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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 22 January 2019

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. Our first item of business today is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Pastor Rob McArthur, who is the pastor at River Church in Banff.

Pastor Rob McArthur (River Church, Banff): Presiding Officer, elected members of the Scottish Parliament, it is an absolute honour to be with you this afternoon.

One thing that I love is being with my wife and four children. Times together as a family are a high priority for us. There is something about being together in heart and mind that makes us stronger. Is it not true for us all that making time to be with family and friends is good for us?

Nine years ago, I dedicated my life to Jesus and I chose to bring my heart and mind into alignment with his purposes for my life. That was not in my life plan, but God's plans are always better than ours.

Recently, I was part of a team that organised a unity service for remembrance Sunday. We decided that the best location for the service would be the connecting area of our two towns, Banff and Macduff—the Banff bridge. During the service, which more than 500 people attended, I asked folks to come together and to link arms, in order to make a human chain across the bridge. It was a beautiful symbol of local unity and there was such a sense of togetherness.

However, in the early stages of preparation for the service, we had many doubts as to whether people would come. We had to challenge our thinking and replace our “as ifs” with “what ifs”—going from, “As if this could work,” to, “What if this could actually work?” That was a powerful shift in our minds. As a small group, we had to think big.

I wonder what could happen if we, as a people, asked “what if” questions rather than the negative “as if” questions. What if God could use us, as a people, to do great things for this nation? What if he actually listens to our prayers and wants to help us? What if we believe that God is for us and not against us?

It was one thing to have a physical bridge connecting our two towns; it is quite another to have people connecting hearts in fellowship and

relationship. Hearts that are connected are stronger together.

My prayer is that, in the year ahead—for each one of us who is here and for those people who cannot be with us—we, as a people, think big, that we have hope and think “what if”, and that we remind ourselves that the Lord Jesus is absolutely for us.

Thank you.

Topical Question Time

14:03

Cryptococcus Infection (Queen Elizabeth University Hospital)

1. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that two patients have died at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital after contracting a fungal infection, and what advice has been issued to national health service boards on that matter. (S5T-01442)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I will go through some clear, factual points in response to that question, which I am sure members would appreciate.

In November, the bacteria *Cryptococcus* was identified in one patient. That patient was discharged for palliative care and, sadly, subsequently died in late December, but *Cryptococcus* was not a contributory factor in their death. *[Jeane Freeman has corrected this contribution. See end of report.]* In December, the post-mortem of a child who had passed away confirmed that *Cryptococcus* was present and was a contributory factor in the child's death. I know that I speak for the whole Parliament when I say that our thoughts and sympathies go to both families.

The identification of two cases acts as the trigger for additional infection control measures by a board. Those measures were undertaken; they include the provision of prophylactic antifungal medication to the relevant group of vulnerable patients, the provision of additional high-efficiency particulate air—HEPA—filter machines to ensure clean and clear air, and air monitoring.

When I visited the Queen Elizabeth university hospital this morning, I had detailed briefings and the opportunity to speak directly with the medical director, the senior nurse, senior board members and a family. From that, from the external advice that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has sought, including advice from Health Protection Scotland, and from the clinical advice that is available directly to me, I am confident that the board has taken all the steps that it should to ensure and maintain patient safety. To provide further independent assurance, I have asked the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate to review the incident fully and recommend any further steps that should be taken.

Monica Lennon: I, too, extend our sympathies to the families of the patients who died. We have now learned that the infection was a contributory

factor in the case of the child who sadly died, which people will be shocked and upset to hear.

The cabinet secretary said that she is confident in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, but she must recognise that, over the weekend, there was a complete lack of clarity from the health board in response to legitimate media inquiries. We also had no update from the Scottish Government at a worrying time.

We have had further information about the outbreak that occurred back in November, but it is not clear when the Scottish Government was first made aware of the situation. Perhaps the cabinet secretary will confirm that. We learned yesterday that an out-patient and his wife wrote last March to the previous cabinet secretary about the pigeon infestations, but the Government has said that it cannot find that letter.

This is a serious public health concern. Sadly, two people who contracted the infection are dead. The public need to have full confidence that the Government has a grip on the situation.

Was the cabinet secretary made aware of the issue at the Queen Elizabeth when she took over as health secretary last year? If she was not, when exactly was she first notified and what did she do when she was?

Jeane Freeman: I will be clear on a number of matters. I said that I am confident that the board has taken all the steps that it should to ensure and maintain patient safety in the light of the incident.

Monica Lennon queried why there was no update from the Government. I hope that I am making it clear to members that I treat such matters exceptionally seriously, but I want to work on the basis of factual information. That is why I have come to give factual information today.

The Government was first informed of the *Cryptococcus* infection in two patients on 21 December. That was the right time for the Government to be informed, because it was the post-mortem following the child's death that identified the second case. As I said, a second case is the trigger for additional infection control action. We were rightly informed and kept up to date.

To make progress and understand the factual situation, we must first be sure about patient safety, and we must then be sure about and take time to identify the source and the manner of the spread of the bacteria. That takes time, because plates have to be cooked—if members will forgive me, I cannot think of another word—

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): Incubated.

Jeane Freeman: I thank my minister for that helpful comment. Plates must be incubated to ensure that the right form of *Cryptococcus* is identified, so that the right steps are taken and so on.

As for the letter, not just the current Scottish Government but all previous Governments have always had a robust system for recording all communication to ministers and cabinet secretaries, whether it comes in writing, by email or via social media. Over the past few days, we have undertaken a thorough search of the MACCS—ministerial and corporate correspondence system—using a number of different ways of spelling people's names and different keywords, and have found no record of that letter. In addition, Ms Robison's constituency office undertook a search of its system and found no record. Although the letter predates my appointment as cabinet secretary, my constituency office also undertook such a search. Although we have found no record of the letter, we have made it clear that, if its authors wish to advise us of what they said, I will be very happy to deal with the matter seriously and to respond directly to them. However, in the absence of that information, I cannot do so.

Monica Lennon: I think that the people of Scotland will find it absolutely extraordinary that, in a modern hospital—the country's flagship super-hospital, no less—an infection from pigeons can kill patients. The health board has struggled to get its facts straight over the weekend, the *Evening Times* has reported that concerns had been known about for two years and two people are dead, yet we do not know what our health secretaries have been doing. This is the latest in a catalogue of public health concerns not just at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital but in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Two cancer wards at the Royal hospital for sick children were closed over an outbreak of bacteria, and the temporary closure of the Cowllairs facility led to more than 1,000 operations being cancelled. The public are right to be concerned about patient safety. If this unthinkable and deadly infection can happen at the flagship Queen Elizabeth university hospital, what is to prevent it from happening at other hospitals?

Will the cabinet secretary comment further on what steps she is taking to support the families of the deceased and what she is doing to prevent this from ever happening again at any other hospital?

Jeane Freeman: Let us be clear, because it is very important that we deal in factual and accurate information. I understand that the concerns that were raised two years ago were very different from the concerns about this case, which has led to one

patient dying as a consequence of *Cryptococcus* infection. The concerns of two years ago were acted on by the board, which implemented a number of additional anti-bird measures including spikes and the use of hawks. Those concerns were dealt with at that time, and this is a new instance.

In investigating the source of the infection, the hospital's and the board's estates staff, including the director of estates, traced it to one plant room on the 12th floor, at the top of the building. There, invisible to the naked eye, was a very small break in the wall through which pigeons had entered, and their excrement was found in the plant room. I emphasise that the break was found only by means of smoke detection because, as I have said, it was invisible to the naked eye. Staff continue to work on how bacteria from that excrement were able to enter a closed ventilation system, and they will continue to update us on that.

Nevertheless, Ms Lennon is right in saying that concern has been expressed—by the board and by me, but, much more importantly, by the people of Glasgow and more widely—about what appear to be a number of instances of the fabric of the Queen Elizabeth university hospital being less than satisfactory. Therefore, in the discussion that I had this morning, I agreed that a review should take place, with external expert advice. That review will look at the building's design, the commissioning of the work and the construction, handover and maintenance of the building to identify where issues were raised that should have been addressed and where current maintenance programmes should perhaps be more robust or frequent—or whatever the review's recommendation might be.

Independent expert advice will be sought for the review, and, in addition, such advice will be provided to me on the progress of the review and its recommendations. By the end of this week, I intend to make available to members and to publish the review's remit and details of the expert advice that will be sought in the various technical areas in which it is required. It is right that we should consider whether, in its totality, the fabric of the Queen Elizabeth university hospital is as fit for purpose as we require it to be and that, if there are lessons to be learned, we should take those and apply them across the rest of our health system in Scotland, particularly where we have the commissioning of new build.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We have had a series of quite lengthy questions and correspondingly detailed answers. At least five members would like to ask further questions. If members can be brief, we will be able to get through some of those, at least.

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I very much welcome the cabinet secretary's statement and, in particular, the review, which I hope will also look at the issues around the closure of the children's cancer wards at the Royal hospital for sick children. It is very welcome, too, to hear that the proper procedures appear to have been carried out.

However, a great deal of anxiety has been created unnecessarily as a result of the way in which external communications have been handled by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. If the information had been made available more timeously, I am sure that much of the anxiety that has been created in recent days could have been avoided. Will the cabinet secretary make sure that the health board learns lessons on the need, in such circumstances, for effective and timeous communications and transparency as part and parcel of the strategy for handling such outbreaks?

Jeane Freeman: I absolutely accept Mr Neil's point. In answer to Ms Lennon, I should have said that the board immediately had conversations with the families of the two individuals who died, and there is on-going communication between clinical staff and the families affected in the areas of the hospital concerned right now.

This morning, I took the opportunity to discuss external and internal communications with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and I understand that there will be—and I expect to see—a number of improvements in those areas in addition to other improvements that the board has made. However, we must understand that, in order to be sure of one's facts, one cannot always work exactly to the timetable of the news cycle. There will be times when I or a health board cannot answer questions from our friends in the media at the precise point at which they are asked.

That said, it is fair to say that improvements have been sought on external communications, and I am confident that improvements will be made.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I, too, express my sympathy to the families involved, and I thank the cabinet secretary for her answers to the previous questions.

What other concerns—if any—have been raised with the cabinet secretary with regard to the major problems at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital? Will she ensure that there is full transparency when it comes to the publication of the review?

Jeane Freeman: We know that a number of issues have arisen at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, including with water hygiene, external cladding, the ventilation system and glazing failures. As I explained, the most recent

incident involved ingress into the plant room and the ventilation system. I expect the review to cover all those areas and others, such as the impacts on access to healthcare. As part of the review, external advice will be taken, because some of what will be discussed will certainly be beyond my expertise in its technicality.

The review's recommendations will be made public and I will present our response to the recommendations to the chamber. By the end of this week, I hope to be able to make public to all members the review's remit, the nature of the external advice that will be sought and of the additional independent advice that will be provided to me, and an idea of timescale, although we must wait to find out what the experts tell us. I undertake to keep the Parliament updated, to make public the review's recommendations and to respond to those recommendations in the chamber.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Given the series of events that have taken place at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, I welcome the review that the cabinet secretary has announced today. Can she give a guarantee that it will be a genuinely independent review—that is, that the people who were involved in commissioning, doing the work on and delivering the hospital will not be part of investigating what has gone wrong there?

Also, will the review commit to look at the history of the reports from the consultant microbiologists at the hospital, who, I believe, have been raising concerns about the safety and security of the hospital for a number of years?

Jeane Freeman: Yes—I can give that commitment. Obviously, individuals who have been involved at various steps along the way will provide information to the review, and perhaps comment and opinion. We will need to discuss with those who will be charged with the review exactly how they want to undertake it, but it will have that very important independence and expert advice available to it.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): Can the health secretary advise on the current hospital-acquired infection rate for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and how it compares with the rest of Scotland?

Jeane Freeman: Since 2007, there has been an 85 per cent fall in cases of *Clostridium difficile* infection in over-65-year-olds and a 94 per cent fall in levels of MRSA, in line with the national average. The national point prevalence survey record shows that the Queen Elizabeth university hospital has an overall rate of hospital-acquired infection of 4 per cent; in comparison, the rate for Scotland is 4.9 per cent. We should not ignore the

successful track record of our patient safety programme.

However, the hospital deals with very sick individuals in a very acute circumstance, and in those circumstances—in this hospital and elsewhere—infection arises. The key is to understand what we need to do to improve patient safety and get to the source of that infection.

I have been advised today that there has been a fungal infection that is not connected to the one that we are discussing. Further information has been given to me and more information is to come. Again, I am very happy to keep the Parliament updated on that. It affects two patients, both of whom are being treated. The source of that infection is being pursued and additional safety measures have been put in place, including air sampling and enhanced cleaning. As I said, that is unrelated to the infection caused by pigeon excrement but, as I explained, I will come back and update members on that in due course.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to James Kelly. We do not have any more time for questions on that subject.

Brexit Withdrawal Agreement

2. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Prime Minister's latest statement on how she plans to proceed with the Brexit withdrawal agreement. (S5T-01449)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): First, it is clear from yesterday's statement that the Prime Minister has simply not taken on board the crushing scale of the 230-vote defeat in the House of Commons. Yesterday, the Prime Minister could have ruled out no deal. She did not do so. She could have called for an extension of article 50. She did not do so. Instead, still failing to understand the European Union's position, she intends to return for further negotiations, armed with plan A.

Given the Prime Minister's approach to engagement with the Scottish Government to date, her offer of an enhanced role for the devolved Administrations lacks credibility. Indeed, this morning, the United Kingdom Government cancelled the meeting of the joint ministerial committee (European Union negotiations), which was due to take place on Thursday. That decision flies in the face of the Prime Minister's rhetoric.

However, the Scottish Government will continue to do everything that we can to protect Scotland's interests, and the First Minister is due to meet the Prime Minister in the coming days. The Prime Minister should now focus on securing an extension to article 50, during which arrangements

can be made for a second referendum that includes the option to remain within the EU.

Finally, I congratulate the 3 million campaign and the members of this Parliament who voted in December to call on the UK Government to scrap the settled status fee—all members, of course, except the Conservatives. The UK Government should never have introduced it in the first place, but the U-turn is welcome. However, that does not change the fact that EU citizens should not have to apply to retain rights that they already have.

Bruce Crawford: Last week, the First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister, calling for a meeting of the JMC and for

"Urgent and meaningful discussions ... to agree a way forward which can command a majority in the House of Commons, and"—

this is crucial—

"which has the confidence and support of the devolved administrations."

The cabinet secretary has just given us the information about the JMC. In light of that, what does the Scottish Government think is the best way forward in resolving the current impasse?

Fiona Hyslop: The JMC(EN) is not meeting on Thursday, and I understand that the JMC (Plenary) is not meeting over the next few days, although I understand that the First Minister of Wales will also meet the Prime Minister.

It is important that there is some consensus on the way forward, but in the absence of consensus in Parliament, the best resolution would be a second EU referendum.

In her statement yesterday, the Prime Minister referred to improved discussions and consultation with the Westminster Parliament and the devolved Governments, but she also made clear that that is simply about setting future negotiating terms in relation to her current deal, which was rejected by 230 votes. Her offer of talks, as set out in her statement, is just about implementing the political declaration that sets out the framework for the future relationship between the EU and the UK; it is not about changing the terms of the political declaration in a future arrangement.

It is important that there is greater engagement, but it has to be meaningful engagement that tries to address what could command a majority position. That is why the debates that will take place in Westminster over the next week are important; there will be opportunities for members there to put forward different suggestions.

Bruce Crawford: The cabinet secretary mentioned the scrapping of the UK's proposed EU settled status fee. Does she agree that the disgraceful policy should never have been in place

to begin with and that no citizen should be expected to pay to secure rights that they already have and are entitled to because they have made their home in the United Kingdom?

Fiona Hyslop: I welcome the scrapping of the settled status fee; the pay-to-stay approach was never appropriate in the first place. The anxiety about the application system that so many EU citizens have faced and continue to face is of real concern in a country in which we need to ensure that we can attract people from the EU and beyond to help in our workplaces and in our universities, care sector and health sector.

This is a very serious point. The UK should address people's concerns about the application system. There are many questions about the pilot, which was launched yesterday. What kind of message is being sent to people if they are being asked to apply for something that they already have?

I think that this Parliament—even members on the Conservative benches—can come together on that. If we want to address Scotland's real issues with population and migration, this Parliament can make a difference if we come together. We—Ben Macpherson, in particular—made a difference in the discussions and arguments about scrapping the fee, and we can do more in this area if we come together as a Parliament and work together to put forward common-sense proposals.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): The cabinet secretary does not want a no-deal Brexit. I am with her on that. What detailed, concrete, positive proposals for a deal to resolve the crisis has the cabinet secretary's party brought to the discussions with the Prime Minister in the past week?

Fiona Hyslop: The member is aware that we have spent the past two and a quarter years arguing for a compromise position of single market membership and customs union membership.

We are starting to see an opportunity for other parties to come to that position, but the clock is ticking. That is why we have to stop the clock. Unless we rule out no deal, it remains the default position. We have to ensure that there is the opportunity to remain, because if we scrap freedom of movement, whether we do so under the Prime Minister's deal or no deal, that will be catastrophic for Scotland.

To date, we have been diligent and patient in putting forward our proposals, and our First Minister will again engage with the Prime Minister. However, we are now at the very last minute. The UK Government has spent 15 months trying to get a resolution to the risk of a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. After 15 months and no progress, and with the EU standing full square

behind the Irish position, what makes the Prime Minister think that she will get movement in the next few weeks?

The clock is ticking. We need to stop the clock and ensure that there are opportunities for a common-sense proposal, because the consequences are very dire indeed.

