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Scottish Parliament

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

General Question Time

Barnett Consequentials (Retail Sector)

1. Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Government how much will arise in Barnett consequentials from the reduction in business rates that was announced in the United Kingdom budget, and whether it will allocate all of this to support Scotland's retail sector. (S5O-02559)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): We received £42.9 million consequentials from the United Kingdom retail discount scheme. This is in the context of real-terms cuts to the Scottish resource block grant of £2 billion since 2010.

As Mr Bowman will be aware, Barnett consequentials accrue to the Scottish Ministers and decisions on the full package of non-domestic rates measures for 2019-20 will be made as part of our Scottish budget process. We have a competitive NDR package, and do not actively hypothecate Barnett consequentials, other than those for health.

Bill Bowman: As reported in the press this week, according to the Scottish Retail Consortium, 11.1 per cent of Scotland's shop units were vacant last month, compared with the UK rate of 9.6 per cent. In October, footfall plummeted by 7.5 per cent on high streets.

While the UK plans to give £900 million towards business rates relief, cutting a third of expenses for small retailers, the Scottish National Party has doubled the large business supplement, costing businesses hundreds of millions of pounds. With Scottish retail facing real difficulty, why can the Scottish Government not commit now to halving the large business supplement and matching the UK's rate support for retail, and give some good news for firms in Dundee's High Street, Reform Street and elsewhere?

Derek Mackay: The UK Government is working wonders for the British economy right now, is it not? No wonder the UK has the lowest forecast GDP performance of any European Union nation at the moment. I will take no lectures from the Tories on how to run an economy or any parts of the economy.

It is interesting that Bill Bowman mentioned Dundee High Street. Like most other high streets, Dundee High Street would have benefited from the small business bonus that has protected so many of our retail properties across the country. It was opposed by the Conservatives in their failure to support the Government's successive budgets.

The bonus has ensured that Scotland has the most competitive package of business rates anywhere in the United Kingdom. I will keep that reputation as we go towards the Scottish budget. If I replicate all the decisions that the Tories make in terms of Barnett consequentials, that would mean replicating the cuts as well. This Government makes different choices on our public services. We will make the right decisions by the people of Scotland and support our economy in a far more credible way.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Would the Government set out how many recipients of the small business bonus scheme there are in 2018-19 and how much is being provided in relief over that period? How does that measure up to the SNP's manifesto commitment to lift 100,000 properties out of business rates altogether?

Derek Mackay: I take great pleasure in updating the chamber on those numbers. The small business bonus scheme has provided a record £254 million in relief to 119,400 properties in 2018-19. Therefore, we have met our manifesto commitment, lifting 104,500 recipients out of business rates altogether.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Support for the retail sector will not be helped by the fact that there are 470,000 people in Scotland not being paid the living wage. That is an unacceptably high figure and means that a large portion of those people do not have the money to spend in and support those shops.

Will the cabinet secretary support Labour's plan for a £10 per hour living wage? What consideration will the cabinet secretary give in his draft budget to addressing the unacceptably high number of people who are not being paid the living wage?

Derek Mackay: It would be better if real devolutionists ensured that the power to set the living wage rested with this Parliament, rather than with Westminster.

I am looking at the decisions that we can take around the living wage. It is the Living Wage Foundation that sets the rate that we have pledged to follow. We will continue to do that. I am looking at those other matters. I am looking at retail and specific sectors as well, recognising that some sectors have more challenges than others in the delivery of the principle. However, this

Government has delivered more than any other Government in the UK and more than any previous Scottish Administration in taking forward the fair work and living wage agendas.

Autism and Learning Disability

2. Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce the inequalities faced by autistic people, and people with a learning disability. (S5O-02560)

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): We are committed to transforming the lives of autistic people and people with learning disabilities. We have listened to their aspirations and needs and want to address the inequalities that they face throughout their lives. Our programme for government sets out our priorities and shows that we want autistic people and people with learning disabilities to have the same freedoms and opportunities as other citizens of Scotland.

Next month, we will launch the refreshed keys to life implementation framework, which recognises that people with learning disabilities have the same aspirations and expectations as any other person.

Linda Fabiani: Can the minister assure me that discussions are being held right across Government portfolios—in education, health, employability, social security and other departments—so that the holistic approach can be used to ensure that people with autism and learning disabilities are given good life opportunities and the ability to improve their independence?

Clare Haughey: As the member highlighted, autistic people and people with learning disabilities need holistic support across health, social care, employability, education, criminal justice, social security and social connectedness. In refreshing both the autism and learning disability strategies, wide engagement has taken place across the relevant Scottish Government portfolios. An example of that is the cross-policy links between employability and equality colleagues that led to a commitment to halve the disability employment gap. Another example was the engagement with social security colleagues that led to the inclusion of autistic people when designing the new social security system.

Stromeferry Bypass (A890)

3. Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its involvement with the Highland Council regarding the Stromeferry bypass in Wester Ross. (S5O-02561)

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): The A890 at Stromeferry is a local road and is the responsibility of Highland Council. Transport Scotland has provided technical advice to council officials and their consultants on the transport appraisal process since 2013, and I can confirm that it is in receipt of the final appraisal report. The report reflects the substantial amount of work that was undertaken as part of the appraisal process, and a response will be provided in the near future. As roads authority for the A890 at Stromeferry, the final responsibility for the decision to upgrade or improve the route ultimately lies with Highland Council.

Gail Ross: Given that the report into the condition of the rock face is now in the public domain, will the Scottish Government agree to work with Highland Council and Network Rail on a sustainable and economically viable solution for this lifeline route?

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise the importance of the route to communities across Ms Ross's constituency.

Highland Council recently provided the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson, with a copy of the report prepared by the consultants, AECOM. Officials at Transport Scotland are reviewing the report, along with the transport appraisal prepared by the council, which includes the options that have been identified therein. They will continue to provide technical assistance as necessary to identify the correct solutions.

They have also worked closely with the Highland Council and Network Rail to identify a temporary solution in terms of the crossing on the railway. As I said earlier, the final responsibility for a decision to upgrade or improve the A890 at Stromeferry ultimately lies with the Highland Council as the roads authority for the route. However, I give a commitment to Gail Ross that we will continue to work closely with the council.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): In the past, blasting has been used to remove the overhanging rocks at Stromeferry, which has weakened four specific areas. A permanent solution to that will cost £5 million. Will the minister offer to help the Highland Council fund that £5 million to sort out the four overhangs until Transport Scotland responds to the report that was submitted over a year ago?

Paul Wheelhouse: The member will appreciate that I cannot give any commitments on funding today. The cabinet secretary is not here, but I will certainly relay the member's question to him. I recognise the importance of trying to provide as much relief as possible to local users of the

infrastructure in the meantime, while a longer-term solution is found. As I said to Gail Ross, we are committed to providing as much technical support as possible to the council and indeed Network Rail to identify a solution. Discussions around funding will have to take place, but that is a matter for the cabinet secretary.

Michelin Tyre plc (Action Group)

4. Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made since the establishment of the action group for the Michelin plant in Dundee. (S5O-02562)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): On Monday, I convened the first meeting of the action group, at which the members agreed the purpose, remit and actions of the group. We will pursue all possibilities for retaining and/or repurposing the plant as a matter of urgency. We are actively working with pace and vigour on our proposition.

I have again pressed the United Kingdom Government to bring what it can to the table, including seeking additional resource via city deals or industrial strategy resources, and I will keep members advised accordingly.

Shona Robison: Can the cabinet secretary confirm that consideration will be given to putting more than one option to Michelin, including retention and repurposing? What commitments were made by the UK Government at the action group meeting, including in relation to any additional resources that could be made available through the Tay cities deal or other funding sources? How does that sit with the comments that the Secretary of State for Scotland made to the media after the meeting? Can the cabinet secretary shed any light on that?

Derek Mackay: Shona Robison asks an important question about the range of options that are available. I have made it clear to the action group and to members that Michelin does not wish to revisit its decision, but that it is interested in the proposition that we will put to it in approximately two weeks' time. We are looking at a range of options to put forward, based on the best intelligence that we have.

On the contribution of the UK Government, we are relying on the UK Government to use the intelligence and support that it can bring to bear to help us to co-produce the proposition that we put to Michelin. I have also made requests for additional resources, given the clarity that we have on the Tay cities deal, the industrial strategy and the sector deals.

I can neither confirm nor clarify the remarks of the secretary of state because, at the action group

meeting and in the private meetings that I have had, I was given assurances that the UK Government would assist us to co-produce the proposition that we make to Michelin and that it would look at funding streams to help us to do so. I also got agreement on that from Greg Clark, the UK Government's Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and my first call after First Minister's question time will be with another UK Government minister, in relation to the industrial strategy.

Therefore, I cannot square what the UK Government has said to me about providing support for our proposition to Michelin with what the Secretary of State for Scotland said to *The Courier* on the day of the action group meeting. I hope that support is forthcoming, and that is what I am working on, so that we can genuinely work in partnership to put the best possible proposition to Michelin and secure the company's on-going presence at the Dundee site. We should all be absolutely united on that.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): According to media reports, the Scottish Government has invested £8 million in the Michelin plant. Can the cabinet secretary confirm the status of that investment? Can he confirm that it will be used as leverage to secure as many jobs as possible at the plant?

Derek Mackay: What a disappointing response that was from the Conservatives in the context of my remarks about our collective efforts.

As far as leverage is concerned, Michelin is genuinely interested in our industrial proposition for this country, the work that is being done on research and development, the skills and the workforce that we have in Dundee and the good will that exists across the action group towards putting forward the best possible proposition.

I have said previously that there were Scottish Enterprise grants to help the plant to transform and that it was doing that. If we come to the issue of leverage around clawback, of course that will be used but, right now, the priority must be on focusing on continuing with the commercial manufacturing function at the Dundee site and ensuring that the company has an on-going presence there. We must do everything that we can to retain as many jobs as possible in view of the company's position not to revisit the original decision.

I will leave no stone unturned and will explore every avenue in order to put the best possible proposition to Michelin, and I could do with support from the UK Government to get the best possible outcome for the people of Dundee.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I reiterate Labour's support for the work of the

action group that the cabinet secretary has convened. Does he agree that all parties on the group are committed to working together to get the best possible proposal and result for the Michelin workforce and for Dundee?

Derek Mackay: Yes; they are all attendees at the action group, and the other business and industry experts who will help to feed into it are giving us the necessary intelligence and assistance to put forward the best possible proposition. In that sense of solidarity and unity, the workforce is key, as well as the local authority members and others. I appreciate the cross-party support that we have enjoyed so far to take forward that work. It will keep us energised as we get to the opportunity to present the case to Michelin.

Neonatal Intensive Care Units (Location)

5. Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when recommendations will be published for the location of the three national neonatal intensive care units, as outlined in the 2017 "The Best Start" report's five-year plan. (S5O-02563)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): The perinatal sub-group of the best start implementation programme board is currently undertaking an options appraisal to identify the locations of the neonatal intensive care units. That work will move into a testing phase shortly, after which recommendations on those locations will be made to me.

Tom Mason: In three recent written questions, I asked the cabinet secretary whether she thought that it was acceptable for prematurely born babies to travel between the north-east and the central belt for emergency neonatal intensive care treatment. She did not answer, instead citing potential transport links between the two. Let us be clear that the issue is about life-saving treatment for the most vulnerable babies. Does the cabinet secretary accept that any attempt to remove that lifeline service for the north of Scotland would be ill-advised and dangerous?

Jeane Freeman: As Mr Mason will recall, in the answer to those questions I made it absolutely clear that no neonatal units will close as a result of the best start recommendations for neonatal intensive care. The best start report does not recommend a reduction in the number of neonatal care centres in NHS Grampian or, indeed, anywhere else.

My point is that the testing for intensive neonatal care is in the option appraisal stage. It will then move to a testing stage and those recommendations will come to me. At that point, I will make what I consider to be reasoned

decisions based on the recommendations and testing. Let me repeat that no neonatal units will close as a result of the best start recommendations, which came from a group of highly experienced practitioners, the Royal College of Midwives, the Royal College of Nursing, obstetricians, consultant anaesthetists and many others. I will work with their clinical judgment about the best maternity care and configuration for women and babies in Scotland, and not Mr Mason's.

Arts and Culture Facilities (Glasgow)

6. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what funding it provides to arts and culture facilities in Glasgow. (S5O-02564)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government continues to provide extensive support to the arts in Glasgow. Four of the five national performing companies are based in Glasgow and receive grants of more than £20 million a year. We have also invested extensively in Glasgow's cultural infrastructure, including £6.25 million towards the Kelvin hall refurbishment and enabling the National Library of Scotland to have a core presence in Glasgow for the first time in a joint project with Glasgow museums and the Hunterian museum. We are investing £5 million in the Burrell renaissance project and £6 million in the Citizens Theatre redevelopment.

All that investment is on top of the festival 2018 cultural programme in Glasgow as part of the highly successful European championships, which was supported with £63 million of Scottish Government funding.

Anas Sarwar: The cabinet secretary will be aware that there is no central funding for the day-to-day running of the national facilities in Glasgow, which compares with the tens of millions of pounds that go to facilities in Edinburgh. At the same time, there has been a 20 per cent cut in Glasgow's budget. Will she review the funding of arts and culture facilities in Glasgow to look at running costs?

Fiona Hyslop: Anas Sarwar is mistaken. If he had listened to my answer, he would know that the national facilities in Glasgow are four of the five national performing companies, which receive grant of more than £20 million a year. Glasgow is well funded. I did not mention the £27.5 million of funding from Creative Scotland for regularly funded organisations, the £8.5 million grant for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Glasgow royal concert hall or the £5.45 million of grants for Scottish Opera, as part of Glasgow's Theatre Royal. Glasgow is doing extremely well from support for the arts and funding from the Scottish Government.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware that the arts in North Ayrshire received only £192,000 in grants last year compared with the £20 million for Glasgow that she mentioned. Per capita, Glasgow receives almost 25 times as much as North Ayrshire. What steps will the Scottish Government, working in conjunction with Creative Scotland, take to build capacity in North Ayrshire and help to close that gap?

Fiona Hyslop: One of the things that we are supporting is Creative Scotland's place partnerships and North Ayrshire is part of that. In the past year, we have protected Creative Scotland's budget—indeed, we have increased it by £6.6 million to rectify the shortfall in funding from the United Kingdom national lottery. More can be done to ensure that the extent and range of cultural funding reaches communities across North Ayrshire and other areas, and I am happy to supply the member with more information about that.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

European Union (Brexit)

1. **Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** We have learned over the past two years that the First Minister has become a great fan of unions. Can she explain why it would be in Scotland's interests to fracture the one union that matters most to us—our own with the rest of the United Kingdom?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The European Union is a union of independent countries and look how it has stood by and stood up for Ireland over the past two years. By contrast, as I said to the Prime Minister on the telephone just last night, the United Kingdom Government—which has ignored Scotland, sidelined Scotland, cast aside Scotland's interests—now stands on the brink of not just taking us out of the European Union against our will and taking us out of the single market against our interest but placing Scotland at a competitive disadvantage to Northern Ireland.

That is not an academic or an abstract argument. That will have implications for jobs, living standards and investment in Scotland. I do not think that the Tories care a jot about that. It is not so long ago that the Secretary of State for Scotland and the leader of the Scottish Conservatives said that, if there were to be separate relationships for the UK and Northern Ireland, they would resign. Where is David Mundell today? [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Order, please.

Jackson Carlaw: Let me be crystal clear: others may be abandoning their posts, but none of us on the Scottish Conservative benches is going anywhere. We will be staying right here every day, every week, holding the First Minister and the Scottish Government to account. I will also be clear that Ruth Davidson and David Mundell have spent the past year fighting for the United Kingdom. They are not going to take any lessons from anyone else—not from any carpetbagger who has come late to the defence of the United Kingdom and certainly not from the First Minister.

The First Minister: I will try to strike one note of consensus. I agree with Jackson Carlaw when he says that the Tories are staying exactly where they are—it is called opposition, and they do not deserve to be anywhere else. I always thought that it was an odd position for Ruth Davidson and David Mundell to argue against Northern Ireland getting a deal that protects its vital interests, instead of arguing for Scotland to get a similar

deal. They were standing up for the Democratic Unionist Party rather than standing up for Scotland. Having chosen that red line, it is hard to see how they can stay in office after today with a shred of credibility.

Let me quote from the letter that David Mundell and Ruth Davidson sent just a few weeks ago. It states that any deal that undermines

“the integrity of our UK internal market”

or of the United Kingdom is a red line. They were briefing that that would be a resignation issue. Today, we have Dominic Raab, the Brexit secretary who has been involved in these negotiations, being very clear that this deal

“presents a very real threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom”,

and we have Esther McVey saying exactly the same. If I were as cynical and self-serving as the Tories, that might tempt me to vote for this deal, but I am not. However, it is absolutely unclear to me how David Mundell or Ruth Davidson can have any other option but to follow through on the principled commitment that they made. Let us see over the course of today whether they have any principles or whether they have a backbone between them. I suspect that the answer to that will be a resounding no.

Jackson Carlaw: The First Minister and I should be candid with the chamber. She and I have one particular thing in common: neither of us will be First Minister after the next Scottish election. I know a woman who will be, and I am just keeping her seat warm.

Fracturing the UK internal market is exactly what the First Minister proposes. If Scotland were to have a different trading arrangement from England, as night follows day we would create a problem where no problem currently exists: a border at Berwick, with Scotland facing restrictions in a trading market that is four times as important to us as the EU. How is that standing up for Scotland? How can it possibly help our country to prosper?

The First Minister: Jackson Carlaw used to have a reputation for making half-decent jokes, but that reputation has been shattered during this meeting. He has just stood there and uttered the phrase “no problem currently exists”. Is he watching what is happening in the House of Commons right now? The Tory Government is imploding as we speak. People the length and breadth of the UK are seriously worried about their jobs and living standards, all of which are on the line because of the ideology of this Tory Government and the complete shambles that it has made of the negotiations. How dare Jackson Carlaw stand in this chamber and say that there is no problem?

There is a big problem for Scotland. Let me spell it out. Scotland faces being taken out of the European Union against our democratic wishes and being taken out of the single market against our economic interests. We now face being put at a competitive disadvantage to Northern Ireland. That is what the Tories are presiding over, and Jackson Carlaw and every single member of the Tory party should be ashamed of themselves.

Jackson Carlaw: It is the same tired old lines from the same tired old First Minister. This First Minister made her priorities clear on the morning after the 2016 referendum. Before the votes had even been counted, her first action was to get on to her civil servants and demand that they start drafting a bill for an independence referendum. It has been that grudge and grievance agenda that has seen her act in a way that is nothing other than destructive to the negotiations that have been taking place during the past two years.

Everything that the First Minister has said and done since has been in relentless pursuance of the goal that she has in mind, even now using the history of Northern Ireland, with all the desperate turmoil that that has involved, for her singular political advantage. That is the disgrace today. To turn the First Minister’s cliché on its head, it is she who should be thoroughly ashamed of herself.

That the First Minister is exploiting the coming days to pursue her own goals, as she has done over and over again in recent months, is fundamentally against the country’s interests. We need a First Minister who acts for all of Scotland. Is it not time that she acted in the national interest and not the nationalist interest? With everything that is going on, will she acknowledge that and take her threat of a second independence referendum and all the additional disruption that that would cause off the table? Will she do that—yes or no?

The First Minister: Talk about tired old rhetoric. There is only one person in the chamber indulging in that today. What a nerve for Jackson Carlaw to come here and talk about the importance of finding solutions for Northern Ireland. It was David Mundell and Ruth Davidson who wrote to the Prime Minister to oppose a separate deal for Northern Ireland. All I am asking is that, if Northern Ireland is to get a separate deal for very good reasons—I would support that—Scotland should not be placed at a disadvantage as a result.

As for Jackson Carlaw’s statement that the Scottish Government has been “destructive to the negotiations”, Scotland has not been allowed into the negotiations. We have not had the opportunity to be destructive to the negotiations.

I support remaining in the European Union—I have been consistent about that—but from day 1

have put forward compromises. I have put forward the compromise of the UK staying in the single market and the customs union. I have lost count of the number of times I have asked the Prime Minister to consider that sensible option, but she has been too busy pandering to the likes of Jacob Rees-Mogg. Well, I think that the chickens are probably going to come home to roost on that today as Jacob Rees-Mogg and his colleagues bring her down.

I am pretty confident, because I will put my case to the Scottish people, that I will be First Minister after the next Scottish election. I am not confident that the Prime Minister will be in office by the end of today, such is the shambles that she has created in the negotiations. As I said earlier, she should be ashamed of that, Jackson Carlaw should be ashamed of that and every single Tory in the country should be ashamed of the mess that they are creating for people the length and breadth of the UK.

United Kingdom Government

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):

Theresa May's Government is falling apart before our very eyes. The Northern Ireland minister has gone, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has gone and even the secretary of state for Brexit has gone. Does the First Minister agree with me that it is time for the wretched Tory Government to go as well?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes.

Richard Leonard: Nothing is more emblematic of the Tory Government's bankruptcy than universal credit. The roll-out of the flawed universal credit is not only socially unjust; it is morally wrong. It is pushing people into poverty, homelessness and debt. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has just resigned. Why? Because of David Cameron's arrogance in calling a referendum and because of Theresa May's desperation in making promises that she knew she could never keep. Will the First Minister instruct her Government this afternoon to urgently contact the Department for Work and Pensions to press again for the roll-out of universal credit to be halted?

The First Minister: If Richard Leonard wants me to do that, I will do that, but I have lost count of the number of times that the Scottish Government has contacted the DWP, asking for universal credit to be scrapped—for the roll-out to be halted.

