continue to be very important, because they are the only opportunity for some individuals to engage with the process. It is vital that we are confident that we can engage.

Every member who has spoken this evening has talked about the partnership's inability to manage the situation on behalf of our constituents. That must be taken into account. The partnership has said that this is happening because it could not ensure patient safety, but patient safety will be compromised all over the region if patients are unable to access out-of-hours GP services.

We have heard tonight about transport issues. I hope that the minister can tell us exactly what is happening in that respect, because it is totally unacceptable to ask people to travel long distances to Kirkcaldy or Dundee. We are just about to get into winter, when our climate can be very volatile, especially in the evenings. We would be asking individuals to make journeys that could

be quite treacherous—the anxiety that some would experience is also a big problem.

The consultation has been very much mismanaged by the health partnership and that has resulted in huge difficulties in the region. As I said, decisions seem already to have been taken, and people believe that real consultation is not taking place. The possible consequences could be detrimental to the communities that we represent.

The Government has acknowledged that it faces recruitment and retention issues, but it needs to come up with solutions to ensure that those issues are dealt with. In Glenrothes, Dunfermline and St Andrews, we have an opportunity to ensure that individuals feel that their priorities are being taken into account. The status quo is totally unacceptable—these facilities cannot continue to close, and individuals with health conditions cannot be asked to travel long distances.

The partnership must sit up and listen, which it is not doing at the moment. In discussions that I have had with some clinicians, it is as if they know best in this situation. We expect the health service to ensure that people are given the treatment that they require. The partnership must acknowledge that this situation will not be resolved without it making big changes for the communities that we represent.

17:38

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): I, too, congratulate Jenny Gilruth on securing the debate and echo her thanks to the staff in our NHS for everything that they do for us in Fife and throughout Scotland.

Access to urgent primary medical services outwith normal GP surgery opening hours is a fundamental part of unscheduled care in Scotland. The service is there for people who become unwell when their GP surgery is closed and the illness cannot wait until the surgery reopens. Every year, around 870,000 patients across Scotland use the out-of-hours service. In Fife, around 4,470 patients are seen every month by the out-of-hours service, with an average of 20 a week seen between midnight and 8 am.

I acknowledge that there have been difficulties across Scotland in sustaining the out-of-hours service. It is also important to acknowledge that general practice is not a 9-to-5 business.

How did we get to where we are? It is not just about GP numbers. Claire Baker mentioned action that the Government is taking to tackle that issue. The root of the problem is a consequence of a change to GP contracts that was negotiated way back in 2004, which made working in the out-of-hours setting non-mandatory. As a result, over

time, some GPs coming into the service have decided that they do not wish to work in the out-of-hours service, and time has crept up on those GPs who have continued to work in the out-of-hours service, with a significant number having now retired from general practice. I am extremely grateful to those GPs and other clinicians who do work in the out-of-hours service.

As a number of members have noted, in 2015, the Scottish Government commissioned Sir Lewis Ritchie to carry out a national review of our out-of-hours service. The report that he published was “Pulling together: transforming urgent care for the people of Scotland”. The review considered how best to deliver out-of-hours primary care services in the light of challenges posed by Scotland’s ageing population and the integration of health and social care services. The review highlighted that a multidisciplinary model should be adopted in the service design and delivery of urgent care in the community, and it provided a foretaste of the direction of travel for the delivery of primary care in-hours.

The report outlined the expectation that GPs will no longer be the default healthcare professional whom patients see for urgent care. However, they will continue to play a key and essential part of urgent care teams, providing clinical leadership. As Mark Ruskell said, the proposed model of care is clinician led and supported by a multidisciplinary team that includes GPs, nurses, community pharmacists, paramedics and other specialists. It recognises that patients will be seen by the most appropriate professional to meet their urgent care needs.

I turn to the out-of-hours service in Fife. In April this year, Fife’s health and social care partnership took the difficult decision to reduce its overnight service provision from the three centres in Dunfermline, Glenrothes and St Andrews to one centre for the overnight period, which operates from the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy. That was not a decision for this Government or this Parliament. The partnership set out that it believed that the decision had to be taken quickly, and I understand that it has conceded that the implementation of contingency measures for the provision of the overnight element of the out-of-hours GP service felt sudden. That has been echoed by members from around the chamber, who feel that there was a lack of consultation. Perhaps that is a lesson that the partnership will take from today’s debate.

As members will be aware, the partnership subsequently extended the contingency arrangements to the end of January next year.

I appreciate that there have been many local concerns about the contingency measures and the consultation exercise on the future of the service.

In response, the partnership has said that it has considered the consultation since 2016-17, when it completed an options appraisal exercise. It told me that that included workshops with members of the public in Fife, and that the intention was to look at the future of the service using the latest data and evidence.

The next phase of planning by Fife health and social care partnership was a consultation exercise to share the decisions about the options appraisal exercise. At best, it was unfortunate timing that the decision to implement contingency measures happened just as the consultation was announced. The partnership has repeatedly sought to provide assurances to the Scottish Government that, at that stage, no decision had been made about the outcome of the public consultation.

I understand that the consultation period ended on 8 October and that the responses are currently being analysed. It is important to enable the local consultation process to run, and I am not in a position to comment on any likely outcome at this time. However, I understand that draft proposals will be taken through the partnership's governance committees during November. The report and final proposals will be considered by the Fife integration joint board at its meeting on 20 December.

The Scottish Government has been very clear that NHS boards and health and social care partnerships are expected to ensure the delivery of safe and sustainable services across the locality that they serve and in the round.

The points that were raised by Willie Rennie and Murdo Fraser are important. If there are options, they should be fully explored. I understand that the option that Willie Rennie mentioned is still under discussion, as he said, and I hope that it is being seriously considered as part of the solution.

Jenny Gilruth, Claire Baker, Mark Ruskell, Annabelle Ewing and Alexander Stewart all raised important issues, such as the impact of contingency measures on people's ability to access services, which particularly applies to those who have limited or no access to travel options—I apologise to any other members who also mentioned that issue. I am clear that the partnership should carefully consider such issues as it plans for the future.

I again thank Jenny Gilruth for bringing this issue to the attention of the chamber. I hope that I have provided reassurance that the Scottish Government takes these matters seriously and that we expect decisions by partnerships to follow meaningful community engagement.

Meeting closed at 17:45.

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