City Deals and Regional Economic Partnerships

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-15493, in the name of Michael Matheson, on city deals and regional economic partnerships.

14:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): I am delighted to open this debate on Scotland's city region deals and the emerging regional economic partnerships that have been inspired by them.

Not every community in Scotland is in a city region. That is why the Scottish Government wants to ensure that every part of Scotland benefits from investment through a city region or regional growth deal. We continue to press the United Kingdom Government to join us in common purpose on that by making a formal commitment to 100 per cent coverage of Scotland with growth deals and agreeing a clear timetable to achieve that goal.

Despite encouraging noises from some UK Government ministers, we await a formal and unequivocal commitment to achieve 100 per cent coverage. I am sure that communities in Shetland, Orkney, the Western Isles, Argyll and Bute and Falkirk will support my continuing to press the Secretary of State for Scotland on that issue. Those areas are yet to secure a UK Government commitment to formal dialogue leading to a growth deal.

Over the past four and a half years, the Scottish Government has committed almost £1.3 billion to city region deals. Our regional partners in the public, private and tertiary education sectors have identified significant levels of complementary investment.

We have worked in partnership with the UK Government on the city region deals. Like many collaborations, it has not always been easy, but I want to accentuate the positive. The combined investment that both Governments will make over the next two decades has massive potential to enable broad economic opportunity and greater societal equality. The investment in city region and other growth deals combined with our broad complementary action to drive inclusive economic growth will be crucial if we are to protect and develop the Scottish economy as it navigates the uncertain waters made turbulent by Brexit. In this debate, which is linked to prospects for inclusive economic growth in Scotland, it is not credible to ignore the damaging backdrop that is fuelled by

the UK Government's continued inept handling of Brexit. However, we must continue to pursue every means open to us to grow Scotland's economy.

I want to turn to the early impacts that our city region deals are having. City region deals represent an important catalyst in helping to drive inclusive growth in Scotland. Deals for all Scotland's city regions have now either been agreed or reached the stage of a heads of terms agreement between both Governments, local authorities and regional partners. That is an important milestone, but we now want to press forward with the implementation of those deals and agree heads of terms for deals that cover Ayrshire, Moray and the Borderlands, as well as the parts of Scotland that I have already highlighted which await a formal commitment to dialogue from the UK Government.

Making swift progress towards agreement of heads of terms for all those regional growth deals will be a Scottish Government priority for 2019. All our regional partners can be assured that I will persist in my dialogue with the Secretary of State for Scotland on agreeing a clear timetable for achievement of 100 per cent coverage of Scotland with growth deals.

The city region deals need to be given time to mature before a full assessment of their impact can be made, but certain projects and activities point to their huge potential in driving inclusive growth across Scotland.

Through the Inverness and Highland city region deal, homes are being built with technology to monitor residents' wellbeing, directly addressing some of the growing healthcare challenges that we face. This month, in Aberdeen, the Oil & Gas Technology Centre, in conjunction with the University of Aberdeen, launched the national decommissioning centre, cementing Scotland's international reputation as a centre for decommissioning expertise. The focus on data-driven innovation in the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal is complemented by investments in skills and economic infrastructure, which will ensure Edinburgh's status as the data capital of Europe and have a positive impact on the whole of the region. The Glasgow city region deal's canal and north gateway project will enable inclusive growth by making radical improvements, including new bridges, road access and public realm upgrades, all of which enable the creation of new communities in the city.

Before I move on to discuss regional economic partnerships, I will touch briefly on some of the complementary actions that we are taking to drive inclusive growth. Our economic strategy sets out our vision for sustainable and inclusive growth. Last October, we published an evolving economic

action plan that reinforces our commitment to that vision.

It is worth highlighting new key actions that will help Scotland to remain competitive and fair and that complement the city region deal approach. They include responding to the changing skills needs of business and employees. We will work with unions and employers' organisations through the new national retraining partnership to deliver a public and private sector response to those changing needs. We will also use public procurement to create more opportunities for Scottish businesses, including by increasing the level of digital transactions and digital invoicing to focus on faster payments.

Those examples of fresh action build on crucial work already in train, such as the establishment of the Scottish national infrastructure bank and the national manufacturing institute for Scotland. The national infrastructure mission announced in this year's programme for government will see Scotland's annual infrastructure investment steadily increase until the end of the next parliamentary session, when it will be £1.5 billion higher than in it will be 2019-20.

Members will recall that the "Enterprise and Skills Review: Report on Phase 2", which was published in 2017, made it clear that the economic power and the potential of Scotland's distinct regions need to be fully harnessed. Partnership arrangements for the city region deals are inspiring regional economic partnership arrangements. In north-east Scotland, the regional economic strategy and its action plan, developed by local authorities in partnership with the private sector's Opportunity North East and other representatives, offer a very positive development. That partnership, inspired by the catalyst city region deal, has harnessed the resources available to all partners and established a clear focus on sustaining and creating high-value employment and other tangible benefits for people and communities in north-east Scotland.

The developing Glasgow city region had its first regional partner meeting last October. That partnership has evolved over four years of partner dialogue, driven by the city region deal. It brings together local authorities with Government agencies, the private sector and others to develop region-wide approaches to key interlinked inclusive growth issues, such as economic inactivity and driving business growth, and crucial challenges, such as child poverty.

At their heart, regional economic partnerships are collaborations that provide our democratically elected local authorities with an opportunity to engage with the wider public and the private and third sectors in an action-focused way.

The Scottish Government is interested in what it can do to help local authorities and other partners to achieve as much as they can through such partnerships, as opposed to the Government being overtly focused on issues of governance or being prescriptive about the work that they should undertake. The Scottish Government seeks to be conversant in what regions need in relation to inclusive growth, and we also want to focus on our role as an investor and enabler of change that is driven by local and regional partners. That is the way that we have approached our city region deals. Good governance and the involvement of key partners, such as business, are crucial. However, we are interested primarily in the results that regional partnerships can achieve on a spectrum of key issues, such as smart infrastructure development, the creation of new jobs and the modernisation of our skills base.

I want to mention the Local Government and Communities Committee's inquiry into city region deals. The committee's report made a number of recommendations, which we continue to work through with our colleagues in the UK Government. One example of such work is my continued pursuit to reach agreement with the UK Government on a timetable for the roll-out of growth deals to cover every part of Scotland.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): We are now 11 minutes into the cabinet secretary's speech, but he is yet to make any comment on the key project, which is the Glasgow airport link. Will he commit to progressing the project urgently, as the Labour amendment asks?

Michael Matheson: As I mentioned in the chamber the other week, I have a meeting with the key parties next week, at which we will look to make progress on that issue.

My former Cabinet colleague Keith Brown identified a passage in the Local Government and Communities Committee's report in a debate in the chamber last March. The report urged both Governments to avoid

"artificial boundaries of what is a reserved project and what is a devolved one and the badging of who is funding what."

That recommendation remains very wise. Joint 50:50 investment in high-quality, locally developed projects will accelerate economic growth in a way that improves regional and national prosperity while reducing inequality. I am aware that Audit Scotland has commenced work to assess the impact of city region and other growth deals, and Audit Scotland colleagues will receive the full assistance of the Scottish Government in taking that work forward.

I will draw my opening remarks to a close by highlighting three points. First, we have committed almost £1.3 billion to city region deals, and we

want to commit more, in order to work towards 100 per cent of Scotland being covered by such deals. Secondly, we will continue to press the UK Government to work in common purpose by formally committing to 100 per cent coverage and agreeing a timetable to achieve that objective. Finally, we will empower and encourage local and regional partners to continue to grow the emerging network of regional economic partnerships.

The Scottish Government is committed to driving inclusive growth that will benefit every person, family, village, town and city in our country. The city region deals and the regional partnerships, which will inspire other growth deals, will play a crucial part in that mission.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that city region and regional growth deals are important catalysts in driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth across Scotland; notes that the UK Government has not yet made a formal commitment to discussing deals for Falkirk, Argyll and Bute and the Islands; calls on the UK Government to join with the Scottish Government in common purpose by agreeing a clear timetable to achieve 100% coverage of Scotland with growth deals; commends the Scottish Government's committed level of investment to date of £1,584 million in city region deals and additional investment in city regions, and the significant investment committed by regional partners in Scotland; urges the UK Government to provide a further £388 million to match the Scottish Government's investment commitment, and notes that all deals will provide a foundation for strong regional economic partnerships that will inspire collaboration to drive inclusive growth, enabling new jobs and wider economic opportunity.

14:44

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to open the debate for the Scottish Conservatives, and the fact that the Scottish Government is providing the opportunity to discuss city region and regional growth deals in Scotland. Such deals have resulted in billions of pounds of investment in recent years, and they show devolution at its very best, with the UK and Scottish Governments working together collaboratively for the benefit of all of Scotland.

Members on the Conservative benches believe that that is the correct approach and it should be encouraged by all parties in the chamber. To date, city region deals have been signed for Glasgow and Clyde Valley, Edinburgh and south-east Scotland, Tay cities, Aberdeen, Inverness and Highland, and Stirling and Clackmannanshire. There has been at least £2.3 billion of joint investment to date—not an insignificant number.

I want to highlight some of the benefits that the joint investment package has already brought to Scotland. There has been over £1.3 billion for the Glasgow city region deal, which is funding key projects. I want to touch on the Glasgow airport rail link project, which Labour makes an important

point about in its amendment; I will come on to that amendment specifically in a moment. However, that project is just one of a number of key projects that will regenerate the Glasgow region. Other projects in the Glasgow deal will deliver affordable housing, improve public spaces and build business venues to increase capacity for business.

Funding of £1 billion is going into the Aberdeen city region deal to support, among many other things, the oil and gas sector, and to expand the harbour. We hope that that will attract both indigenous and foreign investment and diversify the region's economy; such diversification is much needed.

Inverness is receiving more than £300 million to support regional growth; tourism and life sciences, which are important to that part of Scotland, are specifically targeted.

Edinburgh and south-east Scotland will see investment to boost Edinburgh's proud academic background, supporting our world-leading universities and research and development into cutting-edge technologies. There is the potential in the Edinburgh region alone to support up to 21,000 jobs.

My colleagues will touch on the specific projects in more detail as we go through the debate and I am sure that we will hear from across the chamber specific examples of city region deals doing what they are supposed to be doing. All the deals, including the Stirling and Clackmannanshire city region deal and the Tay cities region deal, are creating jobs and delivering investment across Scotland. They are not just visions or proposals; this is real investment, which is funding real projects and having a real impact on our country.

We are committed to supporting city region deals and we will push to ensure that every bit of Scotland is covered by such deals of one shape or another. Our amendment calls on both Governments to continue to work together in signing new deals. It also welcomes the significant investment that we have seen to date.

We want to set a clear timetable, as was evident in the Local Government and Communities Committee report on city region deals, to ensure that every bit of Scotland is covered and we are taking seriously the recommendations that were made in that report. If time permits, I may go through some of those.

I hope that the Scottish Government is approaching the debate in the constructive manner that the cabinet secretary laid out in his opening remarks. There was very little to disagree with in much of what he said. The problem that I have with what was said in the chamber versus the motion as it is on paper is that the two

narratives do not quite add up. It is a matter of regret that nowhere in the Government's motion does it mention that over £1 billion has been invested by the UK Government in city and regional deals. Whether that investment is unwelcome—I do not think so, given the cabinet secretary's comments—or whether it has simply been omitted from the motion to inform the debate, or the narrative of the debate, I do not know. That is up to the Government to decide.

The Government motion mentions

“additional investment in city regions”

and goes on to ask the UK Government to match fund that investment. The problem is that the motion does not state what that additional investment in city regions is. After the cabinet secretary's opening remarks, it is still unclear what that additional investment is, which bit of Government is funding which projects and why the UK Government should match fund that investment.

The motion calls for £388 million from the UK Government. It is unfortunate that it does not even acknowledge, never mind welcome, the £1 billion that has already been invested by the UK Government. That was said, but it is not on paper. For that reason, we are unable to support the Government motion as it is worded.

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): If the circumstances were reversed, could Mr Greene earnestly and honestly say to the chamber that he would not be calling on the Scottish Government to match the UK Government's investment? Surely, on the basis of partnership, investment should be equal?

Jamie Greene: If we look at the specifics of the deals, the match funding of a large majority of them is equal. For the Glasgow city region deal, the funding is £0.5 billion each, and for the Aberdeen city region deal, the funding is £125 million from each of the Governments. There are deals that are based specifically on the projects that they cover and in respect of which the UK Government has not match funded every penny because, for example, the nature of the projects that are covered by the deals are such that they fall within areas of devolved responsibility. The Treasury has been having that discussion with the Scottish Government throughout the process.

I do not think that the premise of today's debate is that the UK Government has not put in as much funding as the Scottish Government and that it has not done what it was supposed to do. The whole project—the whole city region deal initiative—was a UK Government initiative from day 1 and we would not even be having the debate if it were not for the Conservative Government that agreed to the city region deals. I think that that point is

entirely lost on the members in the centre of the chamber today.

I turn to Labour's amendment, as I promised I would. We agree that the Glasgow airport rail link needs to be progressed as a matter of urgency. There are clear and vital reasons why the project should go ahead: there are major connectivity issues in connecting Glasgow airport to the West Scotland region and the congestion on the M8 is at unbearable levels. I appreciate that there are impasses and I know that the cabinet secretary has in the past committed to work with stakeholders to overcome some of the problems. However, we do not think that there are major barriers to progressing the project.

I appreciate that the premise of city region deals is that both Governments invest in city regions, and it is up to local authorities and local government to decide which projects they progress. It is unfortunate that the local authorities that are involved in the Glasgow city region deal have not progressed the Glasgow airport rail link as we would have liked, but I would like to think there is good will on the part of the stakeholders, the local authorities, the Scottish Government, the UK Government and others that are involved in the discussions around Network Rail and ScotRail and the delivery of the rail link and the effect that it will have on other services. There is good will and, if we have the conversation, the rail link should progress. We will support Labour's amendment to put a renewed focus on that specific project. However, it is only one project of one deal and therefore it is part of a much wider discussion.

City region deals are not the only thing that can drive regional economies. Conservative members believe that devolution is not just a Westminster-Holyrood discussion. We believe in real local devolution, such as devolving business rates and land and buildings transaction tax to local government, so that it can set rates that are based on the needs of local economies. We think that such proposals can, in addition, go a long way to drive growth.

The cabinet secretary mentioned 100 per cent coverage of Scotland with future deals, which we agree with. The Scottish Government wants all parts of Scotland to benefit from some form of deal, and so do we. That is why we are pushing today for both Governments to pursue an open and active dialogue on how and when that could happen.

Our manifesto commits us to the Borderlands deal and I believe that significant progress is being made towards achieving that. We support the premise of a Moray growth deal and the calls for deals for Falkirk and Argyll and Bute. We also await the formal response of the UK Government and will reflect on the response in due course. I

welcome the cabinet secretary's positive commitment to actively work with his counterparts in the UK Government on those deals.

My colleague Brian Whittle will go into the Ayrshire growth deal in more detail and outline some of the great benefits that the project will deliver and unlock. That is the key to regional deals: they unlock investment opportunity from the private sector, from academia and from other stakeholders and it is vital that areas such as Ayrshire benefit from regional deals. I have been to many meetings about the issue and I have seen genuine cross-party support. I have sat round the table with Willie Coffey, Kenneth Gibson, Philippa Whitford and other members of the UK Parliament and it is by having such a collaborative environment that the deals will work—that is the only way that they will succeed.

I reiterate our commitment to city region and regional growth deals. They have been a great success although, admittedly, they have not been without their ups and downs. They involve the political make-up of governance and local government, they often involve a conflict in priorities and agenda and they often involve Governments that are at loggerheads over other issues.

There is no denying that much has happened since the deals were brought into play—elections and referendums all take their toll on progress—but there is much to be said for the cross-Government co-operative approach, which is that we should welcome them and not whine about them. The onus is on all Governments to sit down and get on with it. That is what business wants, it is what academia wants and it is what the public want. We are committed, the UK Government is committed and the Scottish Government is committed, so let us put aside our differences in the interests of all of Scotland and deliver on these deals.

I move amendment S5M-15493.2, to leave out from “notes that the UK Government” to end and insert:

“welcomes the collaborative approach taken by the Scottish and UK Governments in establishing the numerous city region and regional growth deals; commends both Governments for the significant joint investment across Scotland; calls on them to work together to ensure that every part of Scotland is covered by a growth deal; notes the report by the Local Government and Communities Committee, which recommends that both Governments set out a clear timetable to achieve this aim, and reaffirms that the people of Scotland are best served when its two Governments engage in a collaborative and cooperative manner to deliver sustained future investment into Scotland.”

14:55

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): At a time of relentless centralisation in much of Government policy, a focus on city and regional growth deals and regional economic partnerships is welcome. Labour believes that if the right investment choices are made in growth deals, they can be a catalyst for economic growth as part of a wider industrial strategy. However, as well as the investment that such growth deals can provide, they have the potential to empower communities to develop local solutions for local needs. The collaboration between neighbouring local authorities gives those areas a stronger voice, allowing them to advocate for the region on a national level. For the parts of the country whose voices have often been missing from the debate, and those where there has been historic underinvestment, that approach could have a genuinely transformative impact.

Last week, the Ayrshire regional economic partnership was announced when the three Ayrshire local authorities brought their economic development departments closer together ahead of the long-overdue signing of the heads of terms for the Ayrshire growth deal. That approach not only establishes a shared framework to support collaborative working but gives Ayrshire a unified voice on the national stage. However, people in Ayrshire now want to see delivery of the projects in the growth deal. The Ayrshire growth deal has been years in development, but so far not a penny of funding has been allocated by either the Scottish or UK Government. That needs to change. It is time for both Governments to put their money where their mouths are and to announce the funding that is needed to make the Ayrshire growth deal a reality.