Can I make a better suggestion to Richard Leonard? I ask that he join me—we can do it this afternoon—in writing a joint letter to the Prime Minister, if she is still in office, to her successor or to the DWP, asking for power over universal credit to be taken out of the hands of the Tories and put

into the hands of this Parliament. That is a better suggestion.

I know that this is First Minister's question time, but I ask the Presiding Officer to indulge me and allow me to ask Richard Leonard a question. Will he join me in making that call this afternoon?

Richard Leonard: I say to the First Minister that I have a better idea: let us call for a general election. The First Minister and I do not agree on many things, but I think we agree that Theresa May's Brexit deal is a bad deal. That is why Labour members of Parliament will vote against the deal and why, as I understand it, SNP MPs will do the same. It is my firm belief that the deal will not be agreed to by the House of Commons, that the shambolic Tory Government needs to go and that the people need more than anything a general election as a matter of urgency. Will the First Minister join with Labour to defeat the deal, and will she back an early general election?

The First Minister: Let me unpack this step by sorry step. First, I think that we have just had confirmation—yet again—that Richard Leonard would rather leave powers over welfare in the hands of a Tory Government than bring them back to this Parliament. Shame on him for that. As people suffer under universal credit and all these welfare cuts, they will look at Labour and wonder why that is the case.

Let me turn to the Brexit deal. If memory serves me correctly, the SNP made it clear—I made it clear to Willie Rennie in the chamber this afternoon—that our MPs would vote against this deal. I think that we did that before Labour did, so it is perhaps a case of Labour joining with the SNP. I hope that no party in the House of Commons falls for the Prime Minister's spin—that it is a case of accepting a bad deal for fear of having no deal. It is not inevitable that we will have no deal if this bad deal is voted down.

One question remains to be answered: if that happens, what is Labour's position on Brexit? I do not know whether Richard Leonard has another question, but perhaps he can enlighten us: does Labour favour our membership of a single market and customs union? Does it favour another vote? What exactly would Labour do on Brexit that is different from what Theresa May is doing? I do not have a clue, so maybe Richard Leonard can tell us.

The Presiding Officer: We have a number of constituency supplementary questions.

Contaminated Blood

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): The First Minister is all too aware of the terrible impact of the contaminated blood scandal on many Scottish people and their families. Indeed, the First Minister

has played an important role in seeking to address the disgraceful injustice that many people have suffered and, critically, in confirming that she and her Government accepted the moral responsibility to provide support, including financial support, to all victims.

One of my constituents met me this week to highlight her concerns and those of the Scottish Infected Blood Forum and Haemophilia Scotland about imminent decisions by the Scottish Government on financial support, which are in danger of continuing the inconsistent approach to financial support for advanced sufferers as opposed to those who are chronically infected, which has created a gap that is unjustifiable.

I ask the First Minister to reflect on the distress that is being caused by reports that decisions on financial entitlement may be determined not by the clear evidence of need but by predetermined budget constraints. Given Scotland's important role in seeking justice for victims, will the First Minister agree to meet my constituent and me as well as those who have supported victims so that we, in Scotland, live up to our moral responsibility to all victims of contaminated blood?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Johann Lamont for raising an issue in which I have had a long-standing involvement. I campaigned on it when I was in opposition, and I have retained that interest as the health minister and, latterly, as the First Minister. I know many of the people who have been affected, and I understand the issues very clearly from the experience of one of my own constituents. I want to see justice delivered, and the Scottish Government is determined that that will happen. I will ask the health secretary to meet Johann Lamont to discuss our progress on amended payments, and we will listen to the representations that her constituent has made to her and that my constituents make to me. I will ensure that that meeting happens as quickly as possible.

Talgo Announcement

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Does the First Minister agree that the decision by Talgo to choose Longannet as a site for its train manufacturing base, creating 1,000 jobs, could be a wonderful legacy for the communities who served the power station? Does she believe that reopening the Alloa to Dunfermline rail route to passengers should also be part of that legacy for workers and their communities?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I warmly welcome Talgo's announcement this week. Michael Matheson was in London for the announcement, and I met senior executives of Talgo some time ago to make the case for

Scotland. I think that we are all delighted that the announcement has been made. It is good news for Longannet and the surrounding area.

Mark Ruskell is right to talk about the legacy benefits, of which transport links will be a key part. We will consider all of that as we work with Talgo to make the preparations. Of course, the decision is, to some extent, dependent on the company winning the contract for high speed 2, for which it is bidding. However, regardless of the outcome of that bid, we hope that we can persuade Talgo to go ahead with that manufacturing site for all the benefits that we know that it will bring, including those that Mark Ruskell has raised.

Galloway (National Park)

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Given the huge success of the Galloway National Park Association's conference and the overwhelming support from young and not-so-young constituents of Galloway and West Dumfries, will the First Minister recognise the association's work and commit to initiating preliminary investigations into the feasibility of a kingdom of Galloway national park, which clearly has community and local authority support?

The First Minister: I thank the member for raising an issue in which our late Presiding Officer took a close interest and that he worked hard to progress. I understand and appreciate the arguments for a Galloway national park. We want to give full consideration to the proposal, and I am happy to ask the relevant minister to engage with the member and others who have an interest on how we can take the matter forward properly.

National Health Service (Infant Food Intolerance)

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I want to raise the case of Sebastian Skelton, a 13-month-old infant whose mother, Siobhan, is struggling to get the treatment that he needs from our national health service. Days after he was born, Sebastian developed food intolerances; indeed, they have now developed considerably. However, more than a year later, he has still not been seen by the allergy specialist and is still going without an NHS prescription for the medication that he needs. His mother, Siobhan, has been forced to take matters into her own hands and has sought help from private specialist doctors in London and Glasgow. I wrote to the health secretary seven weeks ago, seeking urgent intervention and support, but I have yet to receive a response. Will the First Minister look into Sebastian's case and give him and his family the help that they urgently need?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I give that undertaking today. I do not know the full

details of Sebastian's case beyond what Mark Griffin has narrated just now, but we are clearly talking about a young baby, so I understand his parents' distress. We will all want the baby to get the treatment that he needs as quickly as possible. I will ask the health secretary to look into this as a matter of urgency and will come back to the member as soon as she has had the opportunity to do so. I also ask Mr Griffin to convey my very best wishes to Sebastian and his family.

Brexit (Scottish Independence)

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Another day, another dose of Brexit chaos. The Prime Minister's so-called deal satisfies almost nobody, from Brexiteers to remainers; it is unlikely to pass at Westminster, and the public must ultimately be given the chance to kill off Brexit in a people's vote.

However, if the last two years have made anything clear, it is that Scotland's future is best secured as a full, independent, European Union member state. In summer last year, the First Minister stated in the chamber:

"At the end of the period of negotiation with the EU ... when the terms of Brexit will be clearer, we will come back to Parliament to set out our judgment on the best way forward at that time, including our view on the precise timescale for offering people a choice over the country's future."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 2017; c 14.]

Jackson Carlaw might not want to know the answer in that respect, but I do and I do not think that I am alone in that. Will the First Minister now confirm to us that Scotland will be given that choice and tell us when?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I said at the time that Patrick Harvie has alluded to, I will come back to the chamber and set out my views on the precise detail when we have clarity. We have now seen the terms of the deal, but it remains to be seen whether it will make it to a vote in the House of Commons over the next couple of weeks. When we see how the whole sorry saga plays out, I will undertake my commitment as I said I would.

However, I want to say a couple of things in addition. I have no doubt that Scotland will get an opportunity to choose again on the question of independence, and when it does, I am confident that it will choose to be an independent country. With what has happened over the past two years—from the decision that risked taking us out of the EU against our will, to the way in which the Scottish Government, in trying to represent Scotland's interests, has been sidelined, to the way in which the powers of this Parliament have been undermined—the case for independence has grown stronger each and every day. The sooner this Parliament and this country are independent

and are no longer at the mercy of Tory Governments that do not have our interests at heart, the better. That time will come and when it does, I have no doubt that the people of Scotland will choose to be independent.

Patrick Harvie: The First Minister is right to say that we have only just seen the deal, and it is conceivable—though, I think, highly unlikely—that MPs will vote for it. However, surely there is already enough clarity to make a judgment, given that there is nothing in Theresa May's plan that protects our social, economic and workplace rights and our environmental rights and protections, or that guarantees the future rights of EU citizens living here or our ability to attract more of the people whom we need for the strength of the economy, the delivery of our public services and the diversity of our society.

There is no reference to Scotland in either the withdrawal agreement or the absurdly simplistic paper on the future relationship. The chaos of Brexit was inevitable, but we need to face up to the equally inevitable fact that Scotland will only get the strong future relationship that we want with Europe—which the overwhelming majority of people in Scotland voted for—if we get out there, campaign for it and persuade people to vote for Scotland to become a full, independent EU member country. The Greens are ready to start that campaign; is the First Minister?

The First Minister: The Scottish National Party started that a long time ago and has never stopped campaigning for independence, so my message to Patrick Harvie is, "What's holding you back? Get out there and make the case for Scotland to be an independent country."

I agree with everything that Patrick Harvie said. The case for independence, which I have long thought has been made, has got stronger every day over the past two years. In terms of the precise timing of Scotland having that opportunity to choose, people deserve clarity about what else might unfold over the next period. Are we going to have another general election? Is there going to be a second EU referendum? It is reasonable to wait and allow that to play out over the next few weeks.

However, there is no doubt in my mind that this country will become an independent country, and when it does, it will be a far more prosperous, fairer and better country. It will be able to choose its own place in the world. It will be able to make its own decisions. Undoubtedly, it will make its own mistakes, but it will not be at the mercy of a Tory Government imposing policies on us that we did not vote for. That will be a far stronger position for this generation and for future generations.

Brexit (People's Vote)

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): We were promised that Northern Ireland would not be affected, but it is; that there would be a free-trade deal, but there is not; that the United Kingdom would not be subject to European Union laws, but it will be; that our fishing grounds would be protected, but they will not be. The biggest lie of all is that there is not an extra £350 million a week for the national health service. The people have been cheated. Can the First Minister think of a single reason why there should not be a people's vote so that we can stop Brexit now?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I have made my views on that matter clear. Willie Rennie and I have had that exchange many times. If there is a proposal for a people's vote, we should support that. People across the UK should have that opportunity.

However, the question that I posed to Willie Rennie remains: what if the result of a second referendum is the same as it was in 2016, with Scotland voting overwhelmingly—probably even more overwhelmingly—to remain in the EU, but the UK as a whole voting to leave? I will posit that again to Willie Rennie: what would he suggest Scotland does in those circumstances?

Willie Rennie: The First Minister knows that I think that we can win this people's vote. I want to keep the United Kingdom together and I want to keep us in the European Union as well.

The future of the deal could lie in the hands of Scottish Conservative MPs. They have been ignored on fishing and on Northern Ireland, but still they do nothing. They are as useless as a piano in a pigsty. As ministers resign on principle, where are the principles of the Scottish Conservatives?

The Prime Minister said that stopping Brexit is now an option. With the cabinet divided and the Parliament split, the case for a people's vote grows stronger every day. Now is the best chance. Does the First Minister agree that this Parliament and her Government's first priority should be to secure that people's vote?

The First Minister: I have a feeling that there was an insult to pigs somewhere in Willie Rennie's question, but I cannot quite work out what it was, so I probably should not go any further down that road.

If Willie Rennie is right, and the future of the deal and the country depends on the 13 Conservative MPs, we are all doomed, because they have demonstrated that they do not have a backbone between them and that they will sell Scotland out as quickly as anything.

On the issue in his question, yes, I think that if there is an opportunity to stop Brexit in its tracks

across the whole of the United Kingdom, we should take that. I have no doubt in my mind about that, because, in most cases, the promises that were made in 2016 have been proven to be lies, the negotiation has been shambolic and we are left in the position that we are in today, where there is a bad deal, and the Prime Minister, having spent the past two years saying that no deal is better than a bad deal, is now in the ridiculous and pathetic position of saying that a bad deal is better than no deal. So, if that opportunity to stop it in its tracks is there, I think that people across the UK should take it.

However, I want to do more. I want to ensure that, as well as hopefully stopping Brexit in its tracks, we can ensure that never, ever again will Scotland be put in the position of facing something like Brexit against our democratic wishes, and although a second EU referendum might stop Brexit, it would not guarantee that that would be the case.

Willie Rennie dodged the question the first time but he cannot continue to dodge it. I will support a people's vote to stop Brexit, but if Scotland finds itself facing Brexit against its will yet again, will Willie Rennie support independence so that we can take control of our own future?

The Presiding Officer: There is a lot of interest in asking supplementary questions.

Fixed-odds Betting Terminals (Problem Gambling)

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Does the First Minister welcome the U-turn by the British Government and the reduction to £2—at long last—of the stakes at fixed-odds betting terminals, which will finally be introduced by April 2019? What steps will the Scottish Government take to tackle the issue of problem gambling, particularly in respect of young people?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I welcome the U-turn—although it is long overdue. I congratulate Stuart McMillan on all the good hard work that he has done on the issue. We have been clear for a long time that such action is needed. Earlier this month, the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs wrote to the United Kingdom Government expressing concern about the delay in implementation of the policy. I commend Stuart McMillan and all who have campaigned on the issue for their sustained and effective campaign for the change.

The Scottish Government encourages any action that can help to reduce the harmful impact of problem gambling, which is why we are seeking to deliver faster access to psychological therapies for people with mental illnesses, including people who have problems with gambling. People who

seek clinical support will also benefit from the work that is being done in the mental health strategy.

The Scottish Government will continue to take action where it can, but we look to the UK Government to take action on FOBTs. That action is long overdue, and I am glad that it is now happening.

British Indian Army (Memorial)

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Today, the first multifaith remembrance service will be held in Kingussie for the soldiers of the British Indian Army whose graves have been discovered there and elsewhere in Scotland. These 13 young men came to Scotland having been evacuated from Dunkirk during the second world war and they are our forgotten heroes: Ali Bahadur, Bari Sher, Dadan Khan, Fazl Ali, Khan Muhammad, Khushi Muhammad, Muhammad, Muhammad Sadiq, Mushtaq Ahmad, Mir Zaman, Abdul Rakhman, Ghulam Nabi and Karam Dad.

Does the First Minister agree that their names should be forgotten no more and that there should be a permanent memorial in Scotland to commemorate their lives and the 161,000 soldiers of the British Indian Army who lost their lives in defence of our country, so that their contribution is remembered for generations to come? [*Applause.*]

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I agree with Anas Sarwar. I thank him for raising the issue and for how he has done so. He is right to say that those men were forgotten heroes. Today, as a result of Anas Sarwar's question, their names are in the *Official Report* of the Scottish Parliament, so they will be forgotten no longer. I thank him for that.

I welcome the multifaith remembrance service that is taking place today. It is very fitting. It is an opportunity to remember with gratitude the contribution of the British Indian Army to the war effort. We have just passed armistice day, on which we commemorated the centenary of the end of the first world war and remembered all those who lost their lives in conflicts throughout the past century. When we do such things, we should ensure that we remember everyone.

I would be happy to take forward discussions about the possibility of a permanent memorial. I will ask the relevant minister to contact Anas Sarwar to kick-off those discussions as soon as possible.

Brexit (Single Market and Customs Union)

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Given that it is now clear that the Prime Minister's Brexit deal is dead in the water and cannot command a majority in the House of Commons, will the First Minister commit to working with others to replace the

current Westminster chaos with a commonsense plan to keep Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in the single market and the customs union? The people of our country, who are very worried about what is going on at the moment, deserve a pragmatic and sensible solution. How can the First Minister help?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Bruce Crawford is right to say that the deal that the Prime Minister has brought forward is "dead in the water". She does not need me to tell her that—her own back benchers have been lining up in the House of Commons this morning to do so.

Let me say a word about the Prime Minister. She deserves a degree of respect for the resilience that she has shown in trying to bring forward a deal that she thought was right. I gladly say that about her, but she must recognise the reality of the position that she faces: the deal will not get through the House of Commons.

It is, however, wrong for anybody to suggest that that means that crashing out with no deal on 29 March next year is inevitable. There is now a duty on everyone—principally members in the House of Commons, because that is where the decisions on the matter are taken—to come together to look at sensible alternatives.

I have consistently said that membership of the single market and the customs union for the whole UK would be the best possible compromise position. It is not my top preference—I would prefer that we stayed in the European Union—but if we are looking at compromises, that is the best one. It is also the only compromise in respect of which I can see a path to a majority at the House of Commons—although I say readily that there is no guarantee of that.

This is the moment for people to put party interests aside and to come together to find a way through. Simply blundering on with a deal that is destined to fail is not putting the interests of the country first, so I appeal to the Prime Minister not to do that.

Secure Accommodation (Request for Urgent Review)

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): The tragic death of 16-year-old William Lindsay in Polmont prison while on remand raises many sharp questions about our criminal justice system—in particular, on availability of secure accommodation. I am sure that the First Minister will join me in offering condolences to William's family.

Is the First Minister aware that, by all accounts, the people who worked with William said that he was crying out for help and that prison was not the right place for a young man who had spent his life

in care? Will she explain why the 2016-17 figures show a reduction of 11 per cent in the number of secure places, the complete closure of one unit and a 29 per cent decline in the use of residence in Scotland? Does she agree that, for those and many more reasons, there is an urgent need to review the availability of secure accommodation?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): This is a serious issue that has to be looked at seriously. The Cabinet discussed the issue on Tuesday in the context of the tragic case that Pauline McNeill has raised.

I record my sincere condolences to the family of William Lindsay, who was also known as William Brown. I also take the opportunity to offer my condolences to the family of Katie Allan, who also died in Polmont recently. Earlier this week, Humza Yousaf met her family; I am grateful to them for taking the time to attend the meeting and for allowing us to hear their views about their dreadful experience. None of us can imagine the distress that both those families are going through.

We are determined that any lessons that need to be learned will be learned. All appropriate agencies must look closely at what happened.

There will be mandatory fatal accident inquiries in both cases. While processes are on-going, it is not appropriate for me to get into the details of the individual cases, but in William Lindsay's case in particular, there are a number of things that I, as First Minister, want to address and ensure that we look at properly. Those matters include experiences of the care system; we have the independent review of the care system under way. Secure care provision is certainly among the issues, as are consideration of how we can do even more to keep young people out of the criminal justice system altogether, and mental health support in Polmont. Those are all issues that the Scottish Government is considering.

As I have said, there will be mandatory FAIs in both cases—rightly so—but we will not wait for those before we take action that we consider to be necessary in order to ensure that issues are properly addressed.

Illegal Scallop Dredging

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The First Minister may be aware of two instances of illegal scallop dredging in the Wester Ross marine protected area. I have consistently raised the issue of marine protection and enforcement, particularly in the context of expansion of MPAs and Brexit. I have been assured that the matter is under review. Does the First Minister agree with Open Seas that there is a clear case for robust tamper-proof vessel tracking?

The First Minister: I have seen this morning reports of the instances that John Finnie has raised. I have not yet had the opportunity to look into the detail. The suggestion that John Finnie has made is worthy of our consideration. I will ask the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform to look into the issue in more depth and to contact him to discuss the matter further.

Anti-bullying Week

5. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government is marking anti-bullying week. (S5F-02792)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Anti-bullying week 2018 provides us with the opportunity to send a clear and positive message that bullying of any kind is totally unacceptable and that when it happens we all have a responsibility to address it. The theme is “choose respect”, which reinforces the messages of respect, positive relationships and empathy, and I encourage everyone to spread those messages.

I was particularly pleased that, in time for the start of anti-bullying week last Thursday, the Deputy First Minister was able to announce that we have accepted in full the recommendations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex inclusive education working group report, including its recommendations on tackling bullying. That is just the latest substantial step forward that we are taking. I am sure that the whole chamber will agree that we must always look to instil the values of tolerance and respect in our children and young people, to help them develop positive relationships.

Fulton MacGregor: We know that bullying can have an extremely damaging effect on a young person's mental health, and that in some tragic cases it can result in suicide or attempted suicide. What can be done to assist schools to better support those who are bullied at school, as well as those who perpetrate bullying, who may be experiencing difficulties elsewhere?

The First Minister: Fulton MacGregor is right to raise the issue. We take child and adolescent mental health very seriously. We have discussed in this chamber many times the challenges of making sure that services are there, in the right places for young people. Our commitment to invest more than £60 million in additional school counselling services, supporting 350 counsellors, will, however, help to ensure that that support is in place.

“Respect for All”, our national approach to preventing and responding to bullying incidents, makes it clear that bullying is the responsibility not

just of schools but of all adults involved in the lives of young people. That includes supporting the child who is experiencing bullying and the child who is displaying bullying behaviour. "Respect for All" includes an expectation that all schools will develop and implement an anti-bullying policy, which should be reviewed and updated regularly.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): Seven weeks ago, the First Minister would not agree to a full independent inquiry into allegations of bullying at NHS Highland. Given that we are now going to have an independent inquiry, can she confirm that the Scottish Government will encourage all those people whom it believes were bullied, including any who have signed non-disclosure agreements, to give evidence?

The First Minister: I encourage—not just encourage, but support—anybody who has experience of bullying at NHS Highland or anywhere else to come forward and discuss their experience. I absolutely agree with that and hope that all in the chamber will welcome the action that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport is taking, which sends a very clear message that we will not tolerate bullying in any organisation.

Alcohol Minimum Unit Pricing (Impact on Sales)

6. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what plans the Scottish Government has to evaluate the impact on sales of minimum unit pricing of alcohol. (S5F-02779)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Scotland's world-leading minimum pricing measure targets the low-cost, high-strength alcohol that causes so much damage to our communities. It has been in place for just six months. Our reason for introducing minimum unit pricing is specifically to reduce alcohol-related harm. Of course, it will be at least a couple of years before the necessary data is available to analyse the impacts robustly. Our extensive monitoring and evaluation programme, which is being led by NHS Health Scotland, includes examining implementation and compliance, price and product range, alcohol sales and consumption, alcohol-related harm and the economic impact on industry. I look forward to seeing full and robust data when considering the range of impacts that the policy is having.

Jamie Greene: I thank the First Minister for the confirmation of that on-going monitoring. She may be aware that, since the legislation came into effect six months ago, sales of one well-known and potent drink have increased by 11 per cent, in what some people regard as a trade-off as drinkers move from one high-strength product to another. We all hope that that is not an unintended consequence of the policy.

Although the policy benefited from cross-party support at the time, that was conditional on a sensible sunset clause to ensure that a facts-based approach forms the basis of the success or otherwise of the legislation. What public health targets were set in relation to the introduction of minimum unit pricing, and are those targets being met?

The First Minister: It was to the credit of the Tories, and Jackson Carlaw in particular, that they supported minimum unit pricing. They did so before Labour did—I do not know whether Labour supports it yet. Minimum unit pricing has been in place for less than six months and already Jamie Greene appears to be shaping up to criticise it. For goodness' sake, let us give it a chance. The sunset clause was put in place—I think that it was Jackson Carlaw who lodged the amendment for that, which the Government accepted. We put in place robust monitoring and review procedures, and all the indicators around the policy will be properly monitored. The experts themselves point out that it is far too early to start to judge the success of the policy.

We have seen some indication of a substantial rise in alcohol sales in England—more than in Scotland. If there are any early indications, they might be that minimum unit pricing has helped to peg back alcohol sales in Scotland.

I hope that we continue to have the support of the Scottish Conservatives. This is an important policy, and it was a brave move by this Parliament to put it in place. I believe that it will work, but let us give it a chance and do the monitoring in the proper and full way.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's questions. Before we move to members' business, we will have a short suspension to allow the gallery to clear and members and ministers to change seats.

12:46

Meeting suspended.

12:50

On resuming—

Day of the Imprisoned Writer

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-14312, in the name of Ruth Maguire, on the day of the imprisoned writer. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises 15 November as the Day of the Imprisoned Writer, which is a day when people are invited to stand in solidarity with persecuted, exiled and imprisoned writers across the globe; notes with grave concern what it sees as the international decline in free expression, as documented by organisations such as PEN International, Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders; understands that there are global efforts by state and non-state actors to attack and silence journalists; notes the view that governments around the world have a requirement to combat impunity and seek justice for murdered, persecuted, and imprisoned writers; acknowledges initiatives by national and international governmental, intergovernmental and civil society partners to work together to secure protections for persecuted and imprisoned writers; commemorates writers who have been killed for exercising their right to freedom of expression, and acknowledges the call for the Day of the Imprisoned Writer to be officially recognised by the Parliament.

12:50

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Freedom of expression is a fundamental right. Of course, the need to fight for fundamental rights is not new, as it has always been important to protect people around the world from the threat of violence or state suppression, but, as with so many things this year, that need feels even sharper.

According to Reporters Without Borders, more professional journalists were killed worldwide in connection with their work in the first nine months of 2018 than in all of 2017. The Committee to Protect Journalists reports that, since 1992, nearly 2,000 journalists and media workers have been killed. Moving beyond journalists, according to Deutsche Welle, in 2015, 1,054 authors were attacked, imprisoned, tortured or killed. Protection is vital to ensure that people around the world can express themselves free from the threat of violence.

The day of the imprisoned writer is organised by PEN International as a day of solidarity and action for writers who are denied the right to freedom of expression and who are struggling and fighting for it. I am grateful to colleagues from across the chamber for standing in solidarity with persecuted, exiled and imprisoned writers around the globe. I

thank all members who signed my motion, which secured the debate, and everyone who is contributing today.

Each year, PEN highlights cases of persecuted writers that are emblematic of the persecution and threats that writers and journalists across the world face. In the debate on the same issue last year, I spoke about Zehra Doğan, and I take no pleasure in seeing that she is one of the highlighted cases again this year, as she is still imprisoned by Turkey, a state that is infamous for its violation of the rights of authors, publishers and academics.

Zehra Doğan, who was born in 1989, is a painter and the founding editor of the all-female Jin news agency, which was closed on 29 October 2016 by statutory decree 675. Jin is one of over 180 media outlets that have been closed in Turkey since the beginning of the state of emergency. Zehra received numerous awards for her work for the agency between 2010 and 2016, including the prestigious Metin Göktepe award for her reporting of Yazidi women escaping from Isis captivity.

On 12 June 2017, Zehra was taken into custody while she was en route to visit her family. She is in prison because the Turkish state deemed her reporting and painting to be terrorist propaganda. The painting at issue is her recreation of a photograph that was taken and distributed by the Turkish military of the Kurdish town of Nusaybin following its destruction by Turkish forces. The picture shows destroyed buildings draped with Turkish flags and surrounded by tanks. In her painting, Zehra turned the army tanks into huge, grotesque creatures consuming innocent civilians. Although the Turkish flags were present in the original photograph, Zehra was found guilty of painting them on the destroyed buildings, and the painting was condemned as anti-Turkish terrorist propaganda. After the ruling, Zehra stated:

“they gave me a prison penalty for taking the photo of destroyed houses and putting Turkish flags on them. But it wasn't me who did it, it was them. I just painted it.”

The offending news report featured the following quote from a child who was affected by the clashes in the town:

“We are hearing gunfire right now. When the shots intensify we run to our homes. When the tanks go away we take to the street to protest. I think we are right. I know our voices will be heard one day.”

Zehra's reporting of these five sentences, which were spoken by a child, was also deemed terrorist propaganda.

I wrote to the Turkish Prime Minister last year, expressing my deep concern at the arrest and imprisonment of Zehra Doğan. I never received a response.

Zehra is an inspirational and skilled painter and journalist, not a criminal, and I add my voice to the global calls for her immediate and unconditional release. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and people should not be persecuted for exercising it. It is particularly alarming that this action is being taken against an award-winning journalist and painter whose voice has proven crucial in sharing the stories of underrepresented communities.

I also understand that the imprisonment of Zehra Doğan is unconstitutional, violating articles 26 and 28 of the constitution of the Republic of Turkey, which guarantee freedom of expression and a free press, respectively. Turkey has always been one of the most restrictive countries among the Council of Europe member states in terms of media freedom and freedom of expression, and it is now becoming infamous. It violates globally recognised norms protecting the right to freedom of expression in agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, to which it is a party. According to article 90 of the constitution, international agreements duly put into effect have the force of law.

I again strongly urge Turkey to immediately and unconditionally release the artist and journalist Zehra Doğan. She is guilty of no crime. I say to Zehra and to all those who have been wrongfully imprisoned for simply exercising their fundamental rights that you are not alone. We stand with you, we are proud of your work and your courage and we will continue to advocate for your freedom. [Applause.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I say gently to those in the public gallery that we do not permit applause in the gallery. I know that those in the gallery feel it in their hearts; they should please let it stay there and not applaud.

Ruth Maguire may wish to take the opportunity to welcome folk to the public gallery.

Ruth Maguire: I welcome representatives from PEN International and Amnesty International to the public gallery.

12:57

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I congratulate Ruth Maguire on securing this important debate. It is entirely fitting that the Parliament is marking the occasion of the day of the imprisoned writer. I fully support the calls in Ruth Maguire's motion for the Parliament to recognise the day of the imprisoned writer officially.

In preparing for today's debate, I was struck by the information that Ruth Maguire has quoted and the statistics involved. It is worth stressing the shocking information that Reporters Without Borders has reported—that more professional journalists were killed worldwide in connection with their work in the first nine months of 2018 than in all of 2017. That information is worth reiterating, because it puts in stark focus the terrible prevalence of the problem right across the world. That shocking statistic demonstrates the continuing and pressing need for each of us to be vigilant in defending freedom of expression in Scotland and right across the world.

We all have a duty to stand shoulder to shoulder with those writers who are being persecuted simply for speaking out. We must do all that we can to ensure that their voices are heard and not silenced. Marking the day of the imprisoned writer affords us the opportunity to do that by highlighting individual cases around the world. Ruth Maguire has highlighted one particular case. I will raise the case of Behrouz Boochani, which has been flagged up by PEN. I apologise to all concerned if I do not get the pronunciations correct. I will do my best.

Boochani's country of origin is Iran. He holds a master's degree in political science, political geography and geopolitics. He is a Kurdish-Iranian writer, journalist, scholar, cultural advocate and film maker. In Iran, he worked as a journalist for several newspapers including national dailies and the monthly Kurdish-language magazine *Varia*.

Boochani claims that he was subject to constant surveillance by the Iranian authorities because of his focus on business and politics. In 2013, he was reportedly arrested, interrogated and threatened by the Iranian intelligence services. Fearing that he would be imprisoned, he fled Iran on 13 May 2013. After he left Iran, he was rescued at sea by the Australian navy and asked Australia for asylum. Due to Australia's offshore processing policies, Boochani was taken to the regional processing centre at Lobrum on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, and in April 2016 he was accorded refugee status in Papua New Guinea.

During his detention, he faced harassment because of his reporting to the Australian media and other organisations about the conditions inside the detention centre and the alleged human rights abuses that were taking place in it. He reports having been the target of beatings as a direct result of his reporting. Following the closure of the Manus Island processing centre, Boochani was relocated to a refugee transit centre where he remains to this day, in a no-man's-land limbo.

Boochani's case is just one of those that has been highlighted by PEN. There are obviously many other individuals whom we could talk about,

and I am sure that other members will raise specific cases. Although we do not have time to mention all the cases that have been flagged by PEN, it is important to bear witness to such individual cases.

I conclude by stressing that we include in our thoughts and deliberations all writers across the world who have been imprisoned for simply speaking out. I am sure that we all commend the bravery and determination of those writers. It is important that, through today's debate, our Scottish Parliament is playing its part in ensuring that the voices of those writers are not silenced.

13:02

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am pleased to take part in today's debate and congratulate Ruth Maguire on bringing the debate before Parliament.

As the motion acknowledges, today is known in literary circles as the day of the imprisoned writer. It is a day when people are invited to stand up and support persecuted, imprisoned and exiled writers across the globe and to acknowledge what they see as an international decline in freedom of expression. Many examples of that have been documented recently by the organisation PEN International, and I am delighted that representatives of that organisation are in the gallery this afternoon.

The many examples of Government or religiously motivated acts against writers and journalists—however harrowing and cruel they are—must be remembered, condemned and acted on.

I remember, as a youngster, hearing about the writings of Salman Rushdie and taking on board the difficulties that he was experiencing as a result of having expressed his views and opinions. He is a British-Indian novelist and essay writer and a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. His second novel, "Midnight's Children", won the Booker prize back in 1981 and it was deemed to be the best novel of all the prize winners on two separate occasions—the 25th and the 40th anniversaries of that prize. His fourth novel, "The Satanic Verses", which was published in 1988, generated a particular reaction from some individuals. That was the first time that I started to think about how writers express themselves and the individual circumstances in which they find themselves.

PEN International has been campaigning for writers' freedom since 1921 and has campaigned prominently on behalf of many individuals, because it knew that what was occurring in certain parts of the world should be recognised and condemned.

Today also serves as a commemoration of those who have been killed since the previous year's day of imprisoned writers. Over the years, dozens of writers and journalists around the world have been killed in circumstances that appear to be related only to their profession. That is totally and utterly unacceptable. Individuals should have the right to express their views and opinions without facing persecution, imprisonment or even death. Amnesty International has played a major role in the work to help imprisoned writers, and it should be commended for the work that it has done to ensure that imprisoned writers receive acknowledgement.

All over the world, people are persecuted, tortured or imprisoned in their own country for writing about individuals or the Government. That is a freedom that we would expect to have, but many people round the world do not have the right to exercise that freedom. Many well-known writers and journalists have stood up for and backed writers who have found themselves in that position, and, in doing so, have put themselves in the line of danger. Topics such as children's rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex equality, Syria, Russia, the United States and the global refugee crisis have all been highlighted. People have put themselves in harm's way just by contemplating, discussing and writing about those issues.

I commend Ruth Maguire and congratulate her on bringing this emotive subject to the chamber for debate. It is vital that, as politicians, we make our voices heard and that we stand up and be counted in ensuring that individuals have the right to express their views and opinions in verbal or written form. Democracy is the cornerstone of our nation. We have the privilege to serve, but we also have the responsibility to ensure that other nations that do not have the same beliefs, standards and liberties as we have are challenged on their lack of understanding and held to account for their actions. It is vital that we do that. Writers have a right to be heard, and it is right that we support them.

13:06

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I, too, thank Ruth Maguire for securing the debate, and I am grateful to Scottish PEN and Amnesty International for providing material to support it. It is right that we are having such a debate, and it is right that, as parliamentarians in Scotland, we think about how we can work with those organisations to continue to put pressure on Governments and to highlight the issues that are being raised.

In 1948, the United Nations said in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that

freedom of opinion and expression implies the right to

“seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

At the turn of the 21st century, nearly half the world’s population still lack access to free information, so it is very fitting that today—15 November—alongside PEN International and other PEN centres, Scottish PEN is marking the day of the imprisoned writer by promoting and celebrating the freedom to write, and calling for justice and freedom for persecuted, imprisoned and murdered writers across the world.

Today, it is more important than ever that we raise awareness of the issue because, as Ruth Maguire and others have said, according to Reporters Without Borders,

“more professional journalists were killed worldwide in connection with their work in the first nine months of 2018 than in all of 2017”.

That is scandalous. It is important to make the point that the United Kingdom continues to work and trade with and be a partner of many countries where such persecution takes place. That persecution and murder goes beyond journalists and affects authors and media workers.

The motion and the information that it provides make for chilling reading. It is clear that the attempts to silence journalists are being made by states and powerful bodies within states. Power is being abused through imprisonment, physical attacks, torture and death to protect vested interests and to sustain a state apparatus that dominates society and monopolises most of its wealth. On the face of it, the events that are set out in the motion and the briefing appear to be far removed from our relatively safe and secure democratic society in Scotland, but to ignore the threat to free speech and to continue as if it was only happening in another place is to disrespect the memory of those who have lost their lives in defence of free speech and to ignore the courage that is being shown and the sacrifices that are being made every day around the world to fight for free speech.

Therefore, it is very important that we stand here in Scotland in solidarity with oppressed and imprisoned writers to ensure that their voices cannot be silenced. There are PEN centres in more than 100 countries; their aims include defending freedom of speech and writing against the many threats to its survival that the modern world poses. I am pleased to stand with them today with members of all parties here in the Scottish Parliament on the day of the imprisoned writer.

13:10

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank Ruth Maguire for bringing this important debate to Parliament. I declare an interest as a member of Scottish PEN.

This summer, I was pleased to attend a performance in Edinburgh by Pussy Riot and afterwards to get the chance to speak to a band member, Maria Alyokhina. I discussed with her the state of Russian democracy, in particular the plight of the imprisoned Ukrainian film maker and writer Oleg Sentsov. Maria has campaigned loudly and clearly for his release, and she knows a thing or two about Russian persecution of artists, having been imprisoned for two years for singing a song that was critical of Vladimir Putin. She asked me to raise his case in the Parliament and I am pleased to do so today.

Oleg was born in 1976 in Simferopol, a city on the Crimean peninsula of Ukraine, which is now the capital of Russian-occupied Crimea. He has two children, Alina, aged 15, and Vladislav, who is 14. He is a film maker and writer, and after participating in the Euromaidan protest in Ukraine in late 2013, he was arrested on 10 May 2014 at his home by members of the Russian federal security service, the FSB. According to Amnesty International, his arrest was a barbaric affair. The officers placed a plastic bag over his head and suffocated him until he passed out. They then threatened him with rape and murder to force him to confess to organised bombing, possessing illegal firearms and other terrorist acts including membership of the Ukrainian right-wing group Pravyi Sektor.

A fortnight later, he was transferred to Moscow, more than 1,400km away, where he was placed in pre-trial detention for one year. Oleg denies all his charges but, after a show trial before a military court, at which not one piece of evidence was presented, he was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in prison. The verdict has been condemned by political figures and civil society in the European Union and the US, including his network of peers at the European Film Academy, from which famous film makers including Pedro Almodóvar, Ken Loach and Wim Wenders have vociferously objected to his detention.

After a succession of prison transfers, Oleg is now held in what international observers report as “inhumane conditions” at a penal colony in Labytnangi, a small Siberian town above the Arctic circle, 5,000km from his home. In May this year, four years after his arrest, Oleg began a hunger strike to seek the release of all Ukrainian nationals who are currently imprisoned in Russia on politically motivated grounds. After suffering from excruciating heart and kidney problems, he ended his hunger strike after 145 days in which he lost

30kg in weight and now has irreparable damage to his health.

Despite the authorities' routine denial of access to appropriate medical care and contact with the outside world, Oleg has been a critical and persuasive force. The European Union, for example, commended him for actions that have

“shown incredible courage, determination and selflessness”

in his fight for freedom for all those who have been unfairly convicted on politically motivated grounds.

Oleg Sentsov is an innocent man. Just a few weeks ago, he was awarded the prestigious European Parliament Sakharov prize for freedom of thought, and it is fitting that he is being honoured that way in 2018, which is the 30th anniversary of the Sakharov prize and the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Russian Federation ranks 148th in the latest world press freedom index and more bloggers and journalists are detained now than at any time since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

We must keep Oleg Sentsov and all those who are suffering unjust imprisonment and detention in the public eye. As public figures, we have special responsibilities in not giving succour to repressive regimes such as the Russian Federation.

13:14

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I want to thank my friend and colleague, Ruth Maguire, for once again bringing our attention to the important work of Scottish PEN and Amnesty International and for giving us all a chance to air the stories of those whose voices are silenced.

As we have today's debate in the Scottish Parliament, 29-year-old Abbad Yahya is stranded in Doha in Qatar and is unable to return home to Palestine. Abbad is a fiction writer and it was ordered that all copies of his novel, “Crime in Ramallah”, be confiscated, because of what was deemed to be offensive language. He has been the victim of a hate campaign on social media, he has suffered death threats and copies of his novel were reportedly burned on the Gaza strip.

“Crime in Ramallah” tells the story of three Palestinian men who work in a bar where the murder of a young woman takes place. It charts how the murder affects each man's life and explores the themes of politics, religion and homosexuality through its protagonists. The language that is used to explore those important themes has been used against him in order to silence him and remove his rights.

Abbad Yahya received a summons from the Attorney General, as did the book's publisher and distributor, Fuad al-Akleek, who was reportedly

arrested and held for six hours. Abbad's right to freedom of speech has been taken and he is left fearing for his life.

The chair of PEN International's writers in prison committee, Salil Tripathi, said:

“It is appalling that Abbad Yahya cannot return home because he fears he may be arrested over a novel he has written. The response to his novel is not only disproportionate; it is entirely out of place. Abbad Yahya's novel may have challenged political and religious orthodoxy, but he has the right to express his thoughts. The Palestinian Authority should take immediate steps to overturn the ban and ensure that he will be able to return home safely and protected from any threats.”

Abbad Yahya should be able to return home without fear of prosecution and danger. His book should be allowed to be read once more and the charges against him should be dropped.

As we know from history, banning books and novels and imprisoning their writers is a sure sign that a society has gone very wrong. All of us sitting in the chamber reserve the right to question and criticise our political system—it is our job and it is our right, and I would always argue vociferously that it is also the job and the right of every Scottish citizen. As many people have said, when we see those rights being taken away from other people across the world, we must use our voices to defend them and argue for their rights.

We are fortunate to be able to express our views in writing without any fear of arrest, because we live in a democracy. Ruth Maguire talked about Zehra Doğan in her excellent speech, and she has mentioned her before. The first time that I heard of Zerah Doğan was when Banksy created a mural in her defence and asked for her conviction to be overturned. He produced a piece of street art showing her behind bars. Acts such as that and today's debate are important, as they draw attention to the injustice of silencing artistic expression and freedom of speech.

I am not a great artist by any means but, as some members will know, I have in the past created political art. In 2014 and 2015, the art that I created around the Scottish independence question was highly critical of the UK Tory-led Government and the Labour Party's campaign to deny Scotland its independence. My sister and I established a touring art show in 2014, with art that represented the call for independence from more than 50 artists. If we had been in Turkey, we would all have faced conviction. It is important that we recognise that we have freedoms that others do not.

I commend the work of PEN in giving us a chance to hear the stories of the injustices perpetrated on writers, artists, journalists and film makers throughout the world and, again, I thank Ruth Maguire for securing this debate.

13:19

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): I thank Ruth Maguire for giving us the opportunity to debate this subject and I thank members for their contributions. I join the previous speakers in expressing my support for the day of the imprisoned writer.

I also want to thank Scottish PEN, Amnesty International and others for all the work that they do to raise awareness of the persecution faced by many writers throughout the world. It is essential that we call for freedom and justice for imprisoned and murdered writers.

In Scotland, we defend fiercely the right to say what we think, and we do that often. Like most of our rights, we take that one for granted and it is only when it comes under threat that we realise how important it is. As Scottish PEN, Amnesty and others have highlighted, journalists, poets, bloggers, novelists, artists and film-makers in Africa, Asia, South America, Europe and the Middle East have suffered threats, attacks, imprisonment, been exiled and even killed for their activities. Despite the United Nations declaring 2 November the international day to end impunity for crimes against journalists, many of those violations go unchallenged and, more important, unpunished.