The same applies to the Borderlands inclusive growth deal. I had the privilege of being part of the establishment of the Borderlands initiative when I was a councillor and chaired Dumfries and Galloway Council's economy committee. It was not an easy process. The Borderlands stretches not only the width of Scotland, from the Borders to Dumfries and Galloway, but across the border, taking in Cumbria and Northumbria—five local authorities, representing 10 per cent of the UK's land mass and more than 1 million people determined to use our united strength to fight to ensure that we are no longer the forgotten regions of the UK.

The Borderlands partners were told by the Secretary of State for Scotland that if their proposals for a growth deal were submitted by September last year, that would enable an announcement on funding to be made in the UK Government's December budget. The local councils delivered on their side of the bargain, but the UK and Scottish Governments have not. So

far, only the local councils have invested in the Borderlands inclusive growth deal, with no funding yet from Government.

Although there is no mention of either the Ayrshire or Borderlands growth deals in the Government's motion, I hope that, when summing up, the minister will give Parliament an exact timetable for when we can expect those deals to be agreed to by the Scottish and UK Governments and—crucially—when funding will be announced.

Michael Matheson: The member will be aware that the Ayrshire partners asked for a signing of the heads of terms on the Ayrshire deal this Friday, Burns day, which I agreed to. I invited the UK Government to match us on that, which it has been unable to do. In the Scottish Government, there is no lack of trying to make progress on the matter—we are determined to make progress, and we could have signed the heads of terms this Friday.

On the Borderlands deal, when I met the partners last week they accepted that they still have further work to do on their individual asks. One of the big challenges is that setting the timetable is dependent on other departments in the UK Government that are responsible for the funding elements for those local authorities that are south of the border, which have not yet been agreed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I can give you an extra minute, Mr Smyth.

Colin Smyth: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I appreciate the intervention from the cabinet secretary, but he stresses again the frustration at local level. We heard earlier that there was close working between the Scottish and UK Governments, but every time that we ask a UK Government minister a question about the timetable and the level of investment by both Governments, we get a different answer from the one that we get from Scottish Government ministers. The people of the Borderlands and Ayrshire want a clear timetable and, most important, the funding to be put in place. At the moment, those regions are being left behind the rest of Scotland.

I hope that the minister will also tell us—he can do so now or later, if I get more time—where discussions are on the future of the Falkirk deal, the Argyll and Bute deal and, potentially, an islands deal. What does the Government view as a realistic timescale to deliver those deals? Those deals—as with the city region deals that cover the Glasgow city region, the Aberdeen city region, Inverness and Highland, Stirling and Clackmannanshire, Edinburgh and south-east Scotland, and the Tay cities—have the potential to

unlock economic growth. However, only if those deals are made comprehensive across all of Scotland and focused on the real needs of communities will growth be truly inclusive. Therefore, we support the Government's call for a clear timetable to show when we will get 100 per cent coverage.

As new deals are developed, we must be clear how growth deals fit with the wider policy landscape to ensure cohesion in strategy and the clear allocation of functions. Last year, the Local Government and Communities Committee report "City Regions: Deal or No Deal" warned:

"At present, there are too many overlapping and competing initiatives".

The committee also raised concerns about accountability and openness within the current deals, which risk undermining the aims and ethos of those deals if they are not properly tackled. Devolving decision making to a regional level is beneficial only if the new process is transparent and genuinely responsive to the communities involved. Put simply, we cannot allow deals to be done in secret behind closed doors.

Many of the areas that are covered by deals include some of our most deprived communities. Those communities must be involved in developing the deals to properly identify their needs and their priorities. The process needs to be more open and democratic so that communities have faith in both the process and, ultimately, the funding choices that are made in the final deals.

Growth deals must be in addition to, not instead of, existing funding streams; that is crucial. We cannot simply use deals to distract from declining Government investment elsewhere, particularly in local government. They are not there to plug gaps and they cannot be a substitute for consistent, strategically allocated national funding. Projects that are not adopted by growth deals also need to be delivered, yet just last week we heard that the £224 million investment that was announced by the Scottish Government alongside the Aberdeen city region deal for rail infrastructure in Aberdeen appears to be being sidelined.

Audit Scotland's upcoming report on city region and growth deals will consider a number of those challenges, including clarity around the deals, their governance and the accountability processes. I look forward to reading the report when it is published in autumn this year and I hope that its recommendations will help to guide work to strengthen city region and growth deals.

The most crucial aspect of any deal is ensuring that the projects that have been agreed are actually delivered. At the heart of Scotland's first city region deal—the Glasgow city region deal—is the Glasgow airport access project, which aims to

link the city by rail to the airport. The airport serves around 10 million passengers but, to our shame, it is the largest airport in the UK that is not served by rail.

A rail link is badly needed. A report for Transport Scotland last year showed that traffic levels on the M8, which leads to the airport, between junctions 22 and 29 had increased by 22 per cent from 2011 to 2017. At the time of the report, Stuart Patrick, the chief executive of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, said:

“The solution can’t be the re-allocation of road space or more roads. Rail is the most obvious route forward.”

It is a solution that is long overdue. The first feasibility studies into a rail link were published in the 1990s.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): What happened between 1999 and 2007? Why did the Labour-Liberal Executive not build the rail link?

Colin Smyth: The Labour Administration of 2006 developed a clear plan for the Glasgow rail link. That plan—

Richard Lyle: What happened to the plan?

Colin Smyth: That plan, Presiding Officer, was cancelled by the Scottish National Party Government in 2009. Since then, report after report has highlighted the benefits to the West Scotland economy of delivering a rail link. A new plan for a £144 million tram-train has been developed and agreed. It has overwhelming support and I hear today that it appears also to have overwhelming support from Richard Lyle, who is enthusiastic about the plan.

However, once again the SNP is seeking to put barriers in the way of a proposal that everyone supports. Failure to tackle capacity challenges at Central station does not justify the lack of action and lack of commitment from the Scottish Government to the Glasgow airport rail link.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP) rose—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Smyth is closing.

Colin Smyth: The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland need to work with the Glasgow city regional partners to find a solution, not more excuses. They need to get on with delivering a rail link that will benefit not just Glasgow but all of Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-15493.1, to insert at end:

“, and agrees that the Glasgow City Region Deal’s flagship Airport Access Project should be progressed as a matter of urgency.”

15:04

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I am glad to speak in the debate.

As Jamie Greene pointed out, city region deals are agreements that work across the tiers of government at UK, Scotland and local levels. They are political in nature. Ahead of the Scottish independence referendum in July 2014, the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander, announced that Glasgow would receive £500 million. Within hours, the Scottish Government matched that sum, despite having made no formal announcement that there would be a programme of city region deals. It was all done in extreme haste and took place in a very politicised environment. We are now dealing with the aftermath.

In my view, a better alternative would have been to build on the local authorities’ existing capital investment plans and to create new partnerships to focus on regional economies. However, we are where we are.

As Greens, we are instinctively in favour of collaboration between different spheres of Government, although we challenge the notion that is at the heart of the city region deals, which is sustainable economic growth—as proposed in the motion for debate and in the Conservative amendment. As my colleagues and I have said, the notion of sustainable economic growth is incredibly simplistic. Growth tells us nothing about how wealth is being generated and distributed, or about what the external costs are. Important studies including those that have been carried out by the Royal Society of Arts, the city growth commission and the University of Strathclyde’s international public policy institute have all recognised that Scotland cannot have economic growth if we do not tackle inequalities. That means that we should be using city deals and regional economic partnerships as an opportunity to invest in areas where need is greatest. There is no evidence that that is the case in the current deals.

City region deals are delivering some benefits. In Barrhead in East Renfrewshire, plans are afoot to build a new train station, which would give residents direct access to the rail network. Currently, residents face a walk of up to 40 minutes to reach the railway station.

Beyond that example, transport projects in general are misconceived. In the Highlands, the car is king, with £175 million being spent on road improvements, including a link road in Inverness that will take 12 seconds off existing journey times at peak times. Disappointingly, not a penny will be spent on railways in the region.

Likewise, in Lothian, we will see £120 million being ploughed into upgrading the Sheriffhall

roundabout, while just one sixth of that figure will be spent on public transport improvements in the west of Edinburgh. Although that may be celebrated by local politicians, it is a paltry figure that will do very little to

“drive inclusive growth, enabling new jobs and wider economic opportunity”

—as the cabinet secretary suggests in his motion.

Last year, as a member of the Local Government and Communities Committee, I participated in the committee's inquiry into city region deals. I was particularly interested in transparency and the fact that in some regions there has been a shift in economic growth or job creation from other areas into the investment areas, with no net gains being made. Indeed, in a paper on the issues, policy Scotland, which is based at the University of Glasgow, reported that there are questions about how accountability and transparency are being dealt with in city region deals. Primarily because there has been inconsistency in how deals are negotiated and delivered, it appears that there are very different approaches to engaging stakeholders and being transparent.

During the Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry, Lesley Warren from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights noted that

“The local authorities' own public sector duty reports do not show exactly how communities have been involved or the engagement that they have had. We would expect reports on those things to be part of their current legal duties, never mind the bigger deals.”—[*Official Report, Local Government and Communities Committee*, 1 November; c 48.]

Clear evidence of that is apparent in the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal. The deal was negotiated behind closed doors, with even councillors struggling to find out what projects were on the table ahead of the deal being announced.

However, that is not always the case. The Tay cities deal is a good example of a deal that has been accountable from the start. Members of the public could view its prospectus and the accompanying website well before plans were agreed, in order that they could understand what was being proposed. That level of transparency is welcome, but it is not the norm. Other deals have not taken such a coherent or thematic approach to their spending plans.

As the cabinet secretary noted, Audit Scotland has just announced that it will be conducting two performance audits on city region deals in order to provide an independent assessment of how well the Scottish Government and councils are working with partners. In the scoping note, which was

published just a week or so ago, Audit Scotland claims that

“It is not yet clear what contribution deals will make to Scotland's economy or to the Scottish Government's priority of inclusive economic growth.”

A substantial investment—billions of pounds' worth—has been signed off with no clear understanding about the impact that it will have.

It is essential that Parliament hold the private and public partners of city region deals to account—which is difficult, because of the governance structure—in order to ensure best value for money. We will learn from the recommendations that Audit Scotland will make, in due course.

As an alternative to city region deals, the Greens would support regional economic development based on transition planning and targeting disadvantage, but that is not what the city region deals are, or have turned out to be.

The Greens will support the Labour amendment. We are no great fans of airports, but as long as they exist, they should be accessible by public transport. We will oppose what the city region deals have turned out to be and will vote against the Government motion and the Conservative amendment.

15:10

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I support the Government's motion and will support the Labour amendment, because Glasgow airport desperately needs better and greener public transport connections. It is fair to say that the Scottish Government is wobbling on its commitment to that. It has been 18 months since the Jacobs UK Ltd analysis, and the issue needs to be resolved. People demand better and the solution needs to be in the form of a convenient new connection between the city and its international airport.

We will oppose the Conservative amendment because the UK Government should have continued on the trajectory that Nick Clegg and Danny Alexander established during the coalition Government, which saw the Glasgow deal receive broadly equal funding from the two Governments.

Andy Wightman: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: It is quite early in my speech, but I will.

Andy Wightman: Does Alex Cole-Hamilton accept that the genesis of city region deals by Danny Alexander, who was Chief Secretary to the Treasury at the time, was inspired in large part by politics and not by economic development policy?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: No, I do not accept that. The deals were recognition that for many years—for decades—the focus of economic investment in infrastructure had traditionally been the south-east of England. The city region deals were about expanding the footprint far beyond that. It was a simpler time. If we look back to Nick Clegg and Danny Alexander making important economic decisions about domestic politics, we might prefer that politicians in Westminster now were making that type of decision, rather than stockpiling medicines in the face of Brexit.

We are happy to continue to support the notion of city region deals because they bring much-needed investment. All told, £1.3 billion has been brought to Edinburgh.

I agree with the Scottish Government that the commitment to the deals has ebbed away at the Westminster Parliament and the UK Government, so there is now a gap of £388 million that needs to be closed. The deal is important not just for Edinburgh, but for the regions around Edinburgh. All told, they represent 24 per cent of the population of Scotland, and the investment fits broadly into five baskets.

First is research, development and innovation, in which there are five innovation hubs that are looking at biotech, data and robotics. The region will have the first robotarium in the UK, in a testing space that will see cutting-edge science being deployed for the first time. As Sethu Vijayakumar, who is the director of the Edinburgh centre for robotics, says, that will drive investment in Scotland by big companies, and Edinburgh—as the lab for the research—will get the first of its benefits. There is a virtuous cycle of investment and development in progress that will, all told, represent a £23 return for every £1 that is spent, which is not a bad return on Government investment. That complements the expertise, technology and innovation that have graced the streets of our nation's capital since the enlightenment, and with it we see a basket of investment in employability and in creating the data-savvy workforce that is suited to making Edinburgh the data capital of the world.

Secondly, there is £140 million for transport, including improved roundabouts and public transport. I agree with Andy Wightman that the balance of that investment is not quite right. It is as a drop in the bucket when compared to the investment in Edinburgh Western, which is my constituency, for proliferation of new housing developments—not least of which is the new town that is proposed for Winchburgh, which will see traffic siphoning through existing bottlenecks such as the Barnton junction, which do not have the capacity to deal with the demand.

We cannot forget the culture side of the deal: it is an all-rounder. The concert hall will be most welcome.

However, it is regrettable that the Scottish Government has ruled out using the investment for the trams extension, for which its own SNP-led city administration signalled support. That cost will now have to be met by other means; obviously, it could come from the budgets of services that are already strapped for cash.

It is a fair and reasonable criticism that the decisions that have been made on priorities for the city region deals have been largely top down. We see that in the paltry amount of public transport money for the west of Edinburgh. If we ask anybody in Barnton, East Craigs or the Gyle what they need most from public transport, they will tell you that it is the return of the number 64 bus service. However, that bus does not feature in the deal.

The biggest elephant in the room is that neither the Government motion nor the Government's remarks today recognise the current threat of a £41 million cut to Edinburgh's budget as a result of the Scottish Government budget and financial considerations for this year. That is an existential threat to many local services that my constituents enjoy, including the Drylaw neighbourhood centre and the Muirhouse millennium centre, which serve some of our capital's most vulnerable residents.

If we look at the situation in the round, the city region deal is vital for improving our economy and driving progress, but when we turn our eyes to the distant horizons of technology and to the centres of excellence in our capital, we must not do so at the expense of its most vulnerable citizens.

We are happy to support the Government's motion tonight. We will support the Labour Party's amendment, but we will reject the Conservative amendment. I am grateful to the Government for securing time for the debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the opening speeches. I remind all members and their respective groups that members who are to take part in a debate should be present for the opening speeches.

We move to the open debate, in which speeches should be of no more than six minutes, please. I do not have much time in hand.

15:16

Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): I would like to recognise the efforts of the Scottish Government, the four local council leaders and the business and academic chiefs who were involved and have been pivotal in the recent signing of the Tay cities region deal heads of terms agreement.

The cities region deal comprises Dundee city, Angus, Perth and Kinross and north-east Fife. The region is home to almost 500,000 people and over 15,000 businesses, and it has a strong economic base as a gateway to central Scotland and, to the north, Aberdeen and the Highlands.

As part of the deal, the Scottish Government and the UK Government will each invest £150 million over the next 10 to 15 years. The Scottish Government recently announced an additional £50 million; we await the UK Government matching that £50 million, and we will constantly remind it of that until it does so. It is estimated that those investments have the potential to secure more than 6,000 jobs and to lever in more than £400 million of investment.

We welcome the positives for Dundee of being part of the partnership. Dundee has already enjoyed Scottish Government investment for new social housing, a revamped railway station and, of course, the Victoria and Albert museum.

Dundee has two world-class universities and an outstanding college that is one of the leading centres for the computer gaming industry. Last year, *The Wall Street Journal* ranked Dundee at number 5 on its worldwide hot destinations list.

The deal seeks to support economic and industrial growth across Tayside, to support apprenticeships, to build new social housing, to reduce inequalities, to improve transport infrastructure and to increase tourism.

Because Dundee remains the major travel-to-work area in the region, it could also be the initial starting hub for visitors to, and businesses in, other areas in the region, given the transport links in and out of the city. Therefore, improving transport links and boosting tourism is just one element within the deal.

Throughout the region, there are world-class attractions, and Dundee offers many locations showcasing the city's heritage, such as the former jute mill at Verdant Works, the RRS Discovery and—as I have mentioned—the V&A museum, which saw over 100,000 visitors in its first three weeks of opening.

I applaud the Scottish Government's proposed investment of £37 million to support a regional culture and tourism investment programme, which will boost key economic assets in culture and tourism. The Scottish Government's investment aims to attract longer stays throughout the region in order to increase the amount that each visitor spends, which will boost the hospitality and food and drink industries.

As I mentioned, thanks to funding from the Scottish Government, Dundee railway station has

recently been completely modernised and is part of Dundee's waterfront regeneration.

To ensure that visitors have every travel option to come and stay in the city and surrounding areas, the Scottish Government will invest £9.5 million in and around Dundee airport as it looks at securing and marketing new routes, enhancing airport facilities to assist passenger growth and using the opportunities that arise from the Heathrow expansion.