Let us look at some of the people I want to highlight in response to Ruth Maguire's debate. Daphne Caruana Galizia was murdered by a car bomb in October 2017 following her work exposing corruption connected to the Panama papers.

Dawit Isaak, a poet, playwright and journalist, was arrested in 2001 and is reported to have been tortured and kept in solitary confinement in Eritrea for the past 17 years.

In Turkey, about which we have heard much today, writers and journalists like Zehra Doğan remain in prison, having been caught up in the wave of repression that followed the failed coup attempt in 2016.

In Myanmar, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were sentenced to seven years in prison for reporting on military violence against Rohingya people.

None of us could have been any more horrified, as the whole world was, by the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi, just over a month ago.

I turn to someone whom I have met: Raif Badawi's wife, Ensaf. Raif Badawi remains in prison in Saudi Arabia having been sentenced to 10 years and 1,000 lashes for daring to write a blog. The barbarity of the treatment he has been subjected to is appalling.

I highlight those people because none of them are criminals. They have been attacked, oppressed and murdered because they have worked to expose unwelcome truths. They have suffered for daring to challenge and to question. Yet their work is doing something that we in Scotland consider to be a public service. Their "crime" is to have worked to promote informed debate and to support the exchange of facts and opinions.

Reading and hearing such accounts forces us to reflect on the difference that human rights make in our lives. Ruth Maguire painted a vivid picture of that in her opening speech. I had a similar experience when I spoke to the three human rights defenders participating in the Scottish human rights defender fellowship at the University of Dundee. I hope that the fellowship will go some way towards reassuring Alex Rowley that the Scottish Government is taking seriously its responsibility to international solidarity against human rights violations.

In the year of the 20th anniversary of the UN declaration on human rights defenders, the fellowship is one good example of how we in Scotland can stand shoulder to shoulder with people who put themselves and their families at considerable risk to defend the human rights that they are entitled to.

Let us look at human rights in Scotland. The rights that the fellows and the writers whom we have heard about today are working to uphold, often in the face of incredible difficulties and powerful opposition, are rights that we are fortunate to hold and they should be protected internationally and in Scotland. This year, we mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The rights it contains belong to all of us in equal measure, no matter who we are or where we come from.

A lot has been said about freedom of expression. The rights to freedom of expression and opinion are contained in the European convention on human rights, and the European Court of Human Rights has consistently described them as essential foundations of a democratic society. Those rights have been given practical effect in Scotland through the Human Rights Act 1998.

Alexander Stewart reminded us of the right to freedom of expression when he spoke about the world's reaction to the writings of Salman Rushdie, and the right of people to express their feelings about that. It is a powerful example indeed.

We have heard much about art, culture, poetry, writing and books, so I want to talk about what we are doing for culture and literature in Scotland that I hope will add to our international solidarity.

Alongside the Government's responsibility to uphold and protect human rights and the freedom of expression, it has a duty to promote cultural activity—and we really enjoy that, do we not?—including in ways that enable literature and writing to flourish.

In highlighting the songs of Pussy Riot, Andy Wightman demonstrated the power of culture and the risks that creative people take every single day in expressing their rights. I hope that Oleg Sentsov's story tells us clearly how important it is to maintain and uphold that creativity.

We all have a right to participation in cultural life and a responsibility to support and protect literary and artistic endeavour, and we are proud to help to support Scotland's world-class cultural system. Gillian Martin mentioned Abbad Yahya, the right to freedom of thought and the book that he wrote. Next week will be the seventh annual book week in Scotland, which demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to literature and ensuring that more people can enjoy reading. We hope that people will also be inspired to write, just like Abbad.

As well as protecting core grant funding, we have made an additional £6.6 million available to Creative Scotland and guaranteed it for the next three financial years to support artistic endeavour across Scotland.

This is just one aspect of the Scotland that we are trying to create—a Scotland where human rights, dignity and equality are embedded at the heart of everything that we do. As we mark the importance of the written word in today's debate, I affirm that, as a Government, we intend to put our words into practice and take the action that is necessary to make human rights real for each and every one of us. For example, we are building dignity, fairness and respect into our social security system. The Scottish Government has also been clear in its insistence that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union be retained in UK law following the withdrawal from the European Union, although that might have all changed while we have been in the chamber.

Annabelle Ewing said that we bear witness to the persecution and that we raise our voices in solidarity in our Parliament today, and she is absolutely right.

Joseph Conrad described the written word as having the

“power ... to make you hear, to make you feel”

and

“to make you see.”

As we mark the day of the imprisoned writer and reflect on the individuals who have been

highlighted by Scottish PEN and others, their stories give us insights into the acute importance of human rights and the terrible consequences when they are ignored and neglected. The only appropriate response that we can make is to stand with those who suffer for raising their voices and make it our ambition to do all that we can to ensure that freedom of expression is maintained throughout the world. I lend my support to Ruth Maguire's motion.

13:27

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Proposed European Union Withdrawal Agreement

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Michael Russell with an update from the Scottish Government on the proposed United Kingdom-European Union withdrawal agreement and political declaration. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so I urge anyone who wishes to ask a question to press their request-to-speak button as soon as possible.

14:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations (Michael Russell): I am grateful for the opportunity to update the chamber at this important moment in the Brexit process—though given the speed of current developments, I am not confident that I will be able to cover everything or that things will not have changed again before I sit down.

I make this statement with a heavy heart. In June 2016, Scotland voted to stay in the European Union by 62 to 38 per cent. To be dragged out of the EU against our will is democratically wrong and will be deeply resented by many in this country.

Those of us who regard ourselves as Europeans and Scots, and whose life experience has been embedded in that identity, will feel particularly sad and sore. No doubt there are others who will rejoice at what is taking place, and I respect their view. However, it is fair to note that the experience of Brexit, and the demonstration of Tory incompetence over the past two years, has resulted not only in a growing number who wish to remain in the EU, but in a diminution in the number who are in any way persuaded by the empty bluster of the Conservative Party in Scotland on these matters. Today's polls tell that story, and I believe that a future election would confirm it.

This is a sad day nonetheless. It is a day on which spin, rhetoric, the misuse of funds and the manipulation of electoral legislation have led to the worst and most damaging decision made by a United Kingdom Government in any of our lifetimes. It is a day on which the UK Government has attempted—voluntarily and for its own selfish political purposes—to lower the standard of living of all the citizens of Scotland and to distance itself

from the global benefits of the world's largest free-trade bloc.

Last night, the Prime Minister described the proposed agreement as

“the best that could be obtained in the circumstances.”

What a difference a day makes, particularly to “circumstances”.

The Prime Minister's deal was the inevitable result of a series of self-imposed draconian red lines, the wish to turn her back on sensible co-operation across our continent and the loose talk and empty rhetoric of her Cabinet, which has shown contempt for evidence-based policy making.

The death of her deal over the past 24 hours—for it is now essentially dead—arises from the same insularity, the same wrong-headedness and the same arrogance. The Prime Minister has only herself to blame for the appalling circumstances that she has found herself in. Those circumstances are appalling not just for her, but for all of us on these islands.

There has been much analysis of the deal already, despite the fact that the details are still not as clear as they should be, particularly as regards the political declaration.

I will briefly set out the deal. First of all, it maintains a form of customs union for a period for all these islands. That is, in itself, welcome but, because it is partial, it does not include any of the advantages of the single market, and because it is temporary, it is nowhere good enough.

Secondly, it makes a differentiation between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK in similar terms to those that we suggested for Scotland two years ago.

Thirdly, it prepares the ground for a continuing betrayal of our fishing interests.

Fourthly, it fails to guarantee key rights—human rights, environmental rights and employment rights—that we need and should never give up.

Finally, in its language and outcomes, it continues to ignore the current devolution settlement and the democratic institutions in Scotland and Wales. Indeed, as the Prime Minister confirmed this morning, Scotland does not exist in her thinking about this deal. That fact was tellingly illustrated by the distinguished blogger and legal writer David Allen Green when he pointed out this morning on Twitter that the document that outlines the deal refers to the British Antarctic Territory but makes no mention at all of Scotland.

In summary, the proposed deal does not meet the frequently stated Scottish Government requirement of single market and customs union

membership for the whole of the UK, and so it fails for Scotland; does not make even a gesture towards recognising the vote of Scotland to remain; does not tackle the considerable and grave problems that will be caused by Scotland coming out of the single market and customs union; takes away the four freedoms, in particular the freedom of movement, which is essential for Scotland; and fails to address in any way the additional pressures on Scotland if its neighbour in Northern Ireland retains the advantages of single market and customs union involvement. It cannot therefore be supported by this Government or the Scottish National Party.

Much of Scotland looks at the current state of the UK Government and Brexit with astonishment and resentment. Scotland is an outward-focused European nation. We voted to remain within the European Union. It is clear that we would do so again tomorrow, if a similar referendum were held.

The Scottish Government has been clear, and remains clear, that the best outcome for Scotland is to be within the EU, but—and it is a big but; one that has cost the Scottish Government a great deal of effort—we have repeatedly tried to find a compromise position that would allow the UK Government and the Scottish Government to move forward, but to no avail.

What is to be done? First, we should take some heart from a major development this week, when the leaders of all the Opposition parties at Westminster, including Jeremy Corbyn and Vince Cable, took action to ensure that there will be the opportunity for other proposals to be put when the so-called “meaningful vote” is held.

Many alternatives might be considered, including the Scottish Government policy of remaining in the single market and customs union, as well as a European economic area model or remaining in the EU—as the Prime Minister herself let slip yesterday, that is an option. No one can argue that the choice is whatever the Prime Minister says it is; it is what the people and their elected representatives say it should be.

We will, therefore, as a party in the House of Commons, continue to work in a constructive and commonsense way with other Opposition parties to try to save us from the chaos of this Tory Brexit. I commit the Scottish Government to the same constructive working that we have tried to carry forward with other parties in this chamber during the Brexit period.

Not only is this a bad deal; it is being pursued in a bad way. The presentation of a totally false choice, to try and bludgeon members of Parliament and others to support the Prime Minister, is one sign of that. Another is the actions of the UK Government, which has sought to

restrict the powers of this Parliament and has already imposed legislation on us against our will.

This is a bad deal not just because it will damage our future relationship with Europe, but because it creates the pretext for a continued unconstitutional assault on the rights and privileges of the people of Scotland, as exercised through this Parliament. It is an attempt to unsettle the will of the Scottish people, while eroding the rights and imperilling the future prosperity of everyone who lives in this country.

What is being offered is unacceptable, and so is what is not being offered. The deal provides for a degree of differentiation in Northern Ireland that we fully support as being essential to the future functioning of the Irish border and the protection of the Good Friday agreement. We want that to happen and we will do everything that we can to help it to happen. The deal provides for the whole of the UK to be in a customs union with the EU—thus rendering Liam Fox’s job redundant at a stroke of the negotiators’ pen—but we understand that there will also be specific provisions, including a single-market alignment provision, that apply only to Northern Ireland. That will see a better level of access to the European market for Northern Ireland than for other parts of the UK.

We rejoice for Northern Ireland that that has been achieved, but we cannot accept that it be achieved only for Northern Ireland. The Scottish Government has been arguing since December 2016 that if the UK leaves the single market, Scotland should remain. However, in January 2017, within weeks of the publication of “Scotland’s Place in Europe”, I was told to my face by David Davis, in his office in the House of Commons, that differentiation could not work in these islands and would not be proposed by the UK Government. Northern Ireland is now, rightly, to receive that special status.

We, alone of the four nations, will get nothing that we voted for. England and Wales voted to leave and they will leave, even though polls now show that the majority in Wales is against and much of England is moving that way. Northern Ireland will get a special deal. Even tiny Gibraltar, which was resolute in its need for continued special treatment—which we understood and supported—has been given that special treatment. However, Scotland, with the highest remain vote of any of the UK nations, is to be dragged out of the EU against our will, be exposed to severe economic disadvantage and damage, have the powers of our Parliament diminished and, yet, receives nothing at all.

Enough, Presiding Officer, is enough. Throughout the long and tortuous process of engagement with the UK Government, we have repeatedly been assured of the importance of our

views, but those assurances have turned out to be worthless and hollow.

What do we, in this Parliament, do next? First, we should go on working with others—in Scotland, in the UK and across parties—to ensure that there is a better deal than the false choice that is being offered by the UK Government between this disastrous deal or no deal. Within the mix there should be an election, a people's vote and remaining.

We will also ensure that the Scottish Parliament has the right to give its own view on the deal. I confirm today that if the deal is agreed at the Brussels summit on 25 November, the Scottish Government will bring it to a vote in the chamber before the vote takes place in the House of Commons. Of course, our motion will be amendable—that is how a proper Parliament should work.

As I said at the beginning of this statement, this is a sad day for those of us who still believe in the importance of European co-operation—those of us who reject the demonising of migration, the misrepresentation of co-operation and the assertion of false claims regarding “taking back control” and the “independence” of the UK; those of us, in other words, who still believe in a better future for our country.

Of course, in one sense, we have been here before. The promises made from 2014—in “lead, not leave”, for example—have turned out to be worthless. We are not an equal partner: the events of this week have proved that beyond peradventure; and I know that, from each and every meeting of the joint ministerial committee that I have attended on behalf of this Government. Far from leading the UK, the people of Scotland have been ignored and dismissed. Westminster has treated and goes on treating Scotland with contempt.

It does not have to be that way, though. It should not be that way, and I would contend that it is the duty of every elected representative in this place to make sure that it is not allowed to be that way.

We should understand that politicians are, if they are anything, people with a vision of a better future who are motivated by a burning desire to help our fellow citizens to achieve it. Brexit is not a better future; it is a backward step into a false and imagined past. That is now crystal clear, and every word of this “deal” proves it to be true. For Scotland, things in Brexit can only get worse.

We must acknowledge that this deal is unacceptable to Scotland and her citizens, and we must then find a way to work together to ensure that our country is not failed by a disastrous Tory

Brexit, but enabled to flourish by choosing a different way forward.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): That was not a Government statement from a serious minister. It was a cocktail of contrived grievance from someone who, even two years on, has never accommodated himself to the democratic will of the British people that we leave the European Union. I voted remain, too, but the difference between Mike Russell and me is that I respect the results of referendums and he does not. Unlike some, I was not surprised by yesterday's events. I always thought that the Prime Minister would get a deal with Brussels. I have never advocated a no-deal Brexit and I have never thought that that would be our fate.

None of us knows whether yesterday's draft withdrawal agreement will survive intact. Getting a deal through a fractious House of Commons was always going to be more difficult than getting a deal with Brussels, and that task has not been made any easier by the sad and unnecessary Cabinet resignations that we have witnessed this morning. The deal is not perfect. It may or may not survive. With regard to key elements of the deal, I would reserve judgment. What I support, and this is what the Cabinet decided yesterday, is that it should now be subject to intense parliamentary and external scrutiny.

I do not rush to judgment, neither to celebrate every clause of the agreement's 585 pages nor to condemn it out of hand, as the minister just sought to do.

I want to ask the cabinet secretary about differentiated deals. He wants a deal so differentiated that Scotland would remain in the European single market and customs union, even while the rest of Great Britain withdraws from both. Is it not the case that he wants that for the very reason that I am resolutely against it: namely, that it would destroy the integrity of the United Kingdom, which Scotland voted to remain part of in 2014? Does he not accept that the draft withdrawal agreement published yesterday contemplates nothing of that sort? Its detailed, lengthy and—yes—complex provisions on Northern Ireland are miles away from the Scottish National Party's disastrous proposals for an altogether different sort of Brexit.

Michael Russell: To address the substance of the question, no, I do not agree. It is obvious that a reading of any of the documents indicates that there are huge similarities with what is being proposed for Northern Ireland. A negotiation that led to implementation of some of the recommendations of “Scotland's Place in Europe”, which was published in December 2016, would allow for a sensible compromise.

It is more likely that the precious union—I notice that the word “union” has to have the word “precious” in front of it now for any Tory to talk about it—is more likely to be damaged in the long term and in extremis by the type of dogmatic approach that the Prime Minister has taken or the completely out-of-touch approach that we have heard from Mr Tomkins. I believe—actually, I know—that on those Tory benches there are people who know how ridiculous and appalling the situation is. There are sensible people who would support a sensible way forward and who could not in any way support what they see happening at Westminster, where the Tory party is literally falling to pieces before our eyes.

I hope that perhaps some of those people might eventually step forward and say that enough is enough, because that is in essence what I think that they should do, as representatives of the Scottish people rather than as Conservatives. That is their choice. I do not believe that the tone of Adam Tomkins’s question does anything other than prove the fact that he may well be one of those people who knows how wrong the situation is.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): In the past 24 hours, we have entered the endgame in the 40-year-long civil war in the Tory party over Europe. Two and half years after the Brexit vote, we are presented with a withdrawal agreement that fails to meet the tests that Labour set. We will not support this bad deal. We have always put Scotland first on the issue, and the deal does not meet Scotland’s needs or, indeed, the needs of the other regions and nations of the UK. It fails to respect devolution. It does not meet our demand for a permanent customs union arrangement. It fails to set out the collaborative and co-operative future with the EU that we want. It fails to provide equal access to the single market or guarantee that we will not fall behind on workers’ rights, consumer protection and the protection of our environment.

We cannot have a choice between a bad deal and a disastrous no deal. The cabinet secretary said that he will bring a motion to the Parliament. Will he work with me and others to ensure that the motion garners the widest possible parliamentary support?

The cabinet secretary spoke of a differentiated border and customs arrangements for Scotland; the First Minister has spoken about that, too. What work has been done on that? How will it work, what will the impact be and will he publish the Government’s plans today? Northern Ireland has a land border with the European Union, and we do not. It has a history of conflict, and the Good Friday agreement and the will of the people are holding the peace. The circumstances there are

completely different from those in Scotland, and nothing must undermine that peace. Does the cabinet secretary believe that creating a hard border between Scotland and our biggest market—the rest of the UK—would be in Scotland’s interest?

Finally, will the cabinet secretary now do what the First Minister failed to do at question time? Will he call for an immediate general election so that we can rid the country of the shambolic and arrogant Tory Government?

Michael Russell: The First Minister was very clear about that. Clearly, there are a range of options on the table, one of which is a general election. If a general election takes place, I will be happy to campaign alongside my SNP colleagues, who will undoubtedly take seats from both Labour and the Conservatives.

On the question of publishing material, we published “Scotland’s Place in Europe” in December 2016, and it contains all the information that Mr Findlay seeks.

Neil Findlay: No it does not.

Michael Russell: It absolutely contains all that information. Indeed, we have gone on publishing more volumes of “Scotland’s Place in Europe”—it is almost like a serial publication from the 19th century—and I am happy to go on doing so. That information is in the public domain.

On Northern Ireland, I entirely agree that peace is absolutely the most important thing, and I indicated that in my statement. However, there are similarities in what could be done with differentiation, which would benefit both sides. What we are talking about and want to put in place does not include a hard border. Indeed, the whole purpose of the Northern Irish situation is not to have a hard border.

Let us move to what can bring us together. I am happy to commit to working with Mr Findlay on the details of a motion to bring to the chamber and to ensure that it has the widest possible support. I ask everybody in the chamber to join Mr Findlay and me. I am sure that the Greens and the Liberal Democrats will want to do so. There is no joy in heaven greater than when a sinner repenteth—if the Tories want to take part to produce an effective motion that would show that the Parliament speaks for Scotland against Brexit, I would welcome them, too. As Mr Findlay indicated, I will not get my hopes up that that will happen.

As far as I am concerned, we will take forward the process as the parties in the House of Commons are doing. As I pointed out, Jeremy Corbyn and Vince Cable have signed, with Ian Blackford, Plaid Cymru and the Greens, a letter

about what they hope would take place in the meaningful vote. I continue to work closely with my colleague Mark Drakeford on those issues. Both of us were at the joint ministerial committee on Tuesday where, as usual, we received no illumination of any description.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement. The Greens would be more than happy to work with the Labour Party and the Scottish Government to try to present as close as possible to a united voice from the Parliament on behalf of Scotland.

I understand the Scottish Government's previous reticence to give momentum to a no-deal scenario by publishing material on its preparations for it, but we are well past that point now. No deal is a real threat, now that the deal on the table, as the cabinet secretary said, is almost certainly set to fall in the House of Commons. We still believe that there are other options. We look forward to a ruling from the European Court of Justice later this month or early next month on whether article 50 can be revoked.

The Westminster health secretary apparently told the Cabinet last night that he could not guarantee that people would not die as a result of a no deal, given the near inevitability of medicine, and other, shortages. Given the serious and mounting concerns and the clear impact on areas of devolved responsibility, will the Scottish Government now publish in full its no-deal preparatory work?

Michael Russell: I think that the events of the past 24 hours have made no deal much less likely than it was. They have concentrated minds. Some of the work of people such as the health secretary in England has been designed to egg up a no deal, and so doing has made it clear to almost everybody that a no deal should not happen.

However, we will not let up on our preparations. A substantial amount of my time over the past period has been spent on no-deal issues. I expect to be in a position to come to the chamber with more information on that before Christmas and I make an undertaking to do so. I hope that that will include publication of some information.

Ross Greer makes an important point. We must have a careful judgment between whether we are egging on a no deal—encouraging it and making people think that it will happen—or providing reassurance. I will always consider that to be the most important judgment. I give an undertaking that we will say more about that.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The deputy political editor of the BBC has just tweeted:

"Tory minister tells me if Brexiteers vote down Deal—he and others will openly campaign for a second referendum and to stay in EU."