Investing in transport links and tourism will boost the Tayside region's economy, but it is also vital that the area attracts and retains talented people and creates and sustains new and existing industries. The region has a long history of manufacturing and engineering, and I welcome the Scottish Government's £10 million investment in high-value manufacturing such as in the growing renewable energy sector. Dundee port has huge potential to capitalise on the renewable energy industry, and the Tay cities region deal seeks to maximise the economic and employment benefits of manufacturing and engineering for the Tay region—not solely for Dundee, but for Montrose, in Angus, and Methil, in Fife, too.

Another growing industry for the region is offshore decommissioning. The oil industry has experienced a slow improvement, and new fields are opening or are about to start production, but rigs in older fields are becoming redundant and will have to be decommissioned. The decommissioning industry is expected to be worth about £2 billion per annum over the next decade, and Dundee port and the surrounding brownfield land are ideal for such work. The Scottish Government's decommissioning challenge fund has already demonstrated the Government's support for decommissioning projects.

To complement the investment in manufacturing and in encouraging entrepreneurial talent to come to Dundee, I am pleased that the Scottish Government is seeking to invest up to £3 million in studio Dundee. That entrepreneurial hub, which is to be based at the city's new waterfront and is to include a fully equipped and digitally connected tech lab, will offer flexible and adaptable co-working space.

The deal offers an array of new job opportunities for the people of Dundee, Fife, Perth and Angus. It will invest in research and academic posts, in new start-up companies, in retaining and expanding existing companies and in bringing companies to the region. It includes a £20 million investment to deliver fair work through the Tay cities skills and employability development programme.

There is also a £25 million Scottish Government investment to grow the Tayside biomedical cluster, which will build on the success of Dundee and the

surrounding areas, and that of the University of Dundee, as leading centres of excellence in the UK and internationally for drug discovery research and minimally invasive surgical techniques and technologies. The investment will also create facilities and a skills development and training programme to support biotech and medtech. Dundee and Angus College will help to increase the supply of skilled laboratory staff.

With a modern workforce, there needs to be modern and fast digital connectivity. Therefore, the Scottish Government is investing £2 million in supporting 5G test beds and trials in the Tay region, which are helping to put it at the forefront of 5G deployment.

As we become more and more reliant on the internet and electronic devices, cybercrime is—sadly—increasing. Strengthening cyber resilience and developing digital forensics is therefore crucial in protecting our identities and personal details. Abertay University is a recognised UK leader in research and teaching in ethical hacking, and Dundee university's Leverhulme research centre for forensic science is developing leading applications for forensic research. Both universities are helping to grow expertise in cybersecurity, and the Scottish Government will invest up to £6 million in developing a cybersecurity centre of excellence—a cyberquarter.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Shona Robison: I am conscious of the time, Presiding Officer. The projects that I have mentioned are just a snapshot of what is earmarked for the whole Tay cities region, which I very much welcome.

15:23

Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con): I welcome the chance to speak in the debate, as the Tay cities region deal will have a large impact on the North East Scotland region, which I represent.

On 22 November last year, local council leaders formally signed the £700 million Tay cities deal, under which the Scottish and UK Governments committed to investing up to £150 million each over 10 to 15 years, with the remainder of the funding being levered in from private investors. The deal brings together public, private and voluntary organisations in the council areas of Angus, Dundee, Fife, and Perth and Kinross to deliver a smarter and fairer region. The initiative aims to fund more than 20 major projects and to create more than 6,000 jobs across Tayside and Fife.

Regional partners have established a strong economic partnership to drive growth. The region has world-class universities and many cutting-edge businesses. The councils for Angus, Fife, Dundee, and Perth and Kinross are keen to build on the recent momentum after the area was awarded £63 million under the Scottish Government's growth accelerator model for projects at Dundee waterfront and the development of the V&A.

Under the Tay cities region deal, more than £60 million will go to the James Hutton institute, in Invergowrie, and more than £10 million will go towards a cybersecurity centre in Dundee. Several million pounds will be invested in the University of St Andrews' Eden campus, and £15 million will go towards the Perth bus and rail interchange project.

At this stage, there are five specific investment proposals for Dundee, totalling up to £65 million. These include up to £10 million of investment in and around Dundee airport; up to £12 million for the development of a cybersecurity centre of excellence; up to £15 million to establish the UK's first forensic science research centre; and up to £25 million to support the growth of the biomedical cluster. Region-wide investments that will benefit the city include £20 million for employability and skills. That is particularly important given the decision, in November 2018, that Michelin will stop production in Dundee within two years—a serious blow to hundreds of employees and their families that has had, and will continue to have, an effect on thousands of people across Tayside and Fife. It is hoped that the Tay cities region deal will create in excess of 6,000 jobs for people across the region, including research and academic posts, new start-up companies and migration of companies to the region, which would be especially welcome after recent closures.

Tourism is a key part of the Tay cities region deal. Subject to approval of a business case, the Scottish Government will invest £37 million in supporting a regional culture and tourism investment programme the aim of which is to build on current tourism offerings at St Andrews, Gleneagles and the V&A museum in Dundee. Dundee was included by Lonely Planet in a list of top European destinations for 2018, and it was named by Bloomberg as one of the top holiday destinations for travellers in 2018 and by *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the top 10 hot destinations in 2017. It is encouraging to see that Dundee and other areas of Scotland are already recognised as top places to travel to from across the world, and such investment will continue to promote Scotland as a top holiday destination.

The Tay cities region deal proposes significant investment across Angus. Although the area is set to benefit from the overall regional investment,

three Angus-specific proposals worth a total of more than £30 million are detailed in the agreement. Some £26.5 million of UK Government capital will be invested in projects that are to be developed collaboratively with Angus Council and other local partners. There is also an opportunity to make use of surplus land at the RM Condor base for new development, and the UK Government will contribute the net value of the land that is transferred to the deal. Furthermore, £1 million from the UK Government is to be invested to improve connectivity in rural Angus.

The city deals are intended to be a team effort, with the UK and Scottish Governments working together to deliver investments. However, the SNP has spent more time talking about its disappointment with the deal than about what it is actually doing. Scottish Conservative members of Parliament worked hard for the deal, and their lobbying was vital to providing investment for Angus, which should be a concern for the Angus SNP members of the Scottish Parliament. Some SNP politicians bemoan the UK Government's not putting an extra £50 million into the Tay cities region deal, as the SNP has said it will do. However, £40 million of that so-called extra investment will be spent on the cross-Tay link road rather than the fallout from the Michelin plant closure, which is where the majority of the extra £50 million had been expected to go. Considering that the SNP had already planned that project regardless of the city deals money, it cannot claim to be disappointed that the UK Government has not given it extra funds. The SNP itself should be finding funding to help mitigate the Michelin closure.

Although I welcome the Tay cities region deal and, indeed, other such deals across Scotland, it is crucial that it be managed efficiently and effectively from now on, so that its benefits can be delivered without delay. Actions, not words, are called for.

I support Jamie Greene's amendment.

15:29

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I am pleased to participate in the debate, given that city region deals have been an area of focus both of my membership of the Local Government and Communities Committee, which launched an inquiry into such partnerships in March 2017, and of my work as the constituency member for Cunninghame North.

We know that city region deals have the potential to be transformative—there is strong evidence to suggest that investment in high-quality, locally developed projects is key to accelerating economic growth in a way that

improves regional prosperity while reducing inequality. Indeed, those are the ambitions that are set out in Scotland's economic strategy. However, there are also risk factors associated with such an approach that must be mitigated, such as the risk of displacement.

In November 2017, Patrick Wiggins, who at the time was the director of the Ayrshire growth deal, told the Local Government and Communities Committee:

"The more investment that happens in or close to the centre of Glasgow, the more likely it is to suck up demand in the Scottish economy. That will make it even harder for areas such as Ayrshire to achieve their potential ... It is a timing issue, and we do not want Ayrshire to be left behind."—[*Official Report, Local Government and Communities Committee*, 15 November 2017; c 11.]

It is imperative that Ayrshire gets mitigation through the right investment as soon as possible to ensure that it meets its full potential.

On 28 September 2016, proposals were launched for the Ayrshire growth deal, as part of which £359.8 million of joint funding was sought from the Scottish and UK Governments across the three Ayrshire authorities. Nearly two and a half years of procrastination from the UK Government followed, during which time I asked nine questions about the deal in the chamber, seeking clarity on when the long-promised deal would become a reality. I was repeatedly reassured that the Scottish Government was ready to move towards signing a heads of terms agreement on the Ayrshire growth deal as soon as possible, and all three Ayrshire local authorities expressed their support clearly and publicly. Fellow Ayrshire MSPs and MPs have been vocal in their support for the deal and tireless in their pursuit of UK Government action.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government and the Ayrshire councils have agreed to sign the heads of terms agreement on 25 January—this Friday—so that Ayrshire may finally benefit from the millions of pounds of long-promised investment. I hope that the UK Government will confirm its intention to sign the deal on Burns day, which would be apt, given the economic contribution that the bard still makes to the Ayrshire economy, even 223 years after his death.

Although the deal falls somewhat short of the funds that were sought in 2016—the level of investment is now £324 million—the joint investment from the Scottish and UK Governments is expected to attract £2 billion of private investment and create an estimated 13,000 jobs over the course of the deal's 15-year programme. Inclusive growth is, of course, central to reducing poverty and inequality in each Ayrshire community, while the inclusion of more people in the economy will enable stronger and more

sustainable growth, which, in turn, will reduce demand on Government spending and public services.

Each project that has been included in the Ayrshire growth deal has a well-developed business case that has been designed following collaboration between the public and private sectors, local communities and academia. The projects have been devised to deliver sustainable long-term growth. That is especially true of the carbon energy, circular economy and environmental sustainability growth programme, which will include two major projects that will provide investment of around £34 million in Cunninghame North.

The planned new international marine science and environmental centre that will be based in Ardrossan will work to provide solutions to challenges that the world's seas and society face, from climate change to energy and long-term food sustainability. The centre will bring together leading academics from the University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde and will build on work that has been undertaken by Cumbræ's Field Studies Council, the Community of Arran Seabed Trust and the Clyde marine planning partnership, as well as the success of the Lamlash no-take zone.

The proposal also includes the development of a west of Scotland centre for marine leisure, which will be a key element in providing a new and bespoke skills qualification for the marine industry, and a proposed centre for research into low-carbon energy and the circular economy, to be based at Hunterston in my constituency, which will support new technologies, develop skills and training facilities and provide research programmes in parallel with the University of Strathclyde. A leading global centre for advanced technology, smart systems and energy management will be built. Hunterston already has strong private sector investment interest and the capacity to attract international investment to Ayrshire.

The collaborative working behind the growth deal also extends to the regional economic partnership that Ayrshire's local authorities have agreed. The partnership will work with Scotland's enterprise and skills agencies, academia and the third and private sectors to ensure that the necessary resources, workforce and skills are in place to deliver the positive outcomes that we all hope to see in Ayrshire.

The Ayrshire growth deal team believes that its proposition is more developed than any other deal at the point of signing a heads of terms agreement, so it is imperative that the agreement is signed off as soon as possible—on Friday, we

hope—to maintain the confidence of businesses and communities.

Sadly, the case of the UK Government dragging its heels over Ayrshire is not unique. The Scottish Government has driven such deals forward by investing £1.3 billion in the four city deals in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, which is a third more than the UK Government has invested. Meanwhile, the UK Government's investment in the Aberdeen city region deal fell short by a mammoth £254 million, and its investment in the Inverness and Highland city region deal fell short by £82 million. The Tay cities region deal also faced delays because of the UK Government's sluggishness. I am grateful that Scottish Government ministers and Ayrshire's local authorities are pushing the UK Government to ensure that deals in Scotland are funded on a 50:50 basis and that Ayrshire is not left behind.

I support the airport access project, but only if it is not delivered at the expense of rail services to Ayrshire. That issue remains to be addressed.

I sincerely hope that the next time I raise the Ayrshire growth deal in the chamber, it will be in celebration and I will be welcoming the first steps towards delivering projects with the potential to transform Ayrshire's economy, create new jobs and, ultimately, drive inclusive growth and prosperity for the people of Ayrshire.

15:34

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. In the time that I have, I want to focus on the Labour amendment, which says that the Glasgow airport link must be

“progressed as a matter of urgency.”

I am certain that MSPs across the parties who represent Glasgow and the west of Scotland will want to support that. I welcome the support that has already been indicated, but I am rather disappointed that the cabinet secretary spent no time on it in his opening speech. It is essential that he understands what is at stake and confirms his absolute commitment to making the project happen.

There is no doubt about the absolutely positive merits of the proposal. The rigorous business plan has already been agreed and significant resource of £144 million is in place. The case has already been comprehensively made, and it ought not to be necessary for it to be remade again and again. There is a clear economic case. Very few cities of Glasgow's size and economic significance are without such a link, and there is a clear and present danger of a loss of investment—not just to

Glasgow, but to Scotland—through prevarication on the project.

The airport is important as a travel hub, but it is also an important source of employment, with 35,000 jobs in the local economy, many of which are high-quality, skilled jobs. Poor transport links deter investment—that is already happening—and we increasingly see people travelling into work by car rather than by public transport. Congestion is creating a broader challenge across communities—for people getting to work in the city, for example. I am advised that, at peak times, 90 per cent of buses that go into Glasgow on the M8 run late. The case for the link is, therefore, not just an economic one, but an environmental and social one.

I am sure that we can agree on the theory, but that is not enough. We need to see full progress. We need to ask why progress is so slow. The message is not explicitly articulated, but I fear that the general impression is created that it is all too difficult, too expensive and too complicated. Somewhere in the system, I fear, is a mindset that asks not “How do we make this work?” but rather “How do we throw in objections, concerns and difficulties to muddy the waters?” That approach does not give explicit opposition to the project, but is killing it with a multitude of what ifs and maybes.

There are serious questions to be asked about Transport Scotland’s role. How committed is committed? The cabinet secretary must settle the matter, show leadership and ensure that Transport Scotland rises to the occasion. If this public money is used to its intended purpose, it will have a huge and long-standing effect. Instead, I observe that moneys are in danger of being frittered away, perhaps partly in funding consultants and analysis to scupper the project, not progress it. I fear that that is the desired conclusion for some, with theoretical support but, in reality, delivery of a make-do-and-mend option that will waste money and will not make the transformational change that is required. If we are looking for an example of a make-do-and-mend approach, we can look at Fastlink, which has not delivered what was intended. That approach would be unacceptable.

In his summing up, I expect the cabinet secretary to rule out any approach that involves a suboptimal project. With respect, his response “I am having a meeting about it on Thursday” is simply not good enough. The Scottish Government’s leadership is required and we hope that, in his summing up, we will hear from the cabinet secretary a determination not to allow the project to run into the sand.

The arguments on capacity are a good case in point. For some, they are a useful barrier to the progressing of the project. We should see them simply as basic practical hurdles to be overcome.

The fear of many of my constituents and of businesses in Glasgow and beyond is that Transport Scotland in particular has other priorities that it will not make explicit, but which it will ensure are served above the Glasgow airport project. What we are seeing, I am sad to say, is a form of infrastructure filibustering—a game of delay and deflection, in which the economic, community and environmental needs of Glasgow and the west of Scotland are the clear loser.

Today I seek from the cabinet secretary more than just the rhetoric of support. I seek more than his support for the Labour amendment. I seek a commitment to ensure that Transport Scotland’s apparent dissembling is not allowed to continue. Transport Scotland should be actively engaged with other partners and focused on making the project work. The case has been made economically, environmentally and socially. The continued delay is unacceptable when so many things about the project are in place. I trust that the cabinet secretary, on behalf of the Scottish Government, will show the necessary leadership. I trust that he will not just go to a meeting but ensure that the project, which will deliver economically, environmentally and socially for the whole of Scotland, is delivered on time.

15:40

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): In December 2011, the UK Government published its white paper, “Unlocking growth in cities”. In the foreword, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg—remember him?—wrote:

“The Coalition Government is committed to building a more diverse, even and sustainable economy.”

He went on to say:

“cities will need to show strong leadership and deliver real growth ... My message to them is to seize this opportunity—to work with us to break open our politics and lay the foundations for lasting growth.”

Mr Clegg was certainly right about one thing: from David Cameron’s big society to the European Union referendum, our politics have well and truly broken open since the winter of 2011.

It is unfortunate for Scotland that the opportunities that the city deals afforded did not materialise until the summer of 2014. I invite Opposition members to ponder why that was, as Andy Wightman did.

Almost exactly a year ago, as members have said, the Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Communities Committee, of which I used to be a member, published its report, “City Regions—Deal or No Deal?” The report was not a Mystic Meg premonition of the Prime Minister’s handling of Brexit; rather, it was a concise cross-party look at how the city region deals have operated.

As was clear in the 2011 white paper, the focus for the UK Government was growth. Indeed, cities were described as “engines of growth” in the white paper. Today’s motion sets out the Scottish Government’s focus on “inclusive growth”. That highlights the inherent ideological tension between the two Administrations. As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation said in its submission to the Local Government and Communities Committee,

“‘Inclusive growth’ has potential to gain support across the political spectrum: a more inclusive economy will reduce poverty and inequality”.

Growth for the sake of it is therefore not enough; it has to be about tackling inequality and levelling the playing field.

For my constituency, that is fundamental. Levenmouth, with its population of more than 37,000, is the largest urban area in the country that has no direct access to rail. One in three children lives in poverty, and Levenmouth academy is the second-highest recipient in the country of Scottish Government pupil equity funding, which is based on free school meals entitlement. The need for inclusive growth to tackle generational inequality and poverty has never been more present.

The Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal, which covers Fife, will provide investment of more than £1 billion across six local authority areas, but I remain concerned about the lack of detail on what that will mean for my constituency. My concern has always been about transparency—or the lack thereof—at local authority level on prioritisation of projects for funding. The campaign group Transform Scotland said in its submission to the Local Government and Communities Committee that the selection process for projects is

“shrouded in a degree of secrecy on the basis of being sensitive, or confidential, at least until they are agreed”.

The Federation of Small Businesses said:

“there are big concerns about the lack of transparency at the development and implementation stages and the lack of more inclusive and discursive engagement with the private sector.”—[*Official Report, Local Government and Communities Committee*, 1 November 2017; c 34.]

Part of that lack of transparency is directly related to funding. The co-leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, Councillor Adam McVey, told the committee:

“At the start of the process, both Governments have an idea of how much they are able to put in. It would have been really helpful to have had that information and analysis as early as possible. In our case in Edinburgh we had the UK Government scrambling around trying to find money to match what the Scottish Government was willing to put in. That was an unhelpful tail-end to the process ... It did not give us the opportunity to look at the overall envelope and apply the level of scrutiny of the detail that

we wanted to apply”.—[*Official Report, Local Government and Communities Committee*, 8 November 2017; c 40.]

Therein lies the rub. The Conservative amendment talks about collaboration between the two Governments, but let us get real for a moment. The city deal funding for Glasgow from the UK Government was merely a sweetener during the independence referendum campaign, because at no point since then has the UK Government stumped up the cash without there having been serious political pressure from the Scottish Government in Edinburgh.

The UK Government had to be chased to match the Scottish Government’s funding for the Edinburgh deal in the summer of 2017. It fell short in its contribution to the Aberdeen city region deal by £250 million, to the Inverness and Highland city region deal by £82 million and for Dundee—across the water from my constituency—and the Tay cities region deal by £50 million. A partnership of equals? It is more like a parcel of rogues.

On the subject of sweeteners before the 2014 referendum, page 8 of the UK Government’s 2011 white paper, “Unlocking growth in cities” makes explicit mention of “Greater freedoms to invest in growth”. It states:

“From 2014, a new round of Structural Fund programmes (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund) allows member states to adopt a special focus on cities.”

The year 2014 provided Scotland with lots of promises—European Union membership was one of the most prized. Now, as that promise is broken and withers on the vine, we are invited to believe in the Conservative amendment, which

“reaffirms that the people of Scotland are best served when its two governments engage in a collaborative and cooperative manner”.

Collaboration and co-operation—the dream team. Seriously?

To be effective, our constituents should have been asked what they wanted in our city region deals. Unfortunately, the previous Labour-led Fife Council administration chose not to engage the public effectively in that process. It chose not to ask for the Levenmouth rail link, which was—supposedly—the authority’s number 1 transport priority. That transport priority could have made transformative change in my constituency and beyond; for example, it could have joined up jobs in Edinburgh with a part of the country that has the lowest car ownership in Scotland.

There have been grand words from the Tories today about collaboration, but in reality the city deals in Scotland were only ever a political stunt for the Conservatives. They were useful in 2014, but they are disposable five years on.

As we know, Labour's amendment is entirely focused on the Glasgow airport link. It is supported by a Labour member who will tomorrow raise the issue of the Levenmouth rail link in a question to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. Is not it a pity that Labour consistently seems to forget about its priorities for Fife? Perhaps that is simply a convenient excuse.

Johann Lamont: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her final minute.

Jenny Gilruth: Thank you.

15:46

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): The Borderlands growth deal is supported by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following a pledge in the 2017 Conservative election manifesto and a commitment that was reiterated in his October budget. Last year, the proposals for the Borderlands growth deal were submitted, and five councils from both sides of the Scotland-England border are now tasked with bringing that growth deal into reality.

I welcome the message from the Secretary of State for Scotland that he aims to be in a position to announce the quantum for the deal ahead of the English partners' purdah. That should, I hope, allow heads of terms to be signed towards the end of May, shortly after the end of their purdah period.

With Scottish and English authorities involved, the Borderlands growth deal is unique, but the process has not been particularly satisfactory, particularly with regard to the transparency of local authorities. I grant that the process was, with its cross-border nature, never going to be easy.

Almost four years ago, the Scottish Affairs Committee at Westminster produced a report entitled "Our Borderlands—Our Future". The conclusions in that report included references to the lack of infrastructure and to movement of young people away from the area. Those issues continue to damage the local economy. Therefore, we cannot allow the opportunity to pass us by: we must ensure that the Borderlands deal will deliver the opportunities that will attract our youngsters to live, work and bring up their families in the Dumfries and Galloway region.

Let me put the growth deal into perspective. It has to bring together a geographical area that is larger than Wales, with a population of just under 1.1 million. If the Borderlands area were put into the south of England, it would stretch towards and into France. The deal is unlike any other city growth deal. We do not have the ability to recoup rates on major building projects or invest in large manufacturers. The deal must be, and is, different.

It must deliver positive economic impact right across its huge geographical area and address the growth constraints of the working-age population, limited employment opportunities, poor digital and transport infrastructure, lack of high-quality sites and facilities, and lower skills levels.

Economically, the need for a Borderlands growth deal has never been greater. The facts are stark, and it is worth laying them down again in the chamber, as they were last week during Labour Party business.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Finlay Carson: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

The gross value added in Dumfries and Galloway is only 80 per cent of the Scottish national average, and Dumfries and Galloway is the lowest-paid region in Scotland, with average wages that are 15 per cent below the national average. With the aim of delivering identified projects throughout the region, the growth deal could support delivery of an additional £1.3 billion in gross value, directly benefit 1.1 million residents and generate more than 6,500 jobs over the 10-year deal. The deal focuses on five key strategic drivers: digital, energy investment company, quality of place, destination Borderlands, knowledge exchange network and business infrastructure programme.

I have often highlighted the lack of investment in our transport infrastructure in the south-west—that infrastructure is simply not fit for purpose.

I welcome the section on digital Borderlands in the proposals. It has the ambition of ensuring a package of investment to tackle market failure by rolling out full fibre connectivity, complemented by 4G and 5G mobile connectivity.

As I have mentioned, the Borderlands growth deal is, to my eyes, unique. One of the challenges will be to ensure that the whole Borderlands area benefits, and that no areas are left behind as we forge our cross-border links.

In respect of my constituency, I believe that the deal can help to deliver the vision that is laid out in a recent report that calls for Stranraer to be the capital of the west, and which aims to build on the town being a gateway to Europe, Ireland and the rest of Scotland. I have raised many times the need to regenerate Stranraer as a priority. The SNP has promised so much to the town since the ferry service departed, but it has failed to deliver. There is massive untapped potential in the town, with already identified innovative possibilities and massive tourism potential. The east pier and waterfront must not be overlooked.

I welcome the south of Scotland gaining more focus as an economically disadvantaged region from those in authority. Indeed, last week I attended the evidence session on the bill to create the proposed south of Scotland enterprise agency. That has been a long time coming: businesses and our rural communities deserve a boost. I remain positive about how the Borderlands deal, if it is implemented correctly, can fulfil the needs of our businesses and communities in practice.

We are in the final stages of the Borderlands growth deal. This can be the year when the communities and businesses that I represent receive a much-needed economic shot in the arm from the Borderlands growth deal. That deal can tap into our region's potential, which has bubbled under the surface for far too long.

15:51

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I, too, am pleased to be taking part in the debate, which takes place in the context of a clear Scottish Government economic strategy that argues that our economy needs inclusive economic growth in all Scotland in order for our country and its people to flourish.

The city region deals are designed to act as enablers for local organisations to drive inclusive economic growth in which investment in high-quality locally devised and developed products will improve regional prosperity, while reducing inequality.

The Aberdeen city region deal was one of the first deals off the blocks. I think that there was more impetus in the north-east due to the downturn in oil and gas. It was among the first city deals to be agreed, with the heads of terms agreement being signed in January 2016. The deal is a 10-year programme of investment that will be worth more than £800 million. The main partners are Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, the Scottish Government, the UK Government, Opportunity North East Ltd, the Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen.

At that time, the Scottish and UK Governments both pledged £125 million, and the potential was to unlock more than £500 million from private sector investment. Subsequently, the Scottish Government added another £254 million, which the UK Government has yet to match.

The focus of the Aberdeen city region deal is on innovation, internationalisation and infrastructure. Eleven projects have been identified. The Oil & Gas Technology Centre, which opened in February 2017, is the first investment that we have seen being opened.

I notice that Andy Wightman is no longer in the chamber. He mentioned financial projections. Projections of the financial outcomes of the Aberdeen city region deal have been made. It is estimated that there will be an annual increase in gross value added of £260 million across the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council areas, £220 million throughout the rest of Scotland and £190 million in the UK as a whole.

An average of 330 new jobs per year will be created, which will mean, if we take the aggregate, that some 3,300 net new jobs will be created over the 10-year lifetime of the deal. It is also estimated that there will be £113 million in additional annual tax revenues to the UK and Scottish Governments from income tax, national insurance, VAT and oil tax revenues. The deal is based on inclusive economic growth, sustainability and retention of people locally.

I will mention some of the key projects. I have already mentioned the Oil & Gas Technology Centre, which is up and running. It is based in the centre of Aberdeen, but has global reach in solving offshore mature basin, subsea and decommissioning technology challenges. The innovation is in five key areas: well construction, small pools, asset integrity, decommissioning and digital transformation.

The centre is working in partnership with industry, academia and the supply chain, and is supported by the industry regulator and by both Governments. It has already fostered 80 on-going projects, and 400 technologies have been screened by the OGTC solution centres. It has secured £22 million of industry investment, despite the original expectation being for just £8.5 million, and an additional £1.9 million of funding has been secured from the Scottish Government's decommissioning challenge fund.

That all led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the OGTC, the Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen for a multimillion-pound joint venture to develop a centre for excellence for field life extension and decommissioning. I am sure that everyone will agree that a great deal of progress has been made in a short time.

The next project that I will mention is the bio-therapeutic hub for innovation, which will receive £40 million of investment over 10 years. I spoke about the project in a recent chamber debate on life sciences. The hub is designed to accelerate growth and to build on the strength of life sciences in the north-east region. The project is led by ONE and is being developed in partnership with the two universities and Scottish Enterprise. The hub will provide a focal point and space for the industry to collaborate and innovate on products and therapies for bio-therapeutics, modern epidemics,

medical technology, diagnostics and nutrition. The business case was approved by the Scottish and UK Governments in September 2017, and a new company, BioAberdeen Ltd, has been set up to manage and develop the hub. Construction is expected to commence this year, with the hub opening in winter 2020.

Jamie Greene mentioned the harbour development at Aberdeen as if it is part of the city deal, but it is not. The harbour development at Nigg Bay is being constructed entirely through investment by the port authority, Aberdeen Harbour. The development is due for completion in 2020. However—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): You must wind up, Ms Watt.

Maureen Watt: —the infrastructure around the harbour is really important, and should be developed at a quick pace.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I waved my pen—I was trying not to interrupt.

15:58

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Like Johann Lamont, I welcome the debate and the opportunity to speak in favour of Labour's amendment, which calls for the

"Glasgow ... Airport Access Project"

to be

"progressed as a matter of urgency."

The Glasgow airport access project is our best hope for a direct rail link between Glasgow airport and the city centre, via Paisley. There is a 471-page business case and widespread support from the business community, and £144 million of funding is in place, right now, ready to go. Colin Smyth's amendment will test the level of political support for the project in the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

There is overwhelming independent support from Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce and the wider business community in Renfrewshire for an airport rail link, and there has been for many years. It has been mentioned that businesses are key partners. The businesses that I speak to are warning us that failure to invest in surface access is putting Glasgow airport and the local economy at a disadvantage. Although passenger numbers are rising, numbers at Edinburgh airport, which benefits from a direct tram service, are rising faster. There is real concern that continued uncertainty will deter private investment in the area; there is even concern that it has done so already.

With growing congestion on the M8, surface access to the airport is becoming more and more

challenging. The section of motorway with the biggest increase in congestion is the stretch between the airport and the west of the city. As has been mentioned, according to a Transport Scotland report, between 2008 to 2017, there was been a 22 per cent increase in traffic levels between junctions 22 and 29—from the St James interchange to the city centre.

There are already an estimated 30,000 people working within a three-to-four-mile radius of Glasgow airport. With national innovation centres coming to Renfrewshire and with the city deal authorities promoting industrial sites at Glasgow airport as an investment area, there will be a further increase in the numbers commuting into Renfrewshire. Standing still is simply not an option. As Johann Lamont has said, Transport Scotland has to get on with the job of making this happen. It has to work with local authorities and deliver the rail link that Renfrewshire has already waited on for far too long.

People can board a train at Glasgow Central and take a direct route to Manchester airport but not to Glasgow airport. That is a ludicrous situation and it has to change. Under the proposal, a tram-train link to Glasgow airport would take just 16 and a half minutes. It has been selected as the best successor to GARL on the basis that it offers value for money, short journey times and the greatest attraction to users.

There can be no doubt that enhancing airport connectivity enhances Scotland's position as an international destination. After all, it is estimated that 75 per cent of tourists visiting Scotland arrive by air. However, the economic impact of the rail link is not simply a matter of making travel easier for air passengers. It is about shovels in the ground; about local jobs in Renfrewshire; about supporting other city deal initiatives such as the airport investment area; about modal shift, getting people who commute in and out of Renfrewshire on to public transport; and about taking the strain off one of the most congested stretches of motorway in the country.

Glasgow Airport is the single biggest private sector employer in the Renfrewshire area. The number of jobs supported by the airport in the Renfrewshire area could rise from 4,500 to 7,200 by 2040. Failure to tackle congestion and deliver a direct rail link, however, would undeniably stifle growth and jobs at the airport and in the surrounding area. The Scottish Government made that mistake before in 2009 and we cannot afford for that mistake to be made again.

Jamie Greene: I have a huge amount of sympathy for what the member is saying. However, there are genuine issues in relation to the current proposal, which may mean a knock-on effect to train services in the West Scotland region

that we represent, including those in Inverclyde and Ayrshire. Has the member given any thought to how we could overcome those issues and make some progress?

Neil Bibby: I think that those issues are easily overcome and I will address that point shortly.

The last time a proposal for a transformative Glasgow airport rail link was in front of the SNP Government, it scrapped it. In a debate in this Parliament in 2013, the SNP voted for a motion that branded the rail link “ill-conceived”. Last week, in this chamber, the cabinet secretary for transport could only bring himself to mention

“the possibility of the rail option”.—[*Official Report*, 10 January 2019; c 5.]

I say to the cabinet secretary that there is nothing optional about this project; it is an economic necessity. The 10-year challenge—posting snapshots of people’s lives a decade apart, to see how much things have changed—is popular on social media right now. In 2009, the Scottish Government scrapped the Glasgow airport rail link in a disgraceful act of economic vandalism. It is now 2019, and urgent progress is needed on the airport access project.

Unfortunately, in the past 10 years, the only train running on the back of the GARL debate has been the gravy train for Government consultants. There has been delay after delay and excuse after excuse. This Government’s failure to manage rail capacity at Glasgow Central has been used as a justification for its failure to get on with a surface rail link. Its lack of vision when it comes to Glasgow crossrail mirrors its lack of foresight when it scrapped the rail link in the first place. A rail link to Glasgow airport is back on the political agenda only because in 2014, Labour councils put it there—just as we championed GARL.

As Johann Lamont said, there is understandably concern about the SNP’s real commitment to the project, given its past behaviour. When the SNP has not been ambivalent to the project, it has been opposed to it outright. Now is the time to get on with it. There is no reason why the airport access project cannot be taken forward in the new control period. There is no reason why Transport Scotland cannot work with the city region deal authorities to make the project happen. Rather than creating problems, Transport Scotland should be finding the solutions that are needed. There is a business case, there is funding and there is support from the public and stakeholders. It is time for the SNP, locally and nationally, to learn from its mistakes and to finally get on with the Glasgow airport rail link that the local economy and Scotland needs.

16:05

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): We have been talking about city region deals but, as I represent an island constituency, much of what I will say will focus on the related issue of the islands deal and the potential that it would have for the three island councils in Scotland—Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council—which have been working hard over the past few years to introduce ambitious plans. It is worth saying that, as yet, the UK Government has given no commitment to those plans.

The islands deal will seek to build on the our islands, our future campaign that was launched by the three councils in 2013. Liam McArthur, Tavish Scott and I will be co-hosting a reception later this month in Parliament to give MSPs an opportunity to learn more about the proposals.

Although members would expect me to say this, it is true that the Western Isles are a truly wonderful place to live. We boast some of Scotland’s most spectacular scenery, as well as one of its most vibrant traditional cultures. We have one of the lowest crime rates in Scotland and one of the highest rates of happiness and fulfilment. Although Mr McArthur and Mr Scott are not in the chamber, I should admit that we regularly share such distinctions with Orkney and Shetland.

We should not be shy about promoting those facts relentlessly, given the number of job vacancies that the islands will have to try to fill over the next few years. However—this is related to that point—we face some challenges, the starkest of which, in the case of my own constituency, is depopulation. The National Records of Scotland population projections show a projected decrease for the Western Isles of 4.8 per cent by 2026, and there are no easy fixes in tackling depopulation, and its underlying causes, on that scale. More than anything else, the figures highlight the need to bring more jobs to the islands and to attract more people to live there. That is why I am pleased to see that the projects that are being proposed in the potential islands deal are truly transformational in nature. The efforts to establish the UK’s first commercial spaceport in North Uist is a great example of turning relative geographical remoteness into an advantage and, when we consider the existing assets and infrastructure that are in place due to the Hebrides Ministry of Defence missile test range, we see that North Uist is ideally placed to capitalise on such proposals.