Given the changing position on public opinion that Mr Russell mentioned in his statement, both in Wales and in parts of England, with London having voted to remain, will he get behind that growing cross-party momentum for a people's vote and endorse it here today?

Michael Russell: I am behind it, remain behind it and will be behind it, because that is the position that the SNP has taken. Tavish Scott and his colleagues cannot take yes for an answer, because they just do not want to take yes for an answer.

We support the people's vote campaign. That is clear and on the record. In those circumstances, if that is one of the options that comes through the process of the meaningful vote option, they will find that the SNP will support it. Mr Scott may not wish the SNP to do so, because clearly the Liberal Democrats are much happier constantly asking the question. I will go on giving the same answer—yes, we are behind it; we will go on being behind it; and it may well happen.

The Presiding Officer: There is considerable interest in the subject, as members will imagine. At least 10 members wish to ask questions. I urge everyone to be succinct. I am, however, prepared to let the item run on a bit, which will have an impact on the afternoon's debate.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I will give a very short quotation:

"There is undoubtedly a need for all the devolved administrations to work with the UK Government to ensure we get a deal that reflects the needs of all of us.

Chiefly amongst this will be our continued access to the single market.

Protecting our trade with the European Union will boost our economy, sustain jobs and help to fund vital public services."

Those are not the words of the First Minister, they are not the words of the cabinet secretary, and they are not even my words. They are the words of the Tory leader, Ruth Davidson.

I would be first to acknowledge that the circumstances of Northern Ireland are different to those of Scotland. However, is not it still entirely legitimate to ask why, if single market access is good enough for Northern Ireland, it is not good enough for Scotland? Does the minister agree with Ruth Davidson's comments? What common cause could he find with the pragmatic and sensible Tories that he believes exist in this Parliament, and with other parties, to fight for Scotland's interests?

Michael Russell: My friend, Bruce Crawford, has made a good and sound point. We could extend the matter back in time, and consider the role of Margaret Thatcher as the midwife of the

single market as it came into being and her enthusiastic view of it. The single market has developed and changed, and it has brought in a more acceptable situation with regard to employment and conditions of work. It was valued then, and should be valued now, across the chamber.

We have seen a very strange set of circumstances in which people who supported the single market, and who knew that leaving it would be immensely damaging, have been persuaded by the wind blowing from their party in Westminster to do a complete volte face, and to pretend that it does not matter. To say that it does not matter is simply not true. It matters enormously—particularly, as I said in my statement, with regard to freedom of movement, which is vital to the health of the Scottish economy, and for rural Scotland, most of all. I will make that point when I speak to the Scottish rural parliament in Stranraer tomorrow.

I keep hoping that sense will prevail in the Scottish Tory party—it is perhaps a forlorn hope—and that its representatives will recognise that although the stance that they are taking might help Theresa May for a very brief period, it will damage the people whom they are meant to represent.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives yesterday publicly sought assurances from the Prime Minister that the draft deal will protect Scotland's fishing interests. However, is not it the case that the Scottish Government's position is to take Scotland straight back into the common fisheries policy and that, accordingly, any betrayal of our fishing interests lies at the door of the SNP?

Michael Russell: I like and respect Donald Cameron, but that question was not worthy of him.

The reality of the situation is this: the Conservative Party has been an enthusiastic supporter and implementer of the common fisheries policy since it started. The Scottish National Party has argued, and will continue to argue, as stated in our 2017 manifesto, for the

“scrapping or fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.”

The Scottish Conservatives have perpetrated a cruel hoax on the fishing community in Scotland. Yesterday's part of it was a piece of theatre in which they gave an answer even though the answer was false. There is no doubt that the years-long betrayal of the Scottish fishing industry will continue. I hope that, on reflection, Mr Cameron will realise that what he has just said adds to that betrayal.

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): As someone who voted for Brexit, I agree with the

cabinet secretary that the draft withdrawal agreement is totally unacceptable. It is neither fish nor fowl; it is neither in nor out of the EU. Much is wrong with the draft agreement, but despite what Donald Cameron said, nothing is more wrong than another Tory sell-out of the future of our fishing industry and our fishing communities. The draft agreement again puts at risk one of the most important industries in rural Scotland.

When one reads the document that was published last night—Donald Cameron obviously has not—it is clear that not only is there no deal on fishing, there is no guarantee that the fishing industry will not be in the common fisheries policy. Does the cabinet secretary agree that if the Scottish Tories fail to deliver, every one of their MPs has a moral responsibility to resign his or her seat? They should resign if they do in the Scottish fishing industry for the second time: the first time it was done in by Ted Heath, and the second time by Theresa May.

Michael Russell: I know that time is short, but I will make two quick points about fishing. First, of course I agree that the 13 Scottish Conservative MPs should resign, but they are, no doubt, taking their lead from David Mundell, who clearly does not want to resign, no matter what he has promised. I can say nothing other than that resigning would be the honourable thing for them to do.

I will make a key point about fishing. I represent a number of fishing communities in Argyll and Bute, whose interests are very different from the fishing interests that are claimed elsewhere. The worry among many fishermen in Argyll and Bute is about access to markets—for shellfish, for example. The proposals that Theresa May has put on the table will not provide frictionless trade; they will create circumstances in which market access will become ever more difficult. I am talking about people whose livelihoods are directly threatened by what the Prime Minister is proposing. Fishermen and fisherwomen in Scotland will look at the deal and realise that they will get nothing, zilch, nada from the Scottish Conservatives and the Conservatives south of the border.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The Government's focus today is on arguing for a special deal, although the reality is that, following today's developments, the deal that we are deliberating over is on the verge of collapse. The deal sets out differentiation for Northern Ireland. Is the cabinet secretary confident that all the proposals in “Scotland's Place in Europe” on an open border with England—which, unlike Ireland, would be outside the EU—are still workable, given the detail of the draft proposal for Northern Ireland?

Michael Russell: I am convinced that it would be easy to find a workable solution on those matters. They can be resolved. Differentiation is vitally important in terms of access, particularly to labour. The member will know that, in the region that she represents, there are many industries and sectors that are already experiencing a shortage of labour. That can only get worse. In addition, there are substantial difficulties with wage inflation, because workers cannot be found.

In those circumstances, the right deal for Scotland would be not to leave the EU, but if a deal can be found, it can be found to work for Northern Ireland and for Scotland.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): In the draft deal, Northern Ireland, which voted to remain in the EU, is guaranteed a special deal to stay close to the EU. Where does the cabinet secretary think that that will leave Scotland, which, despite having had the highest remain vote of any UK nation, is being left high and dry, with our democratic voice ignored?

Michael Russell: I simply go back to the account that I gave of my conversation with David Davis. There was a root-and-branch refusal to accept differentiation at the beginning at the process. When differentiation became essential for Northern Ireland, the view was taken—by the Prime Minister, I suspect, because she controls, or at least tries to control, everything—that no ground should be given to Scotland. We now know that it was said in the briefings that we understand took place with the EU that nothing must be drafted that would assist Scotland. The Prime Minister's negative, dog-in-the-manger attitude has affected this. We continue to argue that another way is possible, and we will go on doing that.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): The draft agreement appears to offer no guarantees on the future ability of the UK to be involved in European reference networks, which allow knowledge and expertise about rare diseases, and work on treatment and cures, to be shared across Europe. I appreciate that the cabinet secretary is wrestling with many issues, but will he offer his support for the Genetic Alliance campaign to protect involvement in ERNs and will he undertake to raise the matter with the UK Government, given that, for many people, this could literally be a matter of life or death?

Michael Russell: The member makes a very good point. That is one of the issues that cause enormous concern, of which there are many. If Mr McDonald would like to write to me or to come and see me, perhaps with the organisation concerned, to give me that information—I have seen the outline information—I will undertake to take the matter forward.

I make the general point that there are whole areas in which, although issues might be referred to in passing, nothing is tied down. The process of tying down the relevant material and information will take years. The real problem that we now face if anything like the Prime Minister's deal were to go forward is that we would face an implementation period that would have to be renewed and at any point in which there could be a collapse in the talks. We would be in that limbo for a long period of time. None of that would be necessary if we took a single market and customs union approach.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): In December 2016, Michael Russell stated that membership of the single market was

“clearly not going to happen”.

What has changed?

Michael Russell: The member would have to remind me of the exact context of that remark. Unlike Mr Kerr, I do not scrape through previous speeches in an effort to quote people out of context.

Membership of the single market and the customs union is essential. We have said so from the beginning, and we have had the backing of the Scottish Conservatives—we have had the backing of Ruth Davidson and even of Adam Tomkins—on that. Therefore, in all those circumstances, I say today as I said last year and as I will continue to say: we need to be in the single market—that is it.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): What has been announced is an agreement on the UK's withdrawal from the EU, but the long-term relationship is yet to be agreed. Indeed, the political declaration that details it is only seven pages long and provides no firm commitments about the future economic relationship. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the risk of a blind Brexit is now very real?

Michael Russell: It is true that the blindfold aspect, which has been much discussed in recent months, has not diminished. There is an expectation that we might see more of the political declaration next week, but that is not legally binding, of course—the exit agreement would be legally binding, but the political declaration is aspirational. Then we will have the immensely detailed negotiations that will have to build on those to get to the final relationship, which will all take a great deal of time. We will know more when we see the full political declaration, but if this were to go ahead as Theresa May wants—that is highly unlikely, given where the House of Commons has today shown itself to be—there would be whole areas about which we know absolutely nothing and on which we would have no purchase or heft in negotiations.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Given the many references in the statement to special status for Northern Ireland, does the cabinet secretary agree that the focus should be on permanent membership of a customs union? That would protect the interests of all four nations and also protect the peace agreement in Northern Ireland. Importantly, it would allow the economies and interests of all the nations, including Northern Ireland, to be equally protected.

Michael Russell: I agree with Pauline McNeill that an agreement for the UK to stay permanently in the customs union would be a big step forward. In my view, it would not give us enough in terms of the single market issues, but the single market can of course build on a customs union; if there was an intention for the UK to do that, that would be a step forward. However, we do not have anything like that at present.

I am preparing for all sorts of eventualities, but one has to be that, if this were to happen and Northern Ireland were in that position, Scotland would have to be in the same position, for two reasons. First, we would find it necessary and, secondly, it would be very difficult for us to compete with Northern Ireland. For example, we would not have a level playing field for European investment and European workers. I agree with the member that the best solution of all is for the whole of these islands to stay in the EU—that would be a much more sensible decision. Failing that, a decision to move from that should move as little as possible. Staying permanently in the customs union is not as bad as some of the things that Theresa May is proposing.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): No mention of Scotland in the 585-page Brexit document and no briefing for the Scottish Government—what happened to the 2014 entreaty, “Lead us, don’t leave us”? Does the so-called respect agenda simply not exist?

Michael Russell: Annabelle Ewing is correct; I made that point in my statement. It is now a complete sham. When she asked her question, I noticed that there were mutterings from members of the Scottish Conservative front bench. They do not want to confront the reality that the arguments that they put forward in 2014 have turned out to be completely and utterly untrue. In other words, Presiding Officer, they were a lie.

The Presiding Officer: I urge caution in using such language in the chamber. That concludes our statement on the UK EU withdrawal.

Our next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on physical activity, diet and healthy weight. I allowed the statement to move on, so I have to suggest to the members who will speak in the open debate

that they trim their speeches from six to five minutes—that includes Brice Crawford, Stewart Stevenson, Emma Harper, John Mason, Liz Smith, Tom Mason and Iain Gray. I apologise that we have to do that, but there was a healthy political interest in the previous subject.

Physical Activity, Diet and Healthy Weight

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on physical activity, diet and healthy weight. I ask members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons. As members are aware, time for the debate is already short, so I ask opening speakers not to go over the time that has been allocated to them. I call Joe FitzPatrick to move the motion and speak to it for up to—and no more than—13 minutes.

15:10

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): This Government has made it clear that it wants a fairer Scotland where everyone thrives. In moving the motion, I make the point that our overall aim is to improve the health of the nation, and preventing ill health and reducing health inequalities are central to achieving that.

In June, we published a set of six interlinked public health priorities, each with prevention and early intervention at its core. They cover places and communities; the early years; mental wellbeing; alcohol, tobacco and drugs; poverty; and healthy weight and physical activity. Those priorities, which were agreed between the Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, are the most important issues to focus on, over the next decade, to improve the health of the people of Scotland.

Today I will outline the step changes that the Government is taking to meet one of those public health priorities: a Scotland where we all eat well and have a healthy weight and level of physical activity. In July, we published two complementary delivery plans that set out what needs to be done to achieve that priority. We recognise that the plans sit alongside a wide range of Government policy and action. Each delivery plan has stretching ambitions: we want to cut physical inactivity in adults and teenagers by 15 per cent by 2030, in line with the new global goal that was set out by the World Health Organization; we want to halve childhood obesity by 2030; and we want to significantly reduce diet-related health inequalities.

We have set a high bar, and rightly so. The scale of the challenge is huge and the inequalities remain persistently wide. The ambitions are underpinned by clear and comprehensive plans. I welcome support from across the chamber in addressing those twin challenges. We need to take decisive action, including restricting junk food

promotions and helping more women and girls to get involved in sport and physical activities.

Let us remind ourselves why we need to act so urgently. We all know that being physically active is one of the best things that we can do for our overall physical and mental wellbeing. An active lifestyle can help to prevent heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions and a number of cancers, but it is about more than that. Physical activity has a unique power to inspire and motivate us. It can also play a crucial role in tackling social isolation and developing confidence. In short, being active is about all of us enjoying healthy lives and being connected to our communities and our environment.

Overall levels of physical activity in Scotland remain steady, while other developing countries show decline. Given its many benefits, we want to go further and see those levels increase.

The case for change is even more stark when it comes to diet and healthy weight. We should be in no doubt about the scale of the challenge. We are consistently failing to meet our dietary goals: 65 per cent of adults are overweight or obese and over a quarter—26 per cent—of children are at risk of being overweight or obese. That is a shocking statistic, particularly given that overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults, with all the health inequality that that brings.

Obesity is the second-biggest preventable cause of cancer after smoking. It is the most significant risk factor for type 2 diabetes and it can also increase the risk of lots of conditions, including cardiovascular diseases and arthritis. If we can bring down the rates of obesity and drive up the rates of physical activity, we can prevent the burden of health harms on our children, on adults and on the national health service, and the people of Scotland will live longer, healthier and happier lives.

Both plans have three core priorities. They seek to address health inequalities by supporting everyone to have active lifestyles and healthy diets, they recognise the importance of collective leadership and broad ownership nationally and locally, across the public, private, third and community sectors, and they prioritise cross-portfolio approaches to ensure that policies across the Government—not just in the health portfolio—support the changes that are needed. Let me turn to the detail in each of the plans.

In July, I launched “A More Active Scotland: Scotland’s Physical Activity Delivery Plan”, which sets out a range of 90 actions that we and our delivery partners are taking to encourage and support people in Scotland to be more active more often. Partnership working is a central theme. Our

plan follows the publication of the WHO's "Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030". The WHO plan sets the challenges that countries around the world face in helping people to get and stay active. It highlights how so many aspects of modern life, including transport, technology and changes in work and leisure activities lead us towards inactivity. The WHO plan makes it clear that a whole-system approach is crucial to success. That means working across policy boundaries to improve education, transport, health, planning and sport sectors, among others.

I am extremely pleased that the WHO has welcomed our delivery plan and that it sees Scotland as being ahead of the game in responding to its global action plan.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): In Edinburgh, the Scottish National Party and Labour Party controlled city council is looking to hike up prices for local groups that undertake sports in sports clubs. Does the minister think that will help to achieve the desired outcomes of his delivery plan?

Joe FitzPatrick: Local government is one of our partners in what we are trying to do. I was pleased when City of Edinburgh Council said that it would look again at those matters. I understand that that is still happening.

The delivery action plan shows the actions in which physical activity and sport can transform the lives of people of all ages and demographics. The actions in the plan include rolling out the daily mile across the country, doubling active travel budgets to £80 million to encourage walking and cycling for recreation and travel, increasing support for participation in sport by women and girls, giving £1 million for changing lives through sport and physical activity, and increasing funding support for older people who are in care settings to remain physically active. That is an important point in the amendment that Mr Cole-Hamilton will speak to later.

That is just a snapshot of the actions that we are taking and we will continue to work with academics and practitioners to learn from the evidence and shared experience of what works on the ground.

Physical activity is one factor in maintaining a healthy weight, but it is only one factor. In July—a busy month for me, as I was just in post—I also launched our diet and healthy weight delivery plan, "A Healthier Future". It sets out a wide-ranging approach to tackling the nation's weight problem.

Obesity is complex, but our aim is simple. We want to make it much easier for everyone across Scotland to eat well and be a healthy weight. The delivery plan has more than 60 actions, but today I will focus on three core priorities: transforming the

food environment, giving children the best start in life and preventing type 2 diabetes.

On transforming the food environment, particularly promotions, as a nation, we consume too much food and drink that has little or no nutritional benefit and contributes calories or salt to our diet. These so-called discretionary foods include snacks such as crisps, sweets and chocolate. Half the sugar that is consumed in Scotland comes from that sort of food, so it is clear that we need to eat less of it.

It is, however, difficult to make healthier choices when we are constantly being bombarded with messages that encourage us to impulse-buy such foods and overconsume them. We want to change that. We are looking to restrict the in-store marketing and promotion of discretionary foods so that they cannot be sold on multibuy promotions or placed at checkouts, for example.

The consultation is already under way on a comprehensive set of proposals on which we would welcome feedback. As with all big public health interventions, we know that we need to take the public with us. The latest Food Standards Scotland data shows that around half of the public support restricting the promotion of unhealthy products, but we are not complacent. We will continue to make the case for change so that the consumer feels empowered to make healthier choices.

Transforming the food environment involves much more than that. For example, we are also supporting Scottish small and medium-sized enterprises to reformulate products and remove calories. We are urging the United Kingdom Government to ban the broadcast of advertising of high fat, sugar and salt foods before the 9 pm watershed. Food Standards Scotland will shortly publish its consultation on how restaurants, cafes, delivery services and others can support healthier eating by, for example, better calorie labelling.

Our ambition to halve childhood obesity gives our plan a strong preventative focus. Of course, all the changes to the food environment that I have talked about should improve the diets of children and their families, but there is much more that we can and must do. Early childhood and what happens before children are born are critical to the establishment of good nutrition and healthy eating. We will support parents pre-conception and in the early years on everything from pregnancy nutrition to breastfeeding and weaning. We will serve healthier food to children in early years settings at school, we will target services for families who need them where the child's weight is a concern and we will continue to support children and families through school and the teenage years.

Although our overarching aim is to prevent children from becoming overweight or obese in the first place, we nevertheless recognise the current reality that being overweight or obese has become the norm for adults in Scotland. Along with that come the associated health harms and the significant pressures that they put on health services. Each year, we spend around 9 per cent of our total health expenditure on treating type 2 diabetes—a condition that is closely related to people being overweight and obesity. However, there is growing evidence that, with significant and sustained changes to diet and lifestyle, a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes can be reversed. That is why our third priority is our significant investment of £42 million over five years to tackle type 2 diabetes. In the summer, I also published a prevention framework that sets clear expectations of health boards and their partners to provide services to support those who have or are at risk of what are often avoidable conditions.

We can all unite on the issue in the worlds of health, communities and wellbeing. Politicians, policy makers, community leaders and medical professionals can unite around a programme of action that will add years to the healthy life expectancy of people in Scotland. Since July, we have already achieved a great deal with strong commitment from a wide range of local and national partners, but this is just the start. We need to continue to build leadership and momentum across the system. Such is the scale and nature of the problem that we want to ensure that we have the strongest possible plan of action for Scotland and for future generations, which means that we must continue to learn from others and evolve our thinking.

I therefore welcome our debate today and the tone of the amendments. I confirm that we will support the Conservatives' amendment, which is in line with the strategies, and the Liberal Democrats' amendment, which reflects a commitment that we have given and makes sense in the context. Unfortunately, we are unable to support the Labour amendment because it would remove reference to the two delivery plans. The asks in the Green Party amendment relate to budget matters, which we will come to later, but it is a good try.

I thank everyone for the constructive way in which I know that they intend to take part in the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you formally move your motion, please, minister?

Joe FitzPatrick: I moved it in my very first sentence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Did you? I was not listening closely enough. I am very sorry.

Joe FitzPatrick: I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of two new delivery plans for Scotland, which set out ambitious actions to increase levels of physical activity and to improve diet and healthy weight; recognises the important contribution that physical activity, diet and healthy weight make to health and wellbeing, including that obesity and an unhealthy diet are linked to harms, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, musculoskeletal conditions and cancer; endorses a vision for a Scotland where people eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active, as articulated in the nation's new public health priorities; acknowledges the shared responsibility across all of society to help achieve this vision, including across national and local government as well as the public, private, third and community sectors; supports ambitions to reduce physical inactivity in adults and adolescents by 15% by 2030 and to halve childhood obesity by 2030; commends the commitment in both delivery plans to tackle health inequalities, and maintains support for proposals to restrict the promotion and marketing of food and drink that is high in fat, sugar or salt with little to no nutritional benefit where they are sold to the public.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Brian Whittle to move amendment S5M-14749.1 and to speak to it for no more than eight minutes, please.

15:23

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to open on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives and thank the Scottish Government for the opportunity to debate this important topic. The fact that we have physical activity and nutrition on the parliamentary agenda is very welcome. The Parliament is, at last, beginning to recognise that there is a major health issue in Scotland that we can affect.