The mooted of fixed-link crossings has also captured the public imagination. For example, such a crossing across the Sound of Harris would, if it came to pass, radically improve the transport

connectivity between the islands that I represent. Although it might seem fanciful to some people, it makes sense if, to paraphrase Roosevelt, we “look to Norway”, or if we look to the Faroe Islands. In both countries, we see networks of such tunnels under a sustained building programme. There is also a practical need, given both the immense pressure on the Sound of Harris during the summer and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency’s recategorisation of the vessels that are required on it.

Although not as eye-catching as underwater tunnels or spaceports, proposals to upgrade the Western Isles spinal route, which is our main road, would have no less of a transformational effect. The Western Isles main road runs from Ness, via two ferries and several causeways, to the isle of Vatersay in the south. Much of the main road is single track, by which I mean that drivers have to stop to let other cars pass. There remains a great deal of main road still to be upgraded and, it must be said, it would take significant capital to do so. Although I hear what Andy Wightman said about investing in rail, it is, I would concede, not yet a realistic proposal to bring rail to my constituency.

Like proposals for the islands, city region deals are enablers to drive inclusive economic growth. The Scottish Government has been driving forward much of that work nationally. As other members have noted, the UK Government has fallen short, and it has failed to match the Scottish Government’s contribution in several city region deals. In the case of the islands deal, the UK Government has not yet made commitments. Only a few months ago, however, the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse, confirmed the commitment of the Scottish Government to assist the three islands councils to work towards a deal for the islands. We now need a formal commitment on that from the UK Government.

We have been looking for consensus today, so the dismissive tone adopted by one or two Conservative members who have spoken in the debate was ill judged, but there we have it—that is what we have on the record. What I can say is that ministers from both Governments have made it very clear to everyone who will hear that despite the deals being joint initiatives, funding for projects is still highly delineated on either reserved or devolved policy objectives. According to Lord Duncan, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Scotland Office, that is partly at the insistence of HM Treasury, which takes the view that its expenditure must be in the “reserved space”, as spending on any other objective risks double spending. The insistence of the UK Government that it must rule out such double spending, while providing £1.5 billion to constituencies of certain members of Parliament in

Northern Ireland, and while the Scottish Government finds itself spending in reserved areas such as social security and broadband to make up for the UK’s shortcomings, makes those arguments from the UK all the harder to understand.

In any case, while it may come to pass that not all those projects can be included in an islands deal, they each have the capacity to unlock substantial investment, which would create jobs and opportunities and give more people a reason to live in that part of Scotland.

16:11

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to speak in the debate and will, once again, use my time to extol the virtues of Ayrshire and the importance of the Ayrshire growth deal to the development of the local economy and the economy of Scotland as a whole.

In highlighting the many attributes of God’s own country—Ayrshire—it would be remiss not to mention that at this time of year our wee corner of the world becomes the centrepiece for many dinners around the globe, as the world celebrates the work of Burns. Ayrshire is indeed a wondrous destination, with beautiful coastline and countryside, some of the best golf courses in the world, and historic buildings and estates such as Dumfries house and Culzean country park. It is a fantastic place to work, live and bring up a family.

However, Ayrshire’s low levels of economic growth mean that it has diverged significantly over the years from Scotland and the UK. As a result, Ayrshire currently represents a declining share of Scottish GVA and lags behind GVA per capita in Scotland and the UK. Without intervention, Ayrshire’s GVA is forecast to grow at a slower rate than GVA in Scotland and the UK. With the current underperformance of the Ayrshire economy, we experience persistently low levels of economic participation and high levels of deprivation. A consequence of that has been poor educational attainment and health. There is a high demand for public services and welfare support in Ayrshire, which has a 7 per cent unemployment rate—well above the rate in Scotland. That is why the Ayrshire growth deal is crucial to the long-term economy of Ayrshire and the Scottish economy as a whole.

Last Friday, I met the Scottish secretary, David Mundell, and local MP Bill Grant, following their meeting at Westminster with the Ayrshire growth deal team. The great news from that meeting is that the signing of the heads of agreement with the Scottish Government is imminent. Many congratulations, then, to the Ayrshire growth deal team and the three councils for their persistence

and hard work in getting the deal over the line. In the spirit of collaboration, we should note that MSPs from across the chamber and MPs from many political parties have also been involved in putting pressure on both Governments.

I return to a topic that I have highlighted many times in this place, which is transport infrastructure. The importance of an integrated strategy sitting alongside the Ayrshire growth deal cannot be overestimated. This chamber has heard on numerous occasions the well-rehearsed issue of the long-neglected investment in the transport infrastructure of the south-west. One of the elements that has not been emphasised enough in relation to the success of an Ayrshire growth deal investment is the need for a transport infrastructure that is fit for purpose.

To leverage the maximum benefit that the Ayrshire growth deal can deliver, there is a pressing need to look at not just the much-discussed A77, the rail links south of Ayr and the A75 and A76, but the state of the A70 connection to the M74, and of the Bellfield interchange, which has long been a barrier to development in Kilmarnock. The length of traffic jams that snake all the way down the on and off ramps and on to the main A77 trunk road can only leave the conclusion that an upgrade is long overdue. I also mention the potential to open up Cumnock rail station; with such a main project highlighted in the growth deal, Cumnock may be able to disconnect from the main grid and become energy self-sufficient. I believe that it would be the first town to do so—surely that merits further investment in its rail station?

Despite its current challenges, Ayrshire has so much to offer. It already has significant footholds in key industries. I went on an engineering and technology tour of Ayrshire during the summer and so many great companies are doing innovative and exciting projects, such as Magnox, EDF Energy, UPM Caledonian, GSK, DSM Nutritional Products, Merck, BAE Systems, Spirit AeroSystems, GE Aviation, Wabtec, Hyspec Engineering and the PRA Group. How many of us knew that nearly every fire engine and associated appliance in the UK was built in Cumnock? Emergency One employs around 125 people and is a vital component of the local and Scottish economy. That is alongside the many innovative and emerging hi-tech companies such as Utopia Computers in Kilmarnock, which builds custom personal computers for graphics, gaming and virtual reality for clients across the world.

We have excellent local education at Ayrshire College and the University of the West of Scotland, which can enable local people to develop the skills that they need to contribute to a growing Ayrshire economy. There is an increasing

focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills in schools, preparing young people for career opportunities in science, technology, manufacturing and digital. Ayrshire College is increasingly focused on STEM skills, with a third of its provision in that area. Local tech and engineering companies are working with colleges to develop courses specific to the needs of the local economy.

We have the opportunity to combine that academic and industrial expertise in the UK and Scotland with the aerospace engineering expertise at Prestwick to capture a significant share of the emerging space industry. Securing the UK's first spaceport here has extended the potential still further. The case for driving economic growth in the aerospace, space, life sciences and industrial biotechnology sectors is compelling at a national level; it is absolutely crucial that, in Ayrshire, we have the space to do it.

When it comes to the potential in Ayrshire, the sky is not the limit, literally. Ayrshire has been forgotten and ignored for too long. I ask both the Scottish and UK Governments to continue their drive towards an Ayrshire growth deal and reward the huge efforts made by the growth deal team and the three councils. Potentially exciting times for Ayrshire are coming down the track and I look forward to seeing the much-needed investment move from the planning stage and into full implementation.

16:17

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): The Glasgow city region deal is a good deal for our constituents, because it introduces significant infrastructure and community-focused projects that will directly improve their quality of life by boosting local economies and improving day-to-day living.

The Clyde waterfront and Renfrew riverside development project, which includes a bridge between Yoker in my constituency and Renfrew, will bring excellent job opportunities. It is anticipated that the bridge project will create a whopping 2,300 jobs and inject £867 million into the regional economy. The bridge ranks as a top-performing economic growth project in the Glasgow city region deal. The SNP Government is demonstrably committed to driving economic growth, encouraging innovation in our cities and regions and laying essential foundations for jobs and prosperity.

However, the UK Government's significant lack of investment is deeply disappointing. The Tories consistently overpromise and underdeliver in Scotland. It seems odd that they can afford a £1 billion pay-off for the Democratic Unionist Party but refuse to find the funds to match the Scottish

Government's contribution to our regional economies. It is essential that the Westminster Government now answers for the missing £388 million overall and stops short-changing the people of Scotland.

However, I will go back to cheerier things. The SNP's commitment to the city region deals is shown by our injection of £1.5 billion into the deals and £0.5 billion into Glasgow, in particular. That will have a significant impact on our local economies—the level of jobs anticipated in the Clyde waterfront and Renfrew riverside area evidences that impact.

The impact of the deal on improving quality of life for our constituents must also be acknowledged. Day-to-day activities and experiences, such as clean and healthy transport to and from our places of work, have a significant impact on our wellbeing and state of mental health. Rather than being in congested streets with bad air pollution, good, eco-friendly and speedy transport that gets people where they need to go can vastly improve the start of everyone's day. A sense of community and having enjoyable things to do in our free time, such as walking in green spaces, cannot be overestimated. Those components of life are all deeply personal. Nevertheless, here in Parliament, we have the opportunity to bring about or advocate for changes that promote stability, wellbeing and a sense of community throughout Scotland, through the city region deals.

The city region deal provides opportunities to put in place projects that we know will stimulate local economies, create an environment for communities to flourish and create an infrastructure that reduces congestion, for example, in the building of new bridges to connect communities across the Clyde. All of that facilitates making Glasgow and the surrounding areas the best that they can possibly be for our constituents.

City region deals are about our collective vision for an area that we love and want to see prosper into the future. At the drawing-board stage, those leading the deal appreciated the importance of sharing in a collective vision and, because of that, consultations have taken place, allowing all Glaswegians to have input into the vision of what we want our city centre streets to look like.

Investment in infrastructure in Glasgow will bring modern offices, cycle paths and bridges that look sleek and modern, while promoting wellbeing through the green spaces and walkways woven throughout. That is exciting, and such investment in our surroundings, when coupled with other targeted policies, can have a transformative impact on general mental health.

The World Health Organization published research that looked at the impact of our environmental surroundings on mental health. The findings highlighted two key messages. First, socioeconomic factors and the physical environments in which people live, shape their mental health. Secondly, taking action to improve the conditions of daily life provides policymakers with an opportunity to improve a population's mental health. From that, we can conclude that investment in our general environment, in a way that makes public spaces enjoyable, is very important.

The Clyde waterfront and Renfrew riverside project is something that my constituents will be particularly pleased about. In recent years, they have approached me about improving connections between Yoker and Renfrew. The new and stunning piece of engineering, designed by Sweco and the award-winning designers of the Falkirk Wheel, the Kettle Collective, will bring Yoker and Renfrew together. This bridge will bring increased footfall to local Yoker businesses, and the new thoroughway across the city will give local residents easy access to health and shopping. There are so many reasons why the deal is good for my Anniesland constituency, which Yoker is a part of, and the city as a whole.

The £1.13 billion investment through the Glasgow City region deal will go far in driving innovation and growth, while ensuring that Glasgow grows as a place that people love to live in.

16:23

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): It has been good to hear during the debate all the different priorities for our communities from colleagues from across Scotland. It shows the diverse range of issues, problems and expectations that we hope the growth deals will deliver on in the coming years. The Scottish Government's strategy to cover the whole of Scotland with investment and assistance packages is right, and means that there is something for every community to look forward to.

The biggest package is the Glasgow city region deal, which was just highlighted by Bill Kidd. The deal means more than £1 billion going into improving transport infrastructure, growing the life sciences sector, supporting new business innovation, tackling unemployment—in particular, in the 16 to 24 age group—and boosting opportunities for people on low wages and the more vulnerable people in our communities.

I mention the Glasgow deal first to make the simple point that the spin-off benefits of the investment, if it is successful, will go beyond the

boundaries of Glasgow and its immediate partner authorities.

Ayrshire, and Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley, will also benefit—especially from the project for a business park adjacent to the M77 that is in the proposals. People from Ayrshire, including me, have worked in the Glasgow area for many years, so the investments should not be seen in isolation or as serving only those who live within the region or city deal area.

The growth deal will certainly assist the local communities directly, but will also open up opportunities for many others who choose to work in the area. I am sure that the same can be said for all the deals, whose benefits will spread further afield if we are careful about how we design them.

So, to Ayrshire, where I have been happy to live for the past 60 years of my life. As has already been highlighted by my colleague Kenny Gibson and others, we have been waiting a good few years now for our deal to be agreed. Some of us who have been in Parliament for some time, especially those who have been here since 2009, when Diageo announced that it was leaving Kilmarnock, have been pressing for an assistance package for Kilmarnock and the surrounding area, and for Ayrshire as a whole.

For some time, the Scottish Government has made it clear that it will back the Ayrshire deal and is ready to go. If, as we hope, the UK Government makes an announcement this week, the deal will provide a huge boost for Ayrshire and will kick-start the preparations for a host of wonderful projects that we hope will transform the economy, and offer our citizens the same opportunities as people elsewhere in Scotland have. Also, the spin-off benefits will apply both ways. It is important to recognise that.

Some of the wonderful projects that could be in the pipeline include the Moorfield engineering park proposal, which will expand that location for business space and for supporting advanced manufacturing. There will be assistance to develop smart manufacturing and digital skills via the Ayrshire manufacturing and investment corridor, including an innovation centre in partnership with the University of Strathclyde. An energy research project will explore how to produce localised energy generation and distribution.

The project that could transform my area is the HALO Regeneration Company Ltd project in Kilmarnock. It was conceived by Marie Macklin shortly after Diageo's decision to take Johnnie Walker out of Kilmarnock. Since then, she has worked hard with both Governments, Diageo and the local council to bring that incredible project to life. It will create a dynamic commercial, educational, cultural and leisure quarter in the

town on a site beside the new Ayrshire College, and it could stimulate up to 1,500 new jobs.

The HALO project's focal point will be an enterprise and innovation hub to stimulate digital learning, inspire creative thinking and produce the kind of environment that will foster new starts and spin-out businesses. It will have state of the art live-and-work studios—"rock cribs"—where entrepreneurs can live while growing their businesses. There will be a fashion foundry for small businesses to design and produce retail fashion wear, and a digital retail shopping boutique.

In supporting leisure, it will also have a Wave surfing water feature that will be built to Olympic standards. It will have Scotland's first virtual reality arcade with cafe bar, digital retailing, graffiti art walls and exhibition and conference spaces. Powering it all will be a low-carbon energy scheme, which will be a first for the UK.

The scheme already has financial backing of about £5 million from the Scottish Government, £3.5 million from the UK, and £2 million each from the council and Diageo, which always said that it would support any new local scheme to help us to recover from the loss of the Johnnie Walker jobs. It has been true to its word. If and when the project comes off, it will be utterly transformational for Kilmarnock and for Ayrshire.

I cannot wait for the Ayrshire growth deal to get the go-ahead. I hope that the UK Government is ready to back it this Friday, which is Burns day. If it is not, it will have a bit of explaining to do.

The growth deals offer so much hope for all our communities, but I hope that colleagues will forgive me for saying that such a level of support for Ayrshire has been overdue for some time. We have to make a success of these wonderful proposals. I am sure that we will. After all, they are about people, aspiration, hope and determination—not just for Ayrshire but for Scotland as a whole.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. Mr Rowley will close for Labour. I have a little time in hand, so I can give you eight minutes, Mr Rowley.

16:30

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): In closing for Labour in the debate today, I will restate the key message from colleagues across the chamber—that city deals place great emphasis on innovation, on growing the digital economy, on involving stakeholders, on investment in infrastructure and on promotion of culture. Without doubt, those are worthwhile aims, and we

welcome the funding of city region and regional growth deals.

However, I will restate some of the concerns and issues that Labour has with them. As city region deals and other growth initiatives develop, we believe that there are questions to be asked about how the public money that is involved in those projects is spent. Much like the public money that we spend on procurement, how can we make sure that it is not being handed out in areas where exploitative working practices happen; that the real living wage will be paid; and that there will be no use of zero-hours contracts?

Likewise, there are questions to be asked about transparency in determining projects—whether communities are fully consulted; who is accountable for delivery; how we ensure that investment from city deals is over and above existing investment and not simply to replace funding cuts; and that all of Scotland benefits from growth deals.

For example, many people in Fife were surprised and disappointed that the Levenmouth rail link was not included in the deal that covers Fife. The chief executive of Fife Council confirmed that Scottish Government civil servants had advised council officers not to include it, because it would not have had support.

That raises the question about who decides what goes into the bids and who has a say on what bids are successful. If the Government advises councils beforehand not to put key infrastructure projects into their bids, that is hardly the best way to achieve what local people desire.

The First Minister has said that the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal—which covers six councils, including Fife—is of huge importance to the Scottish economy. The region contains more than a quarter of Scotland's population and contributes £33 billion to the Scottish and UK economies. It is a bit baffling that the Government has overlooked the massive economic and social possibilities that would come from a rail link to Levenmouth. The Local Government and Communities Committee made that point in its report last year, when it said that there was a lack of engagement with local businesses and charities at the outset of deals, and a lack of information on why projects are chosen. The committee's view was that good practice exists, but needs to be shared more widely.

The committee raised an important issue when it asked how city region deals align with other Scottish and UK Government policies. For example, the Scottish Government is implementing the findings of the enterprise and skills review, and the UK Government has

published its "Industrial Strategy: building a Britain fit for the future". How do city region deals fit with those policy priorities?

The Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland has made a similar point. It said that

"To unlock this transformational change, integration and alignment with other national and regional strategies will be essential."

It lists 11 strategies in the briefing that it provided for today's debate. However, the Scottish Government has developed many more strategies. How do they all fit together? Do they not fit together? Is it simply a case of strategy for strategy's sake, with no real outcome?

I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity has led the debate, but the city deals must be about more than building things. If they are to succeed, they will need to be driven by local government and its partners.

As many members are aware, wealth and achievement are not universal across city regions. Across Edinburgh and south-east Scotland, 22.4 per cent of children live in poverty. There is a growing housing crisis, and too many people are on poverty pay in low-skilled jobs. Given those facts, it is clear that the greatest benefit of investment will be from tackling those issues. It is essential that, at their core, the deals focus not only on accelerating economic growth, but primarily on creating new economic opportunities, creating new skilled, well-paid and sustainable jobs and—most important—reducing inequality in our communities.

There must be a skills strategy that aims to support people and give them the opportunities to gain the skills that they need to succeed. We need a highly skilled workforce to achieve a high-skilled, high-wage economy. The Scottish Government needs to acknowledge that serious proposition. What is our ambition for Scotland? Is it to have a high-skilled and high-wage economy? Where do city deals and other strategies fit in in the creation of such an economy?

When Stirling's city region deal was signed, the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, said:

"The ambitious and innovative deal will drive economic growth across the region, creating jobs and boosting prosperity for generations to come. It is now for Stirling and Clackmannanshire to get on with the hard work needed to turn these proposals into a reality."

The reality for Clackmannanshire Council is that it is on the brink of collapse because of financial cuts. How are councils to do the hard work against a background of Scottish Government centralisation and Westminster austerity, which includes ring fencing of budgets, growth in

regional governance, cuts in local government finance and a lack of local accountability for delivery of city deals across Scotland?

Many of Scotland's communities are under pressure—from growth in poverty, cuts in public services, the cost of and lack of access to transport, poor housing and degraded environments. Councils are on the front line of promoting and providing fair and inclusive services to tackle the big issues in communities. Without that support, too many communities and individuals will be at risk of being left behind.

Infrastructure and economic development activities need staff to work with developers, investors and employers. That needs to be driven at local-authority level. Staff cuts in key services in recent years have reduced councils' ability to drive economic development and planning. Councils' capacity to provide support and to deliver initiatives will have a direct impact on achievement of the aims that are set out in the city deals.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must conclude there.

Alex Rowley: On that line, I thank you, Presiding Officer.

16:38

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): In closing for the Scottish Conservatives, and considering all the contributions that have been made across the chamber, I think that we can all agree that, when the Scottish Government and the UK Government work together, great things can be achieved.

City and region deals are vital for securing long-term sustained investment across Scotland. They unlock the potential to generate jobs and drive the local and national economy. Unfairly, investment in Scotland primarily focuses on the central belt; therefore, city deals and regional economic partnerships provide a conduit for driving some investment elsewhere and giving other parts of Scotland a fighting chance of putting themselves on the map, attracting more businesses and realising their potential. Members have spoken of inequalities in education, health, infrastructure and roads investment. Our constituents have high expectations of city deal investments. They want new jobs, better broadband and measures to tackle traffic congestion, which some Labour members have talked about.

As we know, city deals were first announced in 2011, as part of the UK Government's industrial strategy, as long-term projects to boost productivity and earning power by building on the strengths that we have here, in Scotland. However, as we have heard today, it has not all

been plain sailing. The Local Government and Communities Committee conducted an inquiry into city deals, and some of the points that I will make have already been expressed by members who have concerns about rural areas being doubly disadvantaged by city region deals. The committee's report concluded that there are likely to be parts of the country that fall outside the geographic boundaries of the deal in question or in certain parts of the area covered by the same deal. The Borders area is an example of that. Due to its proximity to Edinburgh, it was technically included in parts of a particular city deal but saw only limited investment for specific projects, and my constituents were not happy about that.

Some members have spoken about the negative aspects of city deals. Andy Wightman criticised the closed-door negotiation policy and called for increased transparency in the future evaluation of such projects. Instead of welcoming the £1 billion funding from the UK Government, Shona Robison chose to complain and to ask for more cash. However, some £40 million of the extra £50 million of funding from the Scottish Government that is being put towards the Tay cities region deal will be spent on the cross-Tay link road project, which was already planned. I gently remind Ms Robison that the people of Scotland are best served when our two Governments engage in a collaborative manner and listen to Bill Bowman's calls for actions, not words—for collaboration, not grievance.

Despite the fact that the SNP's motion misses the significant point of the UK Government's investment of more than £1 billion, the Scottish Conservatives remain positive and welcome the secretary of state's announcement that the heads of terms on the Borderlands inclusive growth deal will be signed towards the end of May. Again, good progress has been made on that, and we now call on the Scottish Government to progress the Scottish side of the deal. My colleagues Finlay Carson and Oliver Mundell and I stand ready to support its successful delivery. We also welcome the significant progress that has been made on the Ayrshire growth deal, on which Brian Whittle congratulated everyone involved for their persistence and hard work in getting it over the line.

Johann Lamont and Neil Bibby want to see transformational delivery and not a "make do and mend" approach. Projects for new roads and bridges need to be delivered, and they called on the Scottish Government not to delay such infrastructure projects.

Finlay Carson talked about the Borderlands inclusive growth deal, which is closer to my home. The remit of that transformative deal spans 10 per cent of the UK's landmass, encompassing the

Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Carlisle, Cumbria and Northumberland. The Borderlands deal will bring much-needed investment to a geographically important area of the UK. The region is perfectly situated between the conurbations of the central belt and the north of England. In fact, 14 million people are within two hours' drive of the region—the untapped potential that comes with that is enormous.

The Conservative Party's manifesto for the 2017 UK general election committed us to a Borderlands inclusive growth deal—a commitment that was repeated in the autumn budget of the same year. We know that the economic benefits of that deal will straddle both the English and Scottish sides of the border, encompassing the local authorities for the five areas that I have mentioned, and the Scottish Conservatives were pleased that plans for the deal were submitted in October 2018. I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to the deal and reiterate the point that I made at the beginning of my speech: collaborative working between both Governments delivers results.

I am also glad to see that the feasibility study for extending the Borders railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle has been included. As many members have said of infrastructure projects in their own regions, such an extension would be transformational and would open up parts of the region that would otherwise continue to rely on road infrastructure that, in some cases, requires substantial upgrading.

Nevertheless, some rural areas are often missed in discussions of such issues—I apologise for mentioning my own constituency, but I know the country there. My constituents in areas such as the Ettrick valley, Teviotdale and Hawick constantly write to me about missing out on opportunities for jobs, investment and tourism.

Another project of great worth is the improvement in broadband provision and speeds. Just this morning, we saw the figures from the latest Which? report, which, unsurprisingly, show that the Scottish Borders has the 10th slowest broadband out of 358 local authority areas across the whole of the UK. The allocation of £200 million to pilot innovative approaches to rolling out full-fibre broadband in rural locations will—as, I am sure, many members will agree—go some way towards improving the often patchy and unreliable broadband that we experience in the Borders.

Stuart McMillan: In the spirit of co-operation that Rachael Hamilton mentioned, does she agree that the UK Government should increase its expenditure on the broadband scheme?

Rachael Hamilton: The Scottish Government is being very slow in rolling out delivery of the

broadband programme. The money was allocated by the UK Government years ago, but it was not spent and I doubt that the Scottish Government will be able to deliver the broadband that it has promised to deliver by 2021. I set Mr McMillan and his party the challenge of doing so. A lot of support has been expressed for city deals, but the Scottish Government and SNP members have made a desperate attempt to stoke grievance. I advise them to seek teamwork and collaboration.

We know that city deals and regional economic partnerships bring prosperity and investment to areas that, because of their geographical location, would otherwise lose out. We support the Scottish Government and the UK Government in delivering city region and growth deals, and we support the campaign for every part of Scotland to be covered by and benefit from such a deal. I look forward to the Borderlands growth deal evolving, along with the other city region deals and the deal for the islands, which I hope will come to fruition in the near future. There is a lot of potential out there, which we know such deals help to unlock. In the next round of deals, may the good work that has been done to date continue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: For the avoidance of doubt, I advise members that Mr Wightman had the permission of the Presiding Officers not to be present for the closing speeches—he gave advance notice of his absence. I saw frowns on a couple of faces, so I wanted to set the record straight.

16:47

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): I thank the members who have taken part in today's debate on a subject that I believe is of central importance to growing Scotland's economy.

At the outset, Jamie Greene said that he hoped that the Scottish Government was approaching the issue on a constructive basis. I assure Mr Greene that we are approaching it on the same constructive basis on which we approach each and every issue that we are charged with responsibility for. That said, we will not support his amendment. That is not because there is anything inherently wrong with its terms, but because it is important that the Parliament sends a very clear message to the UK Government that, in the spirit of partnership, it should match the level of investment that the Scottish Government is putting into the city region and growth deals. Thus far, it has failed to do that.

I thought that Alasdair Allan made a telling point when he said that what seems to be driving the UK Government's approach is the Treasury's insistence on the delineation of expenditure

according to devolved and reserved functions. That comes at a time when the Scottish Government is spending on mitigation of the impact of changes to social security and the delivery of broadband, which are, of course, reserved areas. On the latter point, I say to Rachael Hamilton that we will meet our commitments in relation to the reaching 100 per cent programme. Of the investment of £600 million that is being put into that, only £21 million is being provided by the UK Government.

Finlay Carson: Will the minister give way on that point?

Jamie Hepburn: I will, in a minute.

In relation to the investment that we are making in reserved areas, I heard Jamie Greene say from a sedentary position—therefore, his remark might not have been picked up for the *Official Report*, but I am sure that he would confirm that he said this—that it was our political choice to do so. I accept that entirely, but he must accept and concede that the UK Government's decision not to provide equivalent funding for city region and growth deals is a political choice, too. It is one that I regret, and I hope that it will be revisited.

Finlay Carson: Can the minister confirm whether the Government is on track to deliver the road map with timings for the roll-out of R100 in July, as it has committed to?

Jamie Hepburn: Much of that is out to procurement just now, but I make the fundamental point that we will hit the targets that we have set ourselves.

City region and other growth deals and the regional economic partnerships that they are inspiring are new, but I believe that there is recognition of their potential to accelerate economic growth in a way that drives both prosperity and societal equity. The Scottish Government is committed to the arrangements. Since 2014, we have committed almost £1.3 billion to city region deals across Scotland.

Deals for all Scotland's city regions have now been agreed or reached the stage of a heads of terms agreement, and they are providing the catalyst for the development of new regional economic partnerships that are bringing together partners to maximise all assets and opportunities for their regions and creating new, cross-boundary ways of collaborating and maximising opportunities on terms agreed by local partners.

As a few members and I have mentioned, city region deals are a relatively new part of the economic development landscape. Andy Wightman mentioned that Audit Scotland will shortly undertake a review of what has been put in

place so far, and I welcome Audit Scotland looking at city region deals.

Colin Smyth, Andy Wightman, Jenny Gilruth and Alex Rowley suggested that communities need to be involved more in deal partnerships. It is, of course, of fundamental importance that communities are involved in the design and creation of such deals. There should be a transparent process and our democratically elected local authorities should seek to engage with their communities and ensure that there is meaningful connection between communities and the process.

Colin Smyth and others spoke about trying to establish a clear timetable for the agreement of heads of terms for those deals that are under negotiation. I am happy to say in response to what Rachael Hamilton set out a moment ago that the cabinet secretary will meet the Secretary of State for Scotland next week, and we look forward to confirmation that the timescale that she set out for heads of terms will be what the UK Government sets out.

There have been some challenges in getting over the line with the Borderlands deal. The cabinet secretary set that out. Much of that is outwith our gift because it relates to investment that the UK Government must make through local authorities in England. I do not think that any reasonable person would expect the Scottish Government to deliver that element of the deal, but we want to see progress, and if the timescale is as Rachael Hamilton set out, that will be welcome.

Ayrshire was mentioned. The three local authorities there have been very clear that they are ready to sign heads of terms on Friday this week—on Burns day. We have written to the UK Government to make it very clear—abundantly clear—that we are ready to operate to that timescale as well. Thus far, we have had no reply from the UK Government. Let me send this clear message to the UK Government here and now: we remain ready and willing and good to go for this Friday. If the UK Government is listening, I hope to see it in Ayrshire on Friday to sign that deal.

Brian Whittle: As I mentioned in my speech, I spoke to David Mundell on Friday, and he says that the signing is imminent and the Treasury has committed to that project.

In the spirit of collaboration, I note that, as the minister well knows, there are within growth deals devolved projects as well as retained projects and joint projects, and it is well within the Scottish Government's ability to commit to devolved projects. Is there nothing within the project that it could sign? When it comes down to it, it does not matter to me or to the people of Ayrshire whether

the Scottish Government leads or the British Government leads. It just needs somebody to take the initiative.

Jamie Hepburn: We still lack significant clarity on the timescale for signing the heads of terms for the deal. Yes, of course there are investments that we can leverage. We have set out clearly the investment that we will make in the HALO project, which Willie Coffey mentioned. However, in the context of what we are debating today, we need a specific timescale rather than comments about signing being imminent. We are ready to go on Friday and the local authorities are ready to go; the UK Government should be ready to go. I hope that the signing is as imminent as Brian Whittle said that it is.

Mr Smyth asked about the timescale for areas in relation to which there is as yet no commitment from the UK Government on a deal, such as Argyll and Bute, Falkirk and the islands. I say, with the best will in the world, that if the UK Government has not yet committed to a deal, it is somewhat difficult for the Scottish Government to commit to a timescale in that regard. However, I assure all members, particularly the members who represent those parts of the country, of the Scottish Government's commitment to all areas of Scotland.

Bill Bowman said that he was not clear about the Scottish Government's investment in the Tay cities region deal. I make clear that, as we have said, we will invest £150 million in the deal. Specific investments include £25 million in the Tayside biomedical cluster, £37 million in culture and tourism and £20 million in the regional skills and employability development programme. Shona Robison welcomed that investment and, now that Bill Bowman is more acquainted with the details, I look forward to his welcoming it, too.

A number of members mentioned Glasgow airport access. Let me be very clear. The Scottish Government is committed to working with the people involved in the airport access project to find a solution that improves surface access to the airport.

Johann Lamont: Will the minister take an intervention?

Jamie Hepburn: Johann Lamont wanted to know that there is proper engagement. I give her that assurance. Transport Scotland and Network Rail continue to work with the airport access project team, and the cabinet secretary will chair the next meeting of the steering group, which includes the leaders of Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council, as well as Glasgow airport. Johann Lamont says that that might not be good enough, but throughout the debate we have heard a call for collaboration and co-operation, and I

think that the process that is being taken forward is—

Johann Lamont: Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Jamie Hepburn: I can see—or rather, hear—that Ms Lamont is keen to intervene. I am happy to allow her to do so.

Johann Lamont: In the context of other projects, the minister talked about the importance of clarity on the timescale. Will he confirm that the Scottish Government is committed to the Glasgow airport access project, as outlined in the business case and supported by the finance that is there? Will he give us a timescale for not just engagement but delivery of a project that is needed by not just Glasgow but the west of Scotland and Scotland as a whole?

Jamie Hepburn: The timescales that I have spoken about have been about the process of engagement. We need a clear timescale from the UK Government on engagement, so that we can move the city deals forward, and the process that I have laid out in relation to the project that Ms Lamont is interested in is the correct one.

Jenny Gilruth and Alex Rowley talked about another rail link—the Levenmouth link. Although city region deals play a hugely important role, they are not the sole source of investment. Transport Scotland is working with Fife Council on the Levenmouth sustainable transport study, and there is stakeholder engagement, which will continue. A preliminary options appraisal is under way. The cabinet secretary is due to meet Ms Gilruth, who is the local constituency representative, tomorrow, to discuss the issue further.

Through the city region deals and area growth deals that we have put in place, are negotiating and want to put in place, a significant difference will be made to the country as a whole—and the approach must work for the country as a whole.

I go back to Jamie Greene's remarks about a desire for constructive working. Over the past four years, we have worked in partnership with the UK Government on city region deals. Although that has been challenging, the partnership has delivered results. However, the time is now right to continue to press UK ministers not only to match our investment—the Scottish Parliament must do that—but to confirm the timescale for the heads of terms for Ayrshire and to join us in common purpose by making a formal commitment to 100 per cent coverage of Scotland with growth deals. The people of Scotland would expect nothing less, and I hope that the Parliament will unite around that purpose this evening.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-15493.2, in the name of Jamie Greene, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15493, in the name of Michael Matheson, on city deals and regional economic partnerships, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
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)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 28, Against 86, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-15493.1, in the name of Colin Smyth, which seeks to amend motion S5M-15493, in the name of Michael Matheson, on city deals and regional economic partnerships, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-15493, in the name of Michael Matheson, on city deals and regional economic partnerships, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 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)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)

Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 80, Against 33, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that city region and regional growth deals are important catalysts in driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth across Scotland; notes that the UK Government has not yet made a formal commitment to discussing deals for Falkirk, Argyll and Bute and the Islands; calls on the UK Government to join with the Scottish Government in common purpose by agreeing a clear timetable to achieve 100% coverage of Scotland with growth deals; commends the Scottish Government's committed level of investment to date of £1,584 million in city region deals and additional investment in city regions, and the significant investment committed by regional partners in Scotland; urges the UK Government to provide a further £388 million to match the Scottish Government's investment commitment; notes that all deals will provide a foundation for strong regional economic partnerships that will inspire collaboration to drive inclusive growth, enabling new jobs and wider economic opportunity, and agrees that the Glasgow City Region Deal's flagship Airport Access Project should be progressed as a matter of urgency.