We will support the Government's motion, but in doing so we recognise that this should be the start of a conversation and that much more action could and should be taken to make the impact that we all know is necessary. That is the thrust of the Scottish Conservatives' amendment.

The preventative agenda is rooted in good nutrition, physical activity and inclusivity. Over a year ago, the Scottish Conservatives called for any moneys that are raised from the sugar tax to be allocated to a programme to keep schools open during the school holidays to offer activity hubs with healthy meals included, because we know that health inequalities and food bank usage spike during the school holidays. The Labour amendment is too restrictive, as it would prevent other possibilities such as whole days of activities. We recognise the direction of travel, but we cannot support the amendment.

Given that I am the convener of the cross-party group on arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions, members will not be surprised to hear that I support the Lib Dem amendment.

Although we are hugely sympathetic to the Green amendment and certainly want to pursue such a policy, we are reticent about putting a figure on it at this time, so we cannot support the amendment.

The conversation has to change. We must stop focusing so intently on the symptoms and conditions that arise as a result of poor lifestyle choices and focus on Scotland's need for a better relationship with food, drink and physical activity. That argument leads us to issues such as ease of access and the need for an understanding of good nutrition, physical activity and the environment in which it takes place. If we begin to break down the barriers to inclusion, we will be able to have a much more positive conversation.

There are many levers available to the Scottish Government that would not require huge budgetary commitments but could have significant and long-lasting impacts. The educational environment should be a key battleground in delivering a healthier future for Scotland, from nursery education right through to higher education.

When we consider physical and nutritional education, we need to look not only at the learning environment but at how we ensure that that learning can be applied. Physical education is about how to be physically active and about why we should be physically active. We then need to ensure that that learning can be applied outside the school day. Connecting physical education with extracurricular activity and a community offer is, therefore, paramount.

Similarly, it is not enough to learn about nutrition in theory; pupils must be given the opportunity to apply that learning in practice. Increasing the home economics offer would be a good start, along with improving the quality of school meals. If pupils are allowed input into their school meal menu, that affords their buy-in. Pupils might even be allowed access to the school kitchen, as happens in Japan and Copenhagen among other places.

Will the minister explain to me why we export so much high-quality Scottish produce and import lower-grade, cheaper produce through the Scotland Excel public procurement contract? That does not make sense to me.

We also need to look at the environment that is adjacent to schools. The planning departments need to be cognisant of where we give licences for fast food restaurants. We must prevent food vans from parking close to schools, and we should consider the age at which we allow our children to leave the school premises. I have no problem with fast food, but I have a huge issue with its becoming the staple diet. On Monday, I drove past

a school in Kilmarnock at lunch time and noticed three food vans parked at the school gates, with pupils queuing at all of them.

East Ayrshire is the gold standard when it comes to locally procured food and the quality of the food that is served, so we need to understand what drives pupils' behaviour. The food vans simply being there is a big factor. Surely, a simple solution is obvious—we must change the environment and involve our school pupils in the development of school menus.

The approach should apply from pre-school—or pre-birth as the minister said—all the way through life. It can start with an active play framework in nursery schools, perhaps including a vegetable patch in the grounds that is tended by the children. Such an active, inclusive and educational approach would speak directly to attainment. Early intervention directly tackles the situation in which some children are, on reaching primary school age, already two years behind in their learning.

If we are to achieve our aim, we must consider how we can deliver such step changes, because if there is no delivery mechanism, we are nothing more than a talking shop. I have always said that we must first look after the health of our healthcare professionals. How can we expect them to deliver the message when their own working environment is a barrier to their adopting a healthy, active lifestyle? We must also free up our teachers' time, to allow them to deliver education as they are trained and able to. It is through teachers that a paradigm shift in culture can be achieved.

The third sector has a huge part to play in this agenda. We are all aware of the value that the sector delivers to our communities. How third sector bodies are funded and aligned must be reviewed to ensure that they deliver what they are capable of delivering.

We must also consider how we would cater for an increase in physical activity nationally. Dr Frank Dick, the former director of coaching at UK Athletics and chair of the European Athletics Coaches Association, wrote a paper on offering upskilling to people who are approaching retirement, to enable them to continue to use their lifetime of experience and skills in the third sector should they wish to do so. I agree with him that those people are a largely untapped resource that we should be promoting both for their continued health and for the wellbeing of those with whom they would be working.

There is also the possibility of developing people in younger age groups who are interested in being involved, but perhaps not as sportspeople. Pupils in the later years of school who are afforded the opportunity to gain a

coaching qualification can find that activity both empowering and engaging.

I have always believed in education as the solution to health and welfare. We have to create an environment in which all of us, irrespective of background or personal circumstance, have access to education in its wider context, be that in or outside the classroom. I believe that the school estate must be utilised much more effectively. It makes no sense for pupils to have to go home and then somewhere else to participate in sporting activity when the easiest place for them to access quality opportunities is where they are at the end of the school day. We must fish where the fish are.

We support the Government's motion and thank it for bringing the debate to the chamber, but we recognise that the motion tackles only one element of a more complicated system. Now that we are in the starting blocks, let us have no false starts. The Scottish Conservatives look forward to working with the Government to develop a strategy to tackle what I believe is the most important issue that Scotland faces today.

I move amendment S5M-14749.1, to insert at end:

“, and calls on the Scottish Government to recognise that the three pillars of basic health are physical activity, nutrition and inclusivity and for it to provide the methodology required to achieve more ambitious targets.”

15:31

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I welcome this afternoon's debate. Obesity is a modern-day public health crisis that would have been unrecognisable to Scots who lived through rationing in the second world war or to those who lived a century before that, when parishes from Shetland to Selkirk had to set up poorhouses. I share the view of Martin Cohen of the University of Hertfordshire, who has stated:

“Obesity is invariably presented as a diet issue for”

dieticians,

“whereas social inequality is deemed the domain of sociologists and economists. Put another way, even as the inequality gap becomes more and more obvious there's been a medicalisation of a social problem. Yet obesity is not just a matter for”

dieticians;

“rather, it is a product of social inequality and requires a collective social response.”

As we know—indeed, the minister said as much in his remarks—obesity has been on the rise for decades. It is no wonder, as changes to our lifestyles have had inescapable repercussions for our diets. The increasingly fast pace of life has meant that we are more likely to buy quick and easy meals, frequently trading nutritious food for

efficiency, and that shift in our eating habits has inevitably led to our taking in more sugar, salt and fat than we need.

To compound the problem, the busyness of life means that fewer and fewer of us are active enough to burn off the calories, causing what scientists call obesogenic environments. In 2016, it was estimated that only 64 per cent of those aged over 16 reached their recommended amount of physical activity each week. The result is a country with one of the worst records in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with two thirds of Scottish adults classed as being overweight and, even more worrying, almost a third of children at risk of becoming overweight.

We all know that the consequences of endemic obesity are severe. For individuals, being overweight comes with numerous increased chronic health risks and reduces life expectancy by, on average, at least three years. In that respect, I commend the work of Cancer Research UK and Obesity Action Scotland, which are working hard to raise awareness, both in here and with the public, of the link between being overweight and developing cancers.

As one of the co-chairs of the cross-party group on diabetes—I think that my colleagues are in the chamber—I am glad that the motion refers to type 2 diabetes. Being obese or overweight is a significant contributing factor to developing type 2, and, with our obesity crisis, it is unfortunately no surprise that figures on the disease make for bleak reading. I looked at the up-to-date figures on diabetes just last night for a dinner that I was chairing, which a number of colleagues attended. In Scotland, 260,000 people have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, but what is really concerning is the fact that a further half a million people in Scotland are at risk of developing the condition.

Members will be familiar with this fact, but I will restate it: a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes can bring with it serious complications, including the risk of blindness and amputation. Besides the clear and grave impact that it has on an individual's quality of life, this growing disease also provides just one example of the strain that obesity places on our national health service resources. The minister will be aware of the finances surrounding this. The NHS spends almost £1 billion on tackling diabetes, 80 per cent of which goes on managing avoidable complications. I therefore very much welcome the Government's proposal to invest in weight management programmes with long-term goals.

Brian Whittle: I mentioned to the member last night, in discussing preventable health issues, that I read in a magazine that parental physical activity has a huge impact on the metabolic rate of children. When we are talking about prevention,

we need to be cognisant of what the parents are doing pre-birth.

David Stewart: I bow to the member's experience. He makes a very good point that was reinforced at the diabetes dinner last night.

I agree with what the Government has done on weight management, but any tangible improvement is likely to be short lived unless we take a preventative approach. Evidence-based action is absolutely crucial. It is important to know that what we are doing is working.

Diabetes Scotland has raised a concern with me about the budget cuts to the teams that are currently collecting clinical data. Those cuts could undermine the assessment of the programme. Perhaps the minister will address that in his closing speech.

I am conscious of the time, Presiding Officer.

It is good to see that the Government is seriously considering how we can restrict the advertising and promotion of food that is high in fat, sugar and salt. The key to such an approach will be not just to restrict the availability of unhealthy foods but to make the option of a balanced diet much more practical.

The key issue is that, although this challenge may look modern, under the surface the root problems are the same old story, which is that poverty, social deprivation and inequality are significant contributors to people being overweight. It is the least well-off people who are most at risk. For example, a quarter of children who live in the most deprived areas are at risk of obesity, compared to only 17 per cent in the least-deprived areas. We have major health inequality.

I agree with Brian Whittle about the need to use the planning system to ensure that community spaces encourage physical activity by being welcoming and safe.

The key to tackling obesity is to see it not just as a problem for individuals and families but as a social problem similar to educational underachievement or criminality. Poverty, not individual choices, is the driver of the problem. Therefore, only fundamental societal change that fights inequality will cut the Gordian knot of systematic overindulgence.

I move amendment S5M-14749.3, to leave out from "commends the commitment" to "health inequalities" and insert:

"notes with concern the deprivation gap in levels of physical activity and considers that, regardless of background or ability to pay, physical activities should be accessible for all; recognises the impact that poverty has on the ability of families to provide healthy meals; commends the Club 365 initiative from North Lanarkshire Council and calls for this to be rolled out across the country

to end holiday hunger; believes that further action should be taken to tackle food insecurity and make healthy food options more affordable".

15:47

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I would like to thank the many organisations that have provided briefings for this afternoon's debate. I, too, am glad to discuss the systemic change that we need, so that people can live more active, healthier lives. I am also glad to see a range of amendments that present different but complementary ideas, to help us achieve that.

It is fair to say that a real challenge confronts us. The proportion of people in Scotland who meet guidelines for physical activity has not much changed since 2012. Just about two thirds of us manage moderate levels of physical activity for two and a half hours a week. Although the overall proportion of adults who are overweight or obese appears not to have increased since 2008, there has not been the positive reduction that we all want.

Over the past decade, we have certainly learned that public health messages that are focused on individual behaviours tend to fail—and to fail people on lower incomes in particular, as David Stewart stressed. They can also cause unintended harm by stigmatising some behaviours and some bodies.

When discussing the social determinants of health, Professor Michael Marmot often reminds us of the alternative health messages that we could be giving people. Instead of telling people to follow a balanced diet and to keep active, we might advise them not to be poor, and if they cannot avoid that, then to try

"not to be too poor for long",

and not to

"live in a deprived area",

or

"work in a stressful, low-paid manual job."

That kind of parody indicates just how much of our health is determined by factors that we, as individuals, can do little to control. Yet, in 2018, we are a long way from seeing public health campaigns on our trains and buses announcing that poverty is a risk factor for poor health.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I agree with what the member is saying, but does she agree that, sometimes, healthier food can be cheaper than takeaway food, which is expensive, and that an education process is required in that regard?

Alison Johnstone: The member makes an interesting point, but we also have to remember

that in some parts of our more deprived communities we have what are described as food deserts, where it is simply impossible to access fresh fruit and vegetables at the affordable price that the rest of us enjoy.

It is clear that we need to begin to use regulation to tackle our obesogenic environment, and to make meaningful investment in our infrastructure. Most of the amendments reflect that focus.

The amendment in my name concentrates on the urgent need to improve spending on walking and cycling. It is helpful that spending has doubled, but £80 million is still a small proportion of our overall transport budget at just 3 to 4 per cent. Greens have a long-standing policy that active travel should get at least 10 per cent of the transport budget and we want to see spending brought up to at least £25 per head, putting us on par with the spending levels of the Netherlands, which is one of the most cycle-friendly countries in the world. I will address the minister's remarks on finance when I make my closing speech, but in Utrecht, for example, cycling is the dominant form of transport, with 51 per cent of everyday journeys made by bike. That approach would begin to redress the lack of investment in everyday local transport for the third of people who do not have access to a car. It would also tackle two of the biggest barriers to becoming physically active: cost and time.

The increase in the active travel budget for 2018-19 is welcome and has been effective in generating more activity in local communities to deliver walking and cycling infrastructure. However, local authorities—particularly those with large urban areas—are still indicating a desire for more match funding than can be accessed currently. Increasing the active travel budget from the current level of £15 per head to £25 per head—as called for in the Green amendment—could trigger the transformational change in cycling infrastructure that could make Scotland a mass participation cycling nation, with long-distance and recreational trips safe, simple, convenient and frequent.

We need a stronger focus on cycling infrastructure, but while we work on that, we could build on popular, successful approaches, such as the cycle-to-work scheme. We could roll out cycle-to-college and cycle-to-uni schemes, which would give students better access to bike ownership through interest-free bike loans that are integrated into student funding. That would give all students an opportunity to start the semester with a bike of their choice and plan healthier, cheaper travel to lectures and classes.

Getting into healthy habits when we leave school for work, college or university can have a

positive impact for decades and I would like to see more support for young people going through such important transitions. Expanding the daily mile programme is the only measure in the physical activity delivery plan that mentions colleges and universities specifically. That is a missed opportunity.

I am glad to see that the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council will be developing a new approach to diet and weight for staff and students.

I strongly support the emphasis that the Labour Party amendment places on the need to tackle holiday hunger. The Greens are strong advocates of the universal provision of free school meals beyond primary 3. Brian Whittle touched on the need for better school kitchens and dining facilities. I was pleased to welcome the Copenhagen House of Food to Parliament years ago. That is a truly inspirational model that is well worth examining.

We also have to protect children and young people from the very worst aspects of an unhealthy food industry. We have to restrict irresponsible promotions on very unhealthy food—we really must get to grips with that.

I move amendment S5M-14749.4, after second “2030” insert:

“; recognises the positive impact that walking and cycling have on health; welcomes the doubling of active travel funding in 2018-19 but notes that active travel remains a tiny proportion of Scotland's overall transport budget; calls for further urgent increases to bring active travel expenditure up to at least £25 per capita”.

15:43

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): On days such as this, when there are tectonic shifts in politics, both at Westminster and across Europe, it is possible that outside observers might see debates like this one as somewhat prosaic. However, the debate is not at all prosaic. It is right that we come back to such topics, which are almost seasonal fixtures. We are all charged with obtaining progress on obesity.

I am grateful to the Government for lodging such a conciliatory motion and I will be happy to support all the parties' amendments at decision time.

It is right that we return to the issue, because it offers us common ground. We share the same aims and objectives and we will not lose sight of the challenge that lies ahead. That challenge visits us in our constituency surgeries every week when we hear of health or ability complaints.

Large swathes of our population are locked into a trajectory—a vicious cycle—that reduces the orbit of people's social universe, harms their

mental health and, ultimately, cuts short their life expectancy.

Debates such as this one can be acts of contrition. Since this Parliament was first convened, we have sought to end the reality that people here eat more and are less active than those in most other countries. Whether through the confluence of our culture or through particular brands of social inequality, that is a nut that we are yet to crack.

I do not seek to ascribe any blame to any Administration or political viewpoint for the situation. I recognise that, for a multiplicity of reasons, an unhealthy lifestyle is woven into the fabric of our country's make-up. How we unpick that will define the measure of our efforts in this area for years to come.

The challenge is huge. We know that, after cancer, being overweight is the second-biggest risk to health and cause of early death. Despite that reality, only a quarter of our fellow Scots are aware of the link. The scale is eye watering. If 65 per cent of adults and 29 per cent of children contracted a potentially fatal virus, that would trigger the emergency mobilisation of the World Health Organization and an international aid response.

The costs of obesity and inactivity to our society are equally large. Those costs are estimated to be upwards of £4 billion. As the minister said, our response has to be to find whole-nation and whole-place solutions. That could be by reducing the 110 tonnes of sugar that our population ingests every day through reformulation, product awareness and information.

The debate is about promoting activity, including active travel. I am very happy to support Alison Johnstone's amendment, which I will speak to again during my closing speech. It is also about how we teach our children and make them aware of what a healthy, adequate lifestyle looks like.

The debate is also about recognising the links—they have been drawn several times—between obesity and inactivity, social isolation and social exclusion, and between obesity, inactivity, poverty and social deprivation. That is very much the thrust of my amendment.

Again, it seems prosaic to talk about a falls strategy, but the fear of falling reduces the orbit of people's social universe. We need to recognise that and, collectively, do something to address it.

Social isolation and inactivity are definitely bedfellows. This year, 65,000 Scots will spend Christmas alone, and 200,000 Scots go four days or more without contact with another human being. That has an undeniable impact on physical and

mental health. The 19th century French writer Balzac said:

"Solitude is fine but you need someone to tell that solitude is fine."

We cannot magic social connections for those people out of thin air, but we can reduce the barriers to their doing that for themselves.

In 2017, I chaired a meeting of the Scottish older people's assembly in this very room. At one point, I asked assembly members what they were most frightened of. I expected them to mention criminality, disease or frailty, but, universally, the number 1 thing that frightened them the most was falling. That is because they know that a fall could reduce the size of their social universe and that life expectancy after a hip fracture is dramatically reduced.

I am sure that, day in and day out, every member has people who come to their surgery and say that they have no confidence in the pavements or the street corners in their communities—the accident hotspots that we all know something about. My amendment calls on the Scottish Government to build on the 2014 falls framework, which looks at falls reduction and early intervention in medical settings; to expand that work in our local communities; and to work with sport and leisure trusts and local authorities to identify accident blackspots. As the nights draw in and the frost starts to bite, it is at this time of year, more than at any other, that people elect to stay at home rather than take the risk of going out and falling in their communities. If we can get the right approach, we can get them back out into their communities and social networks, and into opportunities for physical activity, which we have heard about this afternoon.

I take great pleasure in moving my amendment, and I look forward to supporting all the other amendments. I move amendment S5M-14749.2, to insert at end:

“, and reaffirms the call, which the Parliament agreed in the debate on motion S5M-04324 on 2 March 2017, for the Scottish Government to bring forward a national falls strategy, which it believes will help give people confidence in the physical landscape around them to enable a more active lifestyle.”

15:49

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): The Scottish Government motion that we are debating today sets out the benefits of improved physical activity and healthy eating. A healthier lifestyle can benefit overall health and wellbeing and, my goodness, as a nation we need to have this debate.

Levels of type 2 diabetes—as we have already heard from David Stewart—heart disease and other illnesses, including many types of cancer

associated with obesity, are stubbornly high in Scotland and they have been that way for years. That puts a strain on our hard-pressed national health service, other public services and economy, and it is something that we could well do without. That is why I very much welcomed the Scottish Government's "A Healthier Future: Scotland's Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan" that was published earlier this year.

Some great work is going on across Scotland to address those issues, and I want to use some of my time in the debate to highlight some of the remarkable initiatives and fantastic organisations that are operating in my constituency and contributing positively towards the Government's plan.

It is, of course, true to say that Stirling has some of the most beautiful and stunning landscape that exists anywhere in this wonderful country of ours. It is home to an impressive array of Munros, Corbetts, Grahams and Donalds, as well as spectacular lochs. Because of that inspiring landscape, it is an attractive and popular place for hikers, hillwalkers, kayakers and cyclists—the perfect setting to promote a healthy outdoor and active lifestyle.

Stirling is also the home of the now internationally recognised daily mile, which was pioneered at St Ninians primary school from 2012 and was the brainchild of the then headteacher, Elaine Wyllie. The scheme ensures that all pupils walk, jog or run a mile each day, in addition to the usual physical exercise that they undertake. A study by Stirling, Edinburgh and the Highlands and Islands universities has shown clear evidence that the daily mile approach can help to combat problems not only in Scotland, but globally. I understand that over 3,500 schools in more than 30 countries around the world now take part in that remarkable initiative. What a success story it is, which began in St Ninians in the city of Stirling. Not all is gloom and doom in this area, although it is very challenging—we know that.

Earlier this year, the Scottish Government said that it wanted Scotland to be the first daily mile nation, with nurseries, colleges, universities and workplaces joining more than 800 primary schools to take part regularly. As the minister said, the Scottish Government's aim is to cut physical inactivity in adults and teenagers by 15 per cent by 2030. That equates to about a quarter of a million more people becoming active. Perhaps, in his summing up, the minister will say a bit more about how that ambition can be realised and reached.

I will say a few words about nextbike in Stirling, which is a highly innovative bike share scheme. Nextbike now provides 160 bikes across 23 bike stations in the city of Stirling, which are available

24/7. It is yet another advertisement for how we can have that active lifestyle.

I turn to healthy eating, and on that matter we are being watched very carefully by Philip Sim of the BBC. He has just tweeted:

"MSPs are debating diet and healthy weight on macaroni cheese day in the canteen. So everyone is making speeches about eating well, mere hours after half the people in the building gorged themselves on pasta, chips and garlic bread."

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Bruce Crawford: Only if the member is going to serve me macaroni and cheese.

Annabelle Ewing: I am curious, now that Bruce Crawford has raised the matter: did he have macaroni cheese for lunch?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Crawford; I put on record that I did not take chips.

Bruce Crawford: I did not have it, but only because I did not spot that it was on. It is one of my favourites. There is a place for it. We should not decry that as not being a good food; the issue is how we go about finding a balance in what we eat.

Members will be aware of the Food Assembly and its shock announcement that it would pull out of the UK earlier this year. That was a concerning time for all involved in food assemblies. I am glad to say that Stirling Food Assembly is still working hard to promote and sell fresh local produce. I was delighted when the organisers announced that they would be staying put in Stirling. They hold pick-up markets in Stirling high school and I understand that the Stirling Food Assembly now has more than 2,000 members.

I do not have any time left, but I want to pay tribute to the work that the Royal Highland Education Trust does in working with food producers and the agriculture industry to educate children about where their food comes from, which is so important.

15:54

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I warmly congratulate the member who has just spoken, not just because of the wonderful Munros in Stirlingshire, which I have had the privilege of climbing—some of them several times—but because Stirlingshire has led the way with many good-news stories when it comes to educating our youngsters on health.

The first Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee inquiry that I took part in when I was elected was on whether we should introduce free school meals in primary 1 to 3. Aside from all

the politics of that debate—and there were plenty of them; in fact, they are still going on—there was some fascinating evidence from around the country, south of the border and other countries about what interventions had helped the very youngest people to eat more healthily. One piece of evidence that stood out for me was the marked improvement when schools encouraged pupils and parents to get involved in the setting of menus, and when those menus made good use of locally sourced food. Brian Whittle referred to initiatives in Japan and Denmark, where pupils are able to help in the school kitchen.

The evidence since then has been striking in relation to rural schools, where food is very much part of the farming community that surrounds those schools. There is a lesson to be learned from the recent story in *The Press and Journal* about the school cook at Broadford primary school, who has been nominated for two awards for her outstanding work in promoting healthy eating at the school and inspiring pupils to further educate themselves on nutrition.

The evidence that we took at the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee has stuck with me throughout my time as an elected member, especially when I consider school meals that are less than satisfactory. It is sometimes argued that it is more expensive to prepare healthy meals because there is less scope for mass purchasing, and therefore less scope for economies of scale when it comes to preparing and transporting food. I wholly refute that view, although I accept that many school kitchens are not always suitable for the kind of meal preparation that we need in modern schools. It is important for us all to think about that when it comes to procurement.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Does the member agree that as well as improving food in school canteens, we need to educate children about the journey that the foodstuffs that they ingest at lunch time have been on to get to their plate?

Liz Smith: Absolutely—I agree. That is all part of the educational journey for youngsters. However, the key thing is that we must ensure that there is an improvement in the quality of the food that is being delivered to children for lunch and, in some cases, breakfast.

Members who have spoken in the debate have said that it is a damning indictment of Scotland's health that we have the lowest life expectancy not only in the United Kingdom but in western Europe. A 2017 Audit Scotland report found that many key trends indicated that overall health in Scotland is not improving in the way that we would like. That is why, as the Conservative spokesperson on education, I feel that we must focus on the diet and nutrition aspects of the motion.

I think that we all welcome the fact that one of the key outcomes in the diet and healthy weight plan is the emphasis that is placed on children having the best start in life by eating well and having a healthy weight. Apart from anything else, children who have that healthy early start do much better at school, irrespective of where they come from and their income background.

The “Scottish Conservative Healthy Lifestyle Strategy”, which was published by Brian Whittle last year, was founded on the belief that issues such as health, education, planning and housing have cross-party and cross-portfolio relevance and that policy must be based on three key, interconnected pillars: nutrition, the educational environment and physical activity. Education in particular is very much the solution to improving health and welfare, irrespective of who we are.

15:59

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I very much welcome the fact that Philip Sim is watching the debate, because I know how much he enjoys my contributions. I say to Bruce Crawford that, in 1945, the ration for cheese was 2 ounces a week, so there would be little prospect of having macaroni cheese very often. Indeed, research that was done in 1939, at the beginning of the war, showed that one could live and thrive on 1 pound of meat a week, a quarter of a pint of milk a day, 4 ounces of margarine and as much potatoes, vegetables and bread as one could eat.

David Stewart: Will the member give way?

Stewart Stevenson: That is all that people need to survive, although the experiment reported that there was a substantial increase in flatulence. Speaking of which, I will give way to David Stewart.

David Stewart: What was the member's experience of living through the Boer war?

Stewart Stevenson: I am never bored by any debate on the subject of food.

Realistically, for many of us, food has become a hobby rather than a way of living our lives. I am a little older than every other member in the chamber at the moment, apart from one. I see that members are looking the wrong way—he is over there on the Conservative benches. I remember the ending of sugar rationing in February 1953, when I was six years old. The ration for sweets at that point was 11g a day. To translate that into something meaningful in today's terms, that means that people could have in total one Mars bar every five days and nothing more—that was it. The sugar content of the 1953 ration was the equivalent of one can of Coke every three days.

We were actually a great deal healthier when our food intake was controlled by the state. I do not advocate a return to that, but that illustrates how much of our food intake is optional or voluntary and unnecessary. I and others of my generation probably have less of a sweet tooth, and I hope that that is reflected in my health. I am about a kilogram over the weight that I should be, although I am working on it. My heartbeat and respiration rate are okay. I had my blood pressure tested here in the Parliament just last week, and I am within the acceptable limits—I am below 140 and the difference between systolic and diastolic is about 60. However, that is not true of everybody in our society, and people suffer because of that.

On exercise, we do not all have to be Brian Whittle, who is a world-class athlete. I am nowhere near that, and I have never been near his historic achievements, but at least I and all of us can walk in our normal days. My watch tells me that I have walked 2.5 miles today. From looking at my diary, I expect to do about 4.5 miles tomorrow. I normally walk around 20 to 30 miles a week, just simply doing my normal business and avoiding taking taxis. That is a great help to my personal physical and mental wellbeing. Walking is a great activity to undertake if we want to think through the issues that we have.

Diabetes is one major consequence of our being overweight. To again return to the period after the war, type 2 diabetes in particular barely existed then, and type 1 was uncommon. However, we need to be cautious about that, because the diagnostic tools were pretty poor, so I suspect that there was a huge amount of undiagnosed diabetes. According to my father, basically it was diagnosed by smelling acetone on the patient's breath. However, by the time that that could be done, people were severely diabetic and their life was at severe risk.

Sport in schools is not what it used to be. I went to a very large school and on the peak day, a Saturday, a grand total of 490 pupils would participate in competitive sport in the rugby, football, hockey and cross-country teams. That is not the case today. The restoration of sport in our schools would definitely help.

I very much welcome the debate and the focus on being healthy, taking exercise and good food.

16:04

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I draw attention to my declaration in the register of members' interests of my position as chair of the Hibernian Community Foundation, which I intend to mention later.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate. We have heard lots of

statistics from all speakers to illustrate the seriousness of the problem that we have with activity, diet and obesity. David Stewart told us that 65 per cent of adults in Scotland are defined as being overweight. That means that being overweight in Scotland is now the norm. Almost one third of adults are classified as being obese. That tells us that Stewart Stevenson is not the norm, but we probably knew that before we started.

It is important to recognise, as speakers have mentioned and the Scottish Government's research shows, that issues relating to unhealthy and unbalanced diets often begin in childhood. The 2016 Scottish health survey revealed that 29 per cent of children in Scotland were at risk of being overweight and 14 per cent were at risk of obesity. In primary school, during those formative early years of education, it is crucial that we teach children the benefits of both physical exercise and maintaining a balanced diet.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Would the member like to know that I was recently at the Rowatt Institute, which has found that a child's taste buds are formed by the twelfth week of pregnancy?

Iain Gray: That certainly illustrates that some of those things are set very early in life.

Mr Crawford made a good point about this not all being doom and gloom. We have made some progress, and he gave the good example of the daily mile, which has been shown in recent research to be not always daily and not always a mile, but still extremely effective in raising health and activity levels in our schools.

It is not the only example. There is also the active schools programme, which goes back further and which in 2017-18 involved 309,000 young people making almost 7.5 million visits to active schools activity sessions. In my constituency of East Lothian, the programme is an enormous success. Therefore, initiatives have been taken that are having a positive impact.

That is true not just on the activity side but on the diet side as well. In my constituency, good programmes are run in our primary schools by the roots and fruits food collective or fundamental foods, working with young children and showing them how to cook, how to use foods and how to make better diet choices when they get older.

That feeds into the quality of the food provided in our school meals and the availability of free school meals—a number of speakers have mentioned school meals. One important aspect is their being available only during term time. That is why in the Labour amendment we mentioned the important initiative in North Lanarkshire, the 365

Club, which provides free school meals throughout the year.

There are other approaches. In East Lothian, we have lunch clubs in the school holidays in both Tranent and Prestonpans, and those are initiatives that we need to encourage.

Perhaps some of the strongest initiatives combine both things. That is why I want to mention the Go Fitba' programme, which the Hibs Community Foundation is currently running in Edinburgh and East Lothian. Youngsters in primary schools are given the chance of an hour's football activity, followed by a session on good nutrition and cooking, and then they sit down for a meal together.

The foundation is not just about children. We have also been responsible for delivering the football fans in training project to more than 560 men and 80 women. The programme is delivered by most of the major football clubs in Scotland and research by the University of Glasgow has shown not only that it encourages weight loss during the 12-week programme, but that the weight loss is still in place some 12 months later. It is an almost uniquely successful programme.

There are programmes that work and we know what we can do, but perhaps the most important thing is to support diverse approaches, because we are obliged to address the problem, and what works for some people will not work for others.

16:10

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Like others, I welcome this afternoon's debate. Obesity is a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

As has already been mentioned, the Scottish Government motion states:

"obesity and an unhealthy diet are linked to harms, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, musculoskeletal conditions and cancer".

As a nurse, I am directly aware of those issues and have direct working experience of patients who live with those conditions. I spent 25 years of my career in the operating room, much of the time—in both Los Angeles and Dumfries—involved in surgery for patients with complications related to type 2 diabetes and obesity. Many of those surgeries were not pleasant for either the patient or the staff. They included some of the worst cases of embolectomy, wound debridement and amputation of limbs, as well as other operations.

Tackling those issues and promoting physical activity, healthy diet and healthy weight—all of which contribute to optimum physical health and wellbeing—requires a multistrategy approach. It is important to highlight that all the amendments that

have been lodged are different, which underlines the fact that a multistrand approach is required.

The Scottish Government has outlined the delivery of ambitious actions in areas such as increasing levels of physical activity and improving diet and healthy weight, and it is important that we use a multistrand approach to achieve those aims.

I agree that improved mobility—potentially through appropriate weight loss—can lead to improved confidence in guarding against falls. I also agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton's words regarding older people's fears about falling—as has been highlighted, it is a major fear. I have looked after many post hip fracture patients and know that rehabilitation can sometimes take a long time.

I agree with the part of the Scottish Government's motion that,

"acknowledges the shared responsibility across all of society to help achieve this vision, including across national and local government as well as the public, private, third and community sectors."

I will pay a little attention to that. Many across our communities choose to engage and participate in, and support others through, social prescribing programmes. Before I joined the Health and Sport Committee, the Minister for Mental Health, Clare Haughey, briefed me in the quickest of conversations about what social prescribing was all about. Since then, I have been exploring the many ways in which social prescribing can help—whether in the form of walking football, walking netball or tai chi.

We know that it is not necessary to increase the heart rate to lose weight; simply an increase in physical activity can contribute to weight loss. The "Fixing Dad" programme, which I have mentioned in the chamber before, created by Anthony and Ian Whittington, helped their dad to lose seven stone—that is about 44kg. They helped their dad to lose so much weight by supporting him in a socially prescribed and family-engaged way so that Geoff could get on his bike. I welcome the work that Anthony and Ian have done. Perhaps the Scottish Government could review some of the merits of and evidence from the "Fixing Dad" model of social prescribing.

Today's debate is about the contribution that physical activity, diet and healthy weight make to health and wellbeing. I highlight the recent research published by the Scottish Government that explores the link between food, environment and the planning system. The Scottish Government consultation paper, "A Healthier Future", identifies Scotland's obesity rates as being among the highest in the developed world. The consultation, which ran from October 2017 to January 2018, included more than 30 proposed

actions to improve the Scottish diet and lifestyle and reduce public health harm.

Improving the food environment is critical to that aim. The consultation document makes it clear that a wide range of regulatory and other actions are needed to make healthier choices easier wherever we eat. The points that stood out for me include the fact that having access to outlets that sell healthy food near schools was noted to decrease the odds of someone being overweight or obese and that the closer a person lives to a fast food outlet, the more likely they are to be obese. How health relates to planning is an issue that the Health and Sport Committee took evidence on.

In addition, I love the easy suggestions for how people can increase their physical activity, which include simple steps such as getting off the bus one stop ahead of their destination. Simple suggestions can sometimes be the easiest way to achieve big gains.

I would like to highlight one of the actions that I took locally—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I do not know whether you have time; you will need to be very swift.

Emma Harper: I will put that up on my social media.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Who needs a Parliament?

Emma Harper: I welcome the debate, and I look forward to the Scottish Government engaging with third sector organisations and members across the chamber to allow us to create a healthier nation.

16:15

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con): Sadly, the fact that we, as a nation, have a problem with diet and exercise should come as no surprise to members. Study after study and case after case have confirmed that to be the truth. The fact that two new delivery plans have been published today is to be welcomed. However, we must not kid ourselves that they will be some sort of a magic wand that will provide the solution to all our problems; another day, another Government strategy. Members should not get me wrong—the ambition is laudable, but I cannot in good conscience say that we are making good progress.

Last year under the SNP, life expectancy in Scotland fell for the first time in nearly four decades. That is not progress, and it is simply not acceptable. We need to fundamentally consider how we go about tackling the problem. One key

pillar, which so far has been neglected by the Scottish Government, is the process of early intervention. We need to spend time working out why school kids prefer to go for a chip roll at lunch time rather than something healthier, and we need to work out how to tell them that the alternatives are better, because at the moment that message is not getting through.

Bruce Crawford: Is the member seriously saying that the Scottish Government is entirely responsible for young people going to chip vans and fast food outlets and for the fact that the age at which people are dying is dropping? If he is seriously saying that that is entirely the Scottish Government's fault, it is a ridiculous statement for him to make.

Tom Mason: We expect the Government to take a lead on such matters and to demonstrate good practice.

We need to figure out how best to convince pupils that physical education is far better for them than updating their Instagram profile. Too many are losing out, and not nearly enough has been done to ensure that every pupil in Scotland has access to sufficient hours of PE in secondary school. I hope that that will be a key focus of ministers in the future, because the current situation, in which nearly 80 per cent of schoolchildren are not getting the right amount of physical activity every day, is not good enough.

It cannot be the case that the strategies and consultations that are put out by the Government are branded as narrowly focused or bewildering. There needs to be clarity of objective on a much smaller scale than is the case now, so that outside groups can understand the specific intentions behind each individual policy. Again, that is simply not the case at the moment—or, at least, not according to the chairman of the National Obesity Forum.

Parents and families have a role to play, too. Even the best food education cannot offset a situation in which parents are not providing healthy meals for their children. When more than 500 two to four-year-olds are referred to a weight management service in one three-year period, it is vital that parents take responsibility and heed the advice that is given. In addition, we need to have a food procurement agenda that puts fresh, locally sourced, nutritious food at the heart of our thinking across the board—in schools, hospitals and every local authority area in Scotland.

Let us not lose sight of the end goal and the opportunities that a healthier Scotland will bring. We can unlock billions of pounds in productivity for our economy and ensure that obesity and weight management do not continue to take hundreds of millions of pounds from our NHS—money that can

be put to better use if progress is made on personal fitness and wellbeing.

We have had plenty of strategies, but not enough progress, with too much talking and not enough action. We know that we have a problem, so let us resolve to fix it before it is too late for a generation of Scots. The time for action is now, so let us not fall short.

16:20

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): There has been a lot of agreement today—maybe slightly excepting the last speech—and I do not aim to be too different from what others have said.

I agree with many members that there are a number of factors involved in our citizens achieving a healthy weight. The individual citizen has a role and the public sector has a role—that is what we found with smoking and alcohol. That role can be legislation, taxation or education, but individuals also have to choose a more healthy lifestyle.

On physical activity, Brian Whittle did not disappoint with his emphasis on sport. I completely agree that sport has to be part of the answer. However, not everyone is into sport, and there are other ways to get the physical exercise that we all need. In yesterday's debate on rail, I mentioned that I used the train seven times on Saturday, which involved a fair bit of walking because the train does not always go to exactly where a person wants to be. I agree very much with Alison Johnstone that we should put more into public transport, which would automatically help with physical exercise. I gave that example to show that we can be physically active without doing sport.

With regard to schools and young people, we have the double problem of parking at schools and youngsters who are not walking or cycling to school. East Lothian has trialled having exclusion zones for vehicles around schools, which therefore encourages more youngsters to walk and reduces the parking problem. I wonder whether we need to look at rolling that out nationally—Glasgow, for example, has been reluctant to go down that route.

Sport is the physical activity of choice for many people, and I am delighted about the investment in the east end of Glasgow, particularly in connection with the Commonwealth games: the Emirates arena, the Tollcross pool and the Glasgow Green hockey centre. Football remains the most popular sport for many people, but the cost of hiring pitches remains a problem—I identify with what Liz Smith said.

Brian Whittle: Does John Mason agree that, in our time, we could just put the jerseys down to have a game of football, but these days hiring 4G pitches is the norm? The cost of participation has gone up.

John Mason: That is exactly the point; expectations have gone up, which is good and means that we do not have the blaes pitches as much, but the new pitches cost money. Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life subsidise pitch hire, but it still remains a big challenge in poor areas where parents do not have spare cash for the kids to go to the football club—that also applies to athletics at the likes of Crownpoint, where Mr Whittle and I spent a pleasant evening recently.

Preventative spend has been an underlying theme of the debate. It is better to prevent people from getting obese in the first place, rather than waiting until they are and trying to fix it. That might mean spending more on subsidising football pitches, but the challenge is where to disinvest to free up the money. Should we cut hospital budgets in order to fund sports activity? What would happen if that meant less money for hospitals?

Diet is clearly a major factor, which we have focused on today. It is a question of what we eat and how much, as members have mentioned. The odd can of Irn Bru or bar of chocolate is okay, but the volumes that some people consume are the problem. Some restaurants are guilty on the question of portion size; even if the food is healthy, the portion size is sometimes far too big. In our canteen in the Parliament, we can be guilty of that.

I agree that there is also an issue with what people are eating and that we should be moving to promote healthier food. I maintain that some of our traditional meals are pretty healthy—for example, mince and tatties or stew—and they do not have to be that expensive, although I take Alison Johnstone's point that they are not always available cheaply locally. Generally speaking, mince and tatties for four will probably cost less than four fish suppers. However, an issue is that traditional cooking skills have been on the decline so there is a need for education in that regard.

Obesity stigma is a tricky area. On the one hand, we are saying that obesity is not a good thing, so we do not want to say at the same time that it is okay to be obese, but I agree that we need to tackle discrimination in employment and potentially related mental health problems.

I fear that there are no easy answers, but I agree with the overall theme that, just as we have tackled smoking and alcohol, we need to tackle obesity.

16:25

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The debate has not been the pedestrian one that it could have been. There has been a lively and vibrant set of contributions from across the chamber and I have been struck by the level of consensus that has been achieved. I thank Joe FitzPatrick for setting the tone and am grateful for his inclusive approach to the debate, which is typical of his approach as minister in the time that I have worked with him.

I associate myself with the priority areas that the minister identified: supporting active lifestyles and healthy diets; leadership across all sector; and linking Government policy across portfolios. It is very easy, in the dark vaults of Government, for people to work in isolation, but we cannot afford to be complacent on an issue as important as this. He was right to reference the fact that WHO has said that Scotland needs a whole-system approach and we see the measure of that in the plans that are being taken forward.

The minister was rightly intervened on by Miles Briggs, who mentioned price hikes in our nation's capital, and I hope that he will continue to put pressure on his colleague, council leader Adam McVey, to walk back any plans to increase the cost of physical activity in Edinburgh.

On transforming the food environment, focusing on children and young people and type 2 diabetes, we need to work to capture the range of interventions that we have at our disposal. When it comes to children and young people, and this speaks very much to my values as a former youth worker, it is not just about looking to expand the daily mile. In particular for children who are disengaged from school, who are arguably most likely to have the hardest health outcomes, we need to work to redress the systemic erosion of youth work that has happened across the country in recent years and find means of boxing clever by making activity available to the children who need it most.

Brian Whittle, who knows a thing or two about physical activity, as he never tires of telling us, offered some forensic analysis of what happens at school, which was a theme that was picked up by Liz Smith. Both members addressed the fundamental and undeniable link between diet and educational attainment. It is not rocket science.

Brian Whittle: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I will, because I was mean.

Brian Whittle: The member will be glad to know that I will not be mean back. I talked about the way in which we discuss this issue. I like to talk about nutrition—I do not like to talk about diet because,

in my view, “diet” is “die” with a “t” on the end. We need to talk more about nutrition.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The point is well made and speaks to the fact that nomenclature—how we describe things—matters here.

I enjoy serving with David Stewart on the Health and Sport Committee; he knows a lot about this issue and he cares a lot about it. He was quite right to identify the overmedicalisation of some of these problems at the expense of the fundamental recognition that a lot of them are social problems. They are symptoms of wider social problems, whether that is social exclusion, poverty or any of a range of other inequalities that exist. It was an important point to make. I congratulate him on the diabetes dinner that he held last night—I am sorry that I could not attend, as 260,000 of our fellow Scots are currently suffering from type 2 diabetes.