Cervical Screening Uptake

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-15194, in the name of Monica Lennon, on cervical screening uptake statistics. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the latest cervical screening uptake statistics, released in September 2018, which show that uptake is falling, with more than one in four women not taking up their invitation; understands that cervical screening is the best protection against cervical cancer and that falling screening attendance means that there will be more diagnoses that could have been prevented; commends the preventative work of the HPV Immunisation Programme in Scotland, which it understands has seen high uptakes of the HPV vaccine among S1 to S3 girls since 2008; supports Cervical Cancer Prevention Week, which runs from 21 to 27 January 2019, and notes calls for more to be done to remove barriers to screening and to make it easily accessible in the Central Scotland region and across the country.

16:59

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): This is cervical cancer prevention week, and I am grateful to members who supported my motion to allow this debate to take place.

There is actually a lot to be positive about when it comes to cancer of the cervix. Why? Because it can largely be prevented through the human papilloma virus vaccination, which is given to girls—and soon to boys—in Scotland and through cervical screening, which is also known as a smear test.

Tonight, with thanks to the fantastic campaigning and research led by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, we will talk about cervical screening, and I hope that we will focus on what more we can do in Scotland to make cervical cancer a disease of the past.

This debate is critical, because not enough women are attending their smear tests—I know that is an issue that the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing is taking very seriously.

Let us face it: no one likes having a smear test. Like too many women in Scotland, I have ignored reminder letters and missed my smear test in the past. It can be uncomfortable and many of us feel embarrassed to talk about it, never mind go to the appointment.

The latest round of statistics reveals that the number of women not attending their regular screening is increasing; in fact, attendance is at an all-time low. Despite our nationwide cervical screening programme, which offers the test to women between the ages of 25 and 64, about one

in four women do not attend their regular appointment. Uptake is even lower among younger women, despite the fact that cervical cancer is the most common cancer for women under the age of 35. Only 62 per cent of women aged between 25 and 29 attend their regular appointment, yet not attending smear test appointments is one of the biggest risk factors for developing cervical cancer.

According to new research by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, young women do not go for their smear tests, because they feel embarrassed, scared or vulnerable—eight out of 10 admit that they are embarrassed. Difficulty in getting a suitable appointment time or time off work are also factors.

We have to remove the fear of the unknown and the worry around smear tests. This week, high-profile celebrities, campaigners and even politicians are sharing a lipstick-smeared selfie on #smearforsmear. After I shared mine on Twitter yesterday, a close friend told me that that is just what I look like on a normal night out—a claim that I strongly reject. The WhatsApp discussion with my girlfriends that followed that remark proved to me that it is good for women to talk about our health fears and that a little bit of light-hearted humour can perhaps help with that.

Katy Johnston, from BBC's "The Social", recently filmed her experience of going for a smear test. As she says in the video:

"Realistically, this is two minutes of your life—a little bit of awkwardness, sure, embarrassment—but it could stop cells in their tracks before they become cancer."

Katy has endometriosis and got over her initial fear of the test, but we must recognise that it is not an easy procedure for all women. The my body back project, based at the Sandyford clinic in Glasgow, provides a dedicated smear testing service for women who have experienced sexual violence. There are so many lessons to be learned from that project. We need vital trauma-informed services as standard across the country.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust told me about Nicola, from Scotland, who was diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2015. Let her words sink in:

"I was diagnosed with stage 1b2 cervical cancer at age 35 after putting off my smear test for over a year. It was 6 weeks before I was due to get married overseas. I was devastated. The word 'Cancer' seemed to take over my whole life and the thought that I might not be around to see my two children grow up terrified me. I postponed my treatment for a few weeks until after my wedding, because I thought, if something were to go wrong then at least I could leave my husband, children and family with wonderful memories of our wedding and holiday together. A radical hysterectomy means I can no longer have children and I went into early menopause. The physical and psychological impact of cancer will never go away but I look forward to the day that no one is diagnosed with cervical cancer."

What can we do to get the word out that cervical cancer can be prevented, so that other women in Scotland do not have the same experience as Nicola's?

First, the Scottish Government and Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust deserve enormous credit for previous initiatives. The nip it in the bud campaign ran last year and is exactly the type of awareness work that we need more of. The HPV vaccination programme also deserves massive credit.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has been calling for Scotland to continue to lead the way by running a pilot of self-sampling, which could have a hugely positive effect on screening levels. I was pleased to read reports today that the national health service in Scotland will pilot a scheme of self-sampling for women who have routinely not kept their regular appointments, and I look forward to seeing its results.

More could be done by health boards to monitor general practices with a low uptake and to increase the availability of screening appointments. Samantha, one of my constituents in Hamilton, waited more than two months for an appointment—clearly, that is not acceptable. Another wise woman, Lesley from Edinburgh, had this to say:

"Imagine we didn't get smear tests under the NHS—we'd all be campaigning to get them for free. It's a few minutes at the nurse, who has probably seen a lot worse than your lady garden and it's so important and life-saving."

In a novel initiative by a Glasgow beauty salon, Debbie Porter offers free waxing services to women to encourage them to book their smear test. As reported on Glasgow Live recently, Debbie posted to her clients on Facebook:

"Being a wax specialist, I see many of you girls who admit you haven't been for a smear or are too scared to do so, yet, you have me wax you for 20 minutes."

Debbie has a point.

There are many reasons why women put off their smear tests, but there is one overriding reason why they should not: the test protects against cervical cancer and can save lives.

I thank all the women who have shared their experiences and thoughts with me and, of course, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust—a number of whose volunteers and board members are in the gallery tonight—for all the amazing work that they do. Presiding Officer, minister, colleagues, if we match our shared ambition with action, we can consign cervical cancer to the history books.

17:12

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Monica Lennon on bringing this important debate to the chamber, which gives us

the opportunity to raise awareness of the latest cervical cancer screening uptake statistics. Given that cervical cancer prevention week runs this week, from 21 to 27 January, it is timely that we have the opportunity to raise awareness about this extremely important subject.

I remind the chamber of my background as a registered nurse. Much of my experience involved working in the operating room to support gynaecologists in their work following positive results, which required less invasive action compared with the more invasive surgery that was required for women who did not attend for screening at all.

As the motion outlines, the latest statistics show that cervical screening rates are falling in Scotland. All women aged 25 to 64 are invited for cervical screening—those between 25 and 49 are invited every three years and those between 50 and 64 are invited every five years. I was shocked to read that one in four women is not taking up their invitation for what is, as we know, a relatively simple test. Approximately 6,000 women across Dumfries and Galloway in my South Scotland region have not responded to their invitation to attend their GP surgery or sexual health clinic or to see a practice nurse. It is important to acknowledge that cervical screening is the best protection against cervical cancer and that attending screening appointments will mean that there will be increased diagnosis. As with many diseases and conditions, early diagnosis is key to effective early treatment.

I will use my time to highlight some of the unique work that is being developed by my former medical colleagues, including researchers in NHS Dumfries and Galloway. Last year, I met Doctors Heather Currie, William Forson, Gwen Baxter and Jim Lawrence to discuss their proposed research on self-testing for cervical screening. As recently as last Friday, I caught up with Dr Forson for an update, and I am pleased that the self-test pilot scheme has gained approval from the ethics committee and will roll out soon across NHS Dumfries and Galloway.

The team has developed a self-test swab to gather samples, which meets the required criteria for testing for the human papilloma virus. I know that we do not like to have props in the chamber, but I am holding up a uni-swab sample packet; it has a wee cotton bud-type swab and PCR media solution. The goal is for the current process to be followed; instead of cytology samples being done, the HPV cotton bud swab would be used and that would be replicated in current places for obtaining cell samples. Ultimately, the aim of the research is to offer the non-attenders—those 6,000 non-attenders, who are known as defaulters—the opportunity to attend and the opportunity to self-

test in their own homes. The self-test swab kit costs less than £2.

Research has shown that the self-test kit has been proven to work in other study populations—I know of one in Africa and one in Canada, and it is also being tested in the Netherlands. It could be applied here in Scotland to help to attract the non-attenders to take up cervical screening and simultaneously work to address the barriers to attending, such as cold speculums, exposure, discomfort, embarrassment and lack of knowledge. Often the challenges are to do with work-life constraints, including transport to and from work or home to places for samples to be obtained. Women can be quite challenged in finding the time to get to their appointments. I am one of them; I have been a defaulter, but I am now taking proactive steps to get myself to my nurse practitioner.

I am aware that some health professionals across Scotland are a bit put off being screened, because they often know those who carry out the screening, who are their colleagues and friends. As I mentioned, other countries such as the Netherlands are trying the self-testing approach, and I look forward to hearing the results.

I encourage the Scottish Government to closely explore and engage in the outcomes of the self-test research and, if it works, to look at the option of rolling out a self-test cervical screen kit across the whole of Scotland.

Cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women aged 25 to 35 in Scotland and the rest of the UK. In Scotland, around six women every week are diagnosed with cervical cancer. Cervical screening saves around 5,000 lives every year in the UK and prevents eight out of 10 cervical cancers from developing or spreading. It is crucial to encourage women to attend and be screened.

I am aware of innovative work from various businesses across Scotland—Monica Lennon mentioned one such business. There is another one in Dumfries called the Salon Bellissimo, which offers women money off waxing and other treatments if they are going to have a cervical screening test.

I encourage everyone to attend when they are invited for their cervical screening test.

17:18

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I congratulate and thank Monica Lennon for holding this debate on the important issue of screening uptake for cervical cancer. I thank the organisations that provided us with briefings ahead of the debate, including Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust.

Cervical cancer screening rates are important because screening saves lives, preventing eight out of 10 cervical cancers from developing. I hope that today we can collectively send out the message that screening saves lives and that, each year, the lives of hundreds of Scottish women can be saved if they go to their screening.

In Scotland, approximately six women every week are diagnosed with cervical cancer—six women every week. There is the potential to reduce that number if we can increase uptake rates for cervical screening. Uptake of cervical screening is lowest among younger women, as has already been outlined. That is particularly concerning for many of us, as cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women under the age of 35 in Scotland and across the UK.

A survey that was carried out by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust asked 2,005 women aged between 25 and 35 about why they would delay or not go for a screening test. The survey, as we have heard, found that a lot of it was about embarrassment. Of the young women who delay or do not go for a screening test, 71 per cent felt scared, 75 per cent felt vulnerable, 81 per cent said that they were embarrassed and 67 per cent responded that they felt that they no control over the screening and the test.

The survey was incredibly important in order to find out what would make women delay or not take up the invitation of a test. Twenty-seven per cent said that they were concerned about making a fuss, 18 per cent were afraid of being judged and 18 per cent said that their concerns were too small or silly to go for the screening. Almost half of the women who were surveyed said that they regularly delay or do not take up the invitation of a test. If the uptake of cervical screening is to be improved and the concerns of women that have been outlined are to be addressed, we need to see progress.

This week is a great time to have the debate. Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has launched its #smearforsmear social media campaign to raise awareness of what a smear test is for and why it is important, and to provide support and advice to women who are going for a test, to make it feel less daunting. As well as providing support and advice, the campaign aims to act as a reminder to women to book their test if they have been meaning to go but have put it off. With busy lives, people often do put off such things, but that is something that we should look to change.

Men also have a role to play. Ali Maxwell, who is the son of Jo Maxwell, after whom the charity is named, has said that men should play a role in understanding the importance of the tests and encouraging our mothers, daughters, sisters, partners and friends to take the test. Too often, we

have similar debates in which we encourage women to remind men, but this is an opportunity to show how men can play a role in helping to address some of the fears around smears.

The survey revealed that 72 per cent of women delayed or missed the test because, as has already been mentioned, of the embarrassment of a stranger examining intimate areas and 44 per cent did not know how to talk to a stranger about it. It is therefore important that public information campaigns are able to really tackle the issues. As members have outlined, many people who work in the health professions worry that they might have to see other health professionals. Therefore, it is important to look at how we can reassure people.

Last week, the cross-party group on cancer published our inquiry into the Scottish Government's cancer strategy and highlighted some progress. We saw progress in relation to public information campaigns through the flower campaign, which I hope that the Government will repeat in future.

We still face significant challenges around cervical cancer, with incidence rates having increased by 19.1 per cent over the past decade. I would like to hear from the minister this evening about what work is being undertaken to develop reminders for women, and to further look at how we can use technology for screening reminders, such as an email or an automated text message, in addition to the letter that women receive from their local health board.

We should all work to address the barriers that are preventing women from accessing screening. Campaigns such as #smearforsmear can make a huge difference in improving uptake rates for cervical screening and reducing the number of women in Scotland and across the UK who are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year.

17:25

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am grateful to Monica Lennon for bringing the debate to the chamber during cervical cancer prevention week. I believe that there is some discussion about how to pronounce cervical, but I will stick with the west coast way. However we pronounce it, it is vitally important for women's health that women take up the invitation to go for a cervical smear test, so it is worrying that the number of women who are doing so is in decline. That needs to be addressed as a priority and may require another Government public health campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of the smear test and to provide reassurance.

As we know, a campaign is being run by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, which is a UK-wide charity that was set up by James Maxwell in memory of

his wife Jo, who died from cervical cancer. It provides high-quality information and support to help prevent cancer and to reduce the impact on those who are affected by cervical cancer and abnormalities, and it campaigns for excellence in treatment and prevention.

Last year, the be cervix savvy roadshow toured the country and provided information and support about screening and cancer to local communities, including communities in Scotland. The purpose of the roadshow was to ensure that more people know what cervical screening is and what to expect at the test; understand the test's role in preventing cancer; learn about cancer and how to spot the symptoms; and know who can have the HPV vaccine and why. I visited the roadshow bus last year when it was in Coatbridge. It was kept very busy, with lots of women, and some men accompanying them, coming to find out more.

As has been mentioned—and as, I think, women in the chamber will know—what can stop women attending is more likely to be the fear of the smear test and a possible bad result than a negative experience of the test itself. In order to encourage women to attend their appointments, it is important to ensure that they know that while the test is certainly not comfortable, it should not be painful. It is also crucial that there is discussion of the outcome, if a bad result is achieved. As Monica Lennon pointed out, there should be a particular focus on the excellent chances of treating cervical cancer if it is caught quickly.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust can help with information and advice about the test. It gives useful tips, such as ensuring that the test is carried out by a woman doctor or nurse, if that makes a woman feel more comfortable about attending their appointment. The only time that I have had a bad experience of the test, which was when I was quite young, was when it was carried out by a male doctor. I always try to ensure that I see a female doctor or nurse.

The trust highlights issues that women who are survivors of sexual abuse might have with screening, on which it provides specific advice and support. A further area of the website provides helpful advice for women with learning disabilities.

The trust's current campaign is underpinned by new research that shows that, as we have heard, young women who delay the test or do not attend it can feel scared, vulnerable or embarrassed at the thought of having the test. Two thirds say that they would not feel in control during the test, so it is important to show them ways that they can be in control. Addressing those issues would undoubtedly help to boost screening numbers.

The idea of invasive screening can be particularly off-putting for young women. More

research into ways of conducting less invasive screening would be extremely welcome. I was interested to hear Emma Harper talk about new research that is taking place into screening.

Emma Harper: The member mentioned those who have been on the receiving end of sexual violence. Does she think that a self-test approach might be a way of supporting women?

Elaine Smith: It could certainly be an option. All options that make women feel comfortable about taking the test should be explored.

We should also consider out-of-hours provision, and persuading employers to be more sympathetic to letting women have time off work to go for the test.

I notice that I am over my time, but I want to mention an issue that is not given enough thought, which is that health screening, for example for breast or cervical cancer, is not available to many women who are homeless. Women who are living on the streets or in hostel accommodation or women's refuges may not receive appointment letters or have a GP. They might have no idea how to go about getting a screening. Screening might be—and probably is—the least of their worries, but the issue is one that, as a society, we should all be concerned about. I will be interested to hear the minister talk about how it could be addressed.

Once again, I thank Monica Lennon for bringing this important women's health issue to the chamber—and I thank the Presiding Officer for the bit of extra time.

17:28

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I, too, thank Monica Lennon for bringing this important issue to the chamber tonight, during cervical cancer prevention week. It is fair to say that we all agree on the importance of getting regular health checks; screening for cervical cancer is no different in that regard. We are aware that the uptake of screening—the smear test—has fallen dramatically in Scotland in recent years. Around 73 per cent of women in Scotland currently access screening, but that figure is consistently lower than the figure for uptake in Northern Ireland and Wales, which is a little higher, at around 77 per cent.

I was really concerned to note that Lothian region has the second lowest uptake rate in the country. As Miles Briggs noted, the rates are closely linked to age, but they are also linked to socioeconomic factors. Young women have the lowest levels of uptake, and uptake is particularly low among women who live in areas of greatest deprivation. It is vital that we increase uptake

across all regions and backgrounds, because cervical screening saves around 5,000 lives a year and prevents up to eight out of 10 cervical cancers.

Research by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust reveals some of the issues that have affected uptake. The availability of GP appointments can vary widely between areas; almost one in 10 women were offered only times that they could not make when they last tried to book an appointment; and around 7 per cent of those who were questioned by the trust were told that no appointments were available when they called to ask for one—sometimes they put it off at that moment and never got around to making that appointment.

Workplace demands are also a barrier for many women, with a fifth finding it a struggle to fit an appointment around their job. More than a tenth of those who were surveyed by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust said that they would be more likely to book an appointment if they did not need to use their annual leave to attend.

Another barrier is the decline in the provision of screenings at sexual health centres. A higher-than-average number of abnormal results come from tests taken at those clinics, so they are of great importance to ensuring that worrying changes are noticed at the earliest opportunity. In Scotland, provision of screenings at sexual health clinics varies widely, with only five tests in Forth Valley in 2017 but more than 4,000 screenings in Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Lack