I associate myself with Alison Johnstone's point about active travel. Active travel really matters; it matters in my constituency, where we have two of the most polluted thoroughfares in the whole of Scotland. One of the points in the five-point plan that I have identified is about investing heavily in active travel, so I am happy to support Alison Johnstone's important point about active travel.

In an exchange with John Mason, Alison Johnstone also talked about the existence of what are called “food deserts”. It is very easy to say that you can cook a meal from scratch cheaply and effectively if you have the means, but that is of no use to people who live 2.5 miles away from the nearest fresh fruit and vegetables.

Moving on to Bruce Crawford's excellent contribution, for full disclosure, I say that I had the mac and cheese. I went for the skinny fries though; I think that counts.

We talked about the natural capital that we as a country have at our disposal for physical activity. We should never tire of reminding ourselves of the beautiful country that we live in and the asset that it represents.

Liz Smith is another contributor who is significantly more active than I am. I am glad that she took my intervention, because I think that it is important that our kids understand how the food that they eat in their schools and homes gets to their plate. That will start a lifelong interest that will pay health dividends.

I will not talk about Stewart Stevenson and the night that I ended up in the same Thai restaurant as him. He clearly used most of his ration book on what I saw him consume that night.

Iain Gray picked up on the school meals issue. I am delighted to say that we will support the Labour amendment, because it is absolutely right. Free schools meals are only available during term

time and we need to recognise that that is a yawning gap, particularly during the summer months.

Before I finish, I want to thank Emma Harper. Her contributions to these debates are always very important. Her lived experience as a nurse lends a lot to the Health and Sport Committee, as it does to these debates. Her insight, particularly into hip fractures and support for a falls strategy, is welcome indeed.

Hippocrates said:

“let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food”.

That is an ancient quote, but it is still apposite today. In my early days on the Health and Sport Committee, a leading clinician—I cannot remember who it was—said that the six best doctors that we have at our disposal in Scotland are sunlight, air, exercise, sleep, water and vegetables. I cannot think of a better way of summing up the preventative and proactive agenda that we are all forging together tonight.

16:32

Alison Johnstone: I agree with colleagues that this has been a positive and consensual debate—even though the Government and the Conservatives feel that they are unable to support my very reasonable amendment. I know that they both really want to; I think that we can get there.

It is important to discuss figures, even in our policy debates.

Joe FitzPatrick: On the doubling of the active transport budget, what is not in that headline figure is the additional leverage through the money that comes from local government as part of the package. That actually delivers the £25 per head that Alison Johnstone asks for.

Alison Johnstone: I appreciate that local government has a part to play, but it is key that Government shows real leadership on this important agenda. We could do much more, together with local government.

I welcome the fact that the minister spoke of the need to restrict the marketing of unhealthy food. The Scottish Greens welcome that, because we have a manifesto commitment to a levy on supermarkets in relation to the mass retailing of high-sugar and high-fat food. As the minister pointed out, there is public support for such restrictions, because we all pay for the outcomes when people do not eat healthily for a variety of reasons.

The minister also spoke of the need to change formulations and about the impact of diabetes on the NHS. David Stewart also spoke about how diabetes is costing the NHS and us £1 billion a

year. Diabetes is worthy of its own debate. It is obesity related and relevant to all the issues that we are discussing in this debate. The debate is important because healthy life expectancy has stalled in this very wealthy country.

We will support the Conservative amendment because I welcome the fact that it acknowledges that inclusivity is key to good health. I also welcome the fact that Brian Whittle suggested that he has huge sympathy for our amendment. I look forward to discussing it with him at a later date and ensuring that we have support when it becomes a firm budget ask.

Brian Whittle also spoke of the fact that the school estate has a role to play. Nurseries and schools also have a role, as do we all—parents, teachers, the third sector, and so on.

Schools and their proximity to junk food are another thing that we need to discuss further. During apprenticeship week I went to visit the Breadwinner Bakery in my Lothian region, and when I came out of that really impressive visit, there was a queue of schoolchildren visiting a burger van in the industrial estate behind the school that I attended. There is work to do there. They were choosing to leave the school campus and go into the industrial estate setting to visit the van. I am absolutely certain that healthier options would have been available within the school grounds.

Volunteering is key to the delivery of physical education that we want to see. We want to make sure that it is affordable and that those who have skills to offer get the chance to offer them. Volunteering is good for the volunteer and good for those who benefit from the skills that they can offer. It is important to look at the cost of access to facilities, too.

David Stewart spoke about the obesogenic environment. Today I have sat in committee and sat in the chamber and tonight I will be sitting as I chair a two-hour public meeting held by Spokes—the Lothian cycling campaign. It is important that we have an opportunity to build activity into our days wherever that is possible. I now live six miles from Parliament, so I cycled in this morning and I will cycle home tonight, but we need to have a discussion about how we enable people to be active during the day, and we have a role to play in being the best role models that we can be.

Alex Cole-Hamilton’s on-going support for a firm look at falls and the impact that they have is welcome. If older people remain physically active, they are more likely to have the strength that will prevent them from falling, which will enable them to continue to be physically active.

I am glad that the diet and healthy weight strategy acknowledges the importance of

breastfeeding, and I certainly agree that we need new specialist support for mothers and babies who have been breastfeeding for around 6 to 8 weeks, because we know that that is when rates tail off. I was dismayed by recent changes to breastfeeding support across the NHS Lothian area, where some much-needed and well-regarded drop-in support has been discontinued and, in effect, replaced by a triaged appointment-based system. I would appreciate an update from the minister on changes and priorities in that regard, particularly in Lothian.

Colleagues have mentioned this, but we must address the fact that the missing ingredient in so many of our plans and our best intentions to eat well and move more is the lack of time that we have in our days. As much as we want to, it can be difficult to find the time to cook with our families and friends, to shop often for fresh food in the middle of a busy week and to prioritise taking part in sports or meeting friends who play those sports when we are feeling overburdened and overstretched.

If we want to improve people's diets and activity levels, we have to be honest about the value that we place on making sure that people have leisure time and the cash to enjoy it. Leisure time is fundamental to living healthily, but too many people—particularly those in high-stress, low-paid occupations—do not get enough of it. All too often, it seems that there is a tension between our working lives and living healthily. We can make changes to our communities, the food that we eat in our workplaces and the amount of time that we spend being physically active, but we need to ask whether we are getting the overall shape of our working week right. That may be a debate for another day.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call on David Stewart to close for Labour. You have six minutes, Mr Stewart.

16:38

David Stewart: As other members have said, this has been an excellent debate with well-argued contributions from across the chamber. There was a strong consensual spirit in the debate, which is why Labour will support the Scottish Government's motion and all the amendments. I note that my spirit of co-operation has not been reciprocated by a couple of parties, but I believe that we should support sinners who repent.

As we have heard, more than a quarter of adults in Scotland are obese, and the Labour amendment particularly emphasises the health inequalities element. Members will be aware that being obese can increase the risk of individuals developing many potentially serious health

conditions including type 2 diabetes and several types of cancer. The key point is that the risk of obesity varies across Scotland, with obesity being seen in 21 per cent of women who live in affluent areas compared with 37 per cent of women who live in deprived areas.

Iain Gray flagged up the key point in our amendment that holiday hunger for schoolchildren is a scandal that cannot be allowed to continue. The successful club 365 programme in North Lanarkshire feeds children who qualify for free school meals throughout the holidays. I hope that the relevant minister will confirm in their wind-up speech whether that can be rolled out across the country.

During the debate, Brian Whittle made sensible points about the need to look after the health of healthcare workers. That is extremely important. Not least, we should consider the flu vaccine proportions in each health board area. Brian Whittle also talked about the important role of third sector organisations, and I think that we all agree with his point about using the school estate better for sporting activities after hours, which seems very sensible.

Alison Johnstone made strong points about health inequality. I agree with her general point that we should increase the walking and cycling budget. That would be a sensible development.

Alex Cole-Hamilton made a good speech, in which he made a key point about the great challenge that we face, because being overweight is the second most important avoidable cause of cancer. He, too, stressed the importance of active travel and talked about the links with poverty and social isolation.

Bruce Crawford made a good speech too. He is a fantastic advocate for his Stirling constituency. I flag up the important daily mile initiative, which originated in a school in his area. I was astounded to learn that 3,500 schools across the world have copied that excellent initiative.

Liz Smith said that one of the first debates in which she became involved in the Parliament was the debate about free school meals. I strongly agree with her about the importance of locally sourced food and making learning about nutrition part of educational activity.

Stewart Stevenson always takes a wide historical sweep. He did not answer my question about his role in the Boer war, but I am sure that I will find out about that at some stage. He made an interesting point about the ending of sugar rationing and the relatively low incidence of diabetes during the war, because people were consuming less fat and sugar.

Iain Gray, whom I have already mentioned, talked about the active schools programme. As a fellow football fan—although I do not support his team—I am interested in what Hibernian Community Foundation is doing, and I will raise the matter with my colleagues at Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club when I see them—I hope at the weekend.

I agree with what Emma Harper said about the fixing dad programme. I saw a presentation on the programme at a cross-party group meeting. I would like the Scottish Government to support the roll-out of a strong element of social prescribing across the piece.

John Mason made good points about the important levers that the Parliament has. Given the important impact of the smoking ban on public health, parliamentarians should consider what other public health solutions we can develop, particularly in the context of public transport and preventative spend.

Time is short, so I must conclude. Health inequality is at the root of this debate. Poverty, social deprivation and inequality are significant contributions to being overweight, and the least well-off are most at risk. Why should someone's postcode determine their life expectancy? As Martin Luther King said:

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. For one dreadful moment, I thought that Stewart Stevenson was going to intervene to explain his role in the Boer war. Mercifully, we were spared that.

16:43

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): This has been a good and useful debate. I say to Alison Johnstone that I hope that one day we will have a Conservative-Green coalition in this Parliament, so she should not give up lodging amendments.

It is clear from all members' speeches that improving people's diet and increasing their physical activity are among the biggest health challenges that Scotland faces. The benefits to health of good diet and regular exercise are clear.

The health inequalities in Scotland in the current landscape are unacceptable. I think that all members who have spoken have highlighted that. We have the lowest life expectancy in the UK; in fact, we have lower life expectancy than most western European countries. That has been the case for too many years, and the health of the people of Scotland is not showing the signs of improvement that we all want. Two thirds of adults are overweight and almost a third are classed as

obese. Even more worrying is that almost a third of children are at risk of being overweight or obese.

Our record on health inequalities is most pronounced in the poorest communities that we represent. We need to work especially hard to address that. As David Stewart said, being overweight and obese significantly increases a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, musculoskeletal conditions and cancer. Obesity is the second biggest preventable cause of cancer, after smoking, and is on track to become the biggest preventable cause.

Type 2 diabetes accounts for a significant proportion of NHS Scotland's drug costs, but it is preventable and reversible and people can, through exercise and living a healthier lifestyle, go into remission. Its cost to NHS Scotland is estimated to be up to £600 million a year, and the cost to Scottish society is estimated to be up to £4.6 billion a year, if we take into account the wider economic impact.

I agree with my colleague Brian Whittle—who would speak on the issue for hours, if he was given the opportunity—that improving Scotland's attitude to eating well and having more regular exercise should be at the heart of what happens in our schools and society. As many members have said, it is our responsibility to teach our young people the important lessons of eating well, and to help them to develop good lifestyle habits to keep physically active. At the weekend, I attended the Hindu community's Diwali celebrations in Edinburgh, and one of the values in the Hindu religion of which I was not aware is that every parent is equivalent to 100 teachers. That is something that we should take into account in the context of the subject of the debate.

In this year of young people, we must ensure that our school pupils have access to meals that are of the best nutritional value, and to physical activity. A number of members have already made the point, but I make no apology for raising once more the issue of access to our school estate. Despite having consistently highlighted the matter, I continue to see how limited the opportunities are for community groups to deliver after-school physical activities and clubs in my Lothian region.

It is also important to consider how every level of government in Scotland will look to prioritise the two new delivery plans. As I have stated, the City of Edinburgh Council proposed this summer to hike prices for sports halls and local groups in the capital. I believe that the proposal is totally counterproductive to what we are trying to achieve, and I am pleased that following my intervention and that of other Lothian MSP colleagues the council has postponed the increase until January. However, in the coming weeks and

months, the minister—indeed, all of us—must make sure that we have a genuine joined-up approach throughout Scotland in order that we can truly make Scotland a healthier nation.

The expansion of weight management services that are tailored to individuals' needs will make a real difference, because such services can massively reduce people's chances of contracting the diseases that are associated with being overweight and obese. Resources and organisations must be available to build up the infrastructure around these services, and to ensure that they are tailored to individuals.

I recently learned of a partnership between Scottish Slimmers and a local general practice on the Isle of Skye that is helping patients with assisted weight loss. I hope that we see that kind of innovative approach being taken as a result of the delivery plans, and that there is a cultural shift in Scotland, with people having access to better-quality food and exercising more.

However, for that to happen, a holistic approach will be required. Scottish Conservatives have already supported the banning of multibuys that promote food that is of low nutritional value, and which actively encourage people to overpurchase and overconsume. We also support labelling on packaging that ensures that consumers can make informed decisions.

I was encouraged to learn in the debate that a record number of schools are receiving sportscotland awards, and that a record 309,000 young people attended active schools lessons. In my Lothian region, third-sector organisations including the West Lothian Youth Foundation are doing exceptional work in our communities. The foundation uses football to promote health development and education for people across West Lothian, and has a range of initiatives that encourage participation by and accessibility for all. In fact, it has tweeted to me during the debate to ask me to advertise its offer of free football games for 11 to 15-year-olds every Friday. For those who are interested—I suppose that this continues a theme that was highlighted by Bruce Crawford, Stewart Stevenson and Alex Cole-Hamilton—the games take place at Livingston Football Club's Tony Macaroni arena tomorrow, if they have time to go. Charities and organisations like the foundation can make a real difference in our communities, so we should provide them with all possible support to make positive change.

Everyone in the chamber will agree that Scotland's relationship with food and exercise needs to improve, and the Scottish Conservatives are committed to working with the Government and all parties across the chamber to make that happen.

However, I point out to SNP ministers and the Government that although strategies, action plans, working groups or the two delivery plans that are being discussed are welcome, they will, as Willie Rennie said at today's First Minister's question time, be worth as much as

"a piano in a pigsty"

if they do not deliver the change that we all want, and if they are not outcomes driven. If we can make sure that they are outcomes driven, the Government will have the support of Conservative members.

16:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I am delighted to close the debate on two interconnected issues that are vital not only to our individual health but to having a healthy nation. I am grateful to members across the chamber for the content and tone of the debate, and I will do my best to respond to some of the questions that were raised.

I will start with Mr Briggs's comments, just because they are in my mind and I will forget otherwise—I have not written this down. Can we collectively agree that, from now on, we will drop the idea of pigsties and pianos? To answer his substantive point, the plans are outcome focused for the very reasons that he pointed to. None of the ministers in the health portfolio has much time for strategies and plans that do not have a purpose and that we do not follow through.

It is important to recognise—as members have done—that, although the issues that we are dealing with are complex and can be difficult, that is no reason not to tackle them. In the spirit of this debate, it cannot be beyond our collective wit to come up with real plans and initiatives that we can drive forward to make a difference. In previous health debates, we have said that one of the challenges for our health service is not simply to meet the health needs that people in Scotland currently have but to tackle the generations coming behind us, so that they do not face the same problems as the rest of us.

Let me turn to what members have said. I agreed with much of what Brian Whittle said, which does not often happen. It is important to talk about children's input into the creation of school menus and to recognise that that is growing. In relation to the school estate, it is important to recognise that sports facilities in 79 per cent of primary schools and 98 per cent of secondary schools are available to the local community. However, there are difficulties with private finance initiative schools, which can restrict that access.

Mr Whittle and other members spoke about the issue of planning applications for fast food outlets near school gates. I agree that we are sending mixed messages if we are teaching children in school about better nutrition and better diet and we are asking them to be involved in that, but then the burger van is immediately outside the school gates. Therefore, we have committed to look at that in the review of planning policy and the national planning framework, which will begin after the Parliament has taken a view on the Planning (Scotland) Bill.

Mr Whittle's important central point was about what drives people's behaviours and how we can change the relationship that we have in Scotland with food, physical activity, nutrition and drink. That is the central point and, to be frank, it is the hardest problem to crack. I do not think that any of us has the ultimate answer to that question.

A number of steps have already been taken, which are having some results. For example, in the national health service in Scotland, the mandatory nutrition criteria for retail outlets require that 50 per cent of food items and 70 per cent of drinks offer a healthier choice. There are also limitations on what can be promoted. The recent evaluation of that initiative has shown that healthy food purchases from those outlets have increased from 11 per cent to 47 per cent and that healthy drink purchases from them have increased from 47 per cent to 76 per cent. There are levers that we can pull to help people to make healthier choices.

Brian Whittle: Does the cabinet secretary agree that how we frame the conversation will be hugely important? For example, I say to Bruce Crawford that there is nothing wrong with having mac and cheese, but he should have broccoli with it. I also say to Alex Cole-Hamilton that skinny fries are worse.

Jeane Freeman: I agree. That speaks to a point that was made by both Alison Johnstone and Iain Gray in their own ways. Alison Johnstone made the important point that, when we have the conversation, we have to be very careful what we say about body image and ideal shape. Those are important issues for everyone, but particularly for young women. John Mason talked about not shaming people, and Iain Gray made the point that we need a diversity of approaches. That is very important.

When I was at school, I absolutely hated sport but I loved dancing. Now, in some of our schools, particularly in secondary schools, dancing is a physical activity option. Indeed, I joined in the dancing at my local secondary school. How we keep young people actively engaged in physical activity as they move into secondary schools is key.

I agree with much of David Stewart's amendment, but I regret that we cannot support it because it deletes what we consider to be an important part of the Government's motion. That is a pity.

I am glad that Mr Stewart raised the important point about type 2 diabetes, in which respect there is work going on. For example, there is an initiative in NHS Fife that, if it proves to be effective, we will look to roll out across the rest of the health service.

The point about holiday hunger was well made by Mr Stewart and others. Many initiatives on that are being undertaken by local authorities across the country, and they are gaining some momentum.

As I said, Alison Johnstone made an important point about body image. I welcome the fact that she recognises the increase in spending on active travel. The problem with the Green amendment is that it seeks to make budget decisions outside budget discussions. I know that Alison Johnstone and her party will pursue that particular point in the budget discussions with Mr Mackay.

We support the Liberal Democrat amendment. Alex Cole-Hamilton made an important point about the work on falls and fractures and the consequential impact on reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Liz Smith and others talked about the importance of school kitchens and menus, and so on.

Everyone touched on the point that what we need is a partnership. Of course, the Scottish Government has a responsibility to lead, but we need to do much of the work in partnership with local authorities, the health service, the third sector and the private sector.

Finally, many members highlighted the work that is being done in their constituencies and regions in schools, football clubs and the third sector. I point to the work that Cumnock Juniors Football Club has done to make a connection between schools and physical activity, focusing on people who are particularly inactive and on young women and girls.

We recognise that we are not going to solve all the issues over the course of one electoral cycle; therefore, sustaining the momentum over the long term is crucial. It is important that we continue the spirit and tone of the debate as we work together collectively not only to deliver the plans to which our motion refers but in being open to new ideas and initiatives that other members may want to introduce. I speak on behalf of my colleagues on both sides of me when I say that we are very open to having those conversations and to considering

additional ideas about how we can move things forward.

The core point to which I return is—as Mr Whittle said—that we must change the individual and collective mindset about how we want to live a healthier life. Living longer is good, but living longer and more healthily is even better. I commend the motion to the Parliament.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-14762, on committee membership. I ask Graeme Dey to move the motion on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Alex Rowley be appointed to replace Monica Lennon as a member of the Local Government and Communities Committee.—
[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-14749.1, in the name of Brian Whittle, which seeks to amend motion S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on physical activity, diet and healthy weight, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-14749.3, in the name of David Stewart, which seeks to amend motion S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)

Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 24, Against 78, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-14749.4, in the name of Alison Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion

S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

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

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 23, Against 79, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-14749.2, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-14749, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on physical activity, diet and healthy weight, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of two new delivery plans for Scotland, which set out ambitious actions to increase levels of physical activity and to improve diet and healthy weight; recognises the important contribution that physical activity, diet and healthy weight make to health and wellbeing, including that obesity and an

unhealthy diet are linked to harms, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, musculoskeletal conditions and cancer; endorses a vision for a Scotland where people eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active, as articulated in the nation's new public health priorities; acknowledges the shared responsibility across all of society to help achieve this vision, including across national and local government as well as the public, private, third and community sectors; supports ambitions to reduce physical inactivity in adults and adolescents by 15% by 2030 and to halve childhood obesity by 2030; commends the commitment in both delivery plans to tackle health inequalities; maintains support for proposals to restrict the promotion and marketing of food and drink that is high in fat, sugar or salt with little to no nutritional benefit where they are sold to the public; calls on the Scottish Government to recognise that the three pillars of basic health are physical activity, nutrition and inclusivity and for it to provide the methodology required to achieve more ambitious targets, and reaffirms the call, which the Parliament agreed in the debate on motion S5M-04324 on 2 March 2017, for the Scottish Government to bring forward a national falls strategy, which it believes will help give people confidence in the physical landscape around them to enable a more active lifestyle.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-14762, in the name of Graeme Dey, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Alex Rowley be appointed to replace Monica Lennon as a member of the Local Government and Communities Committee.

Meeting closed at 17:03.

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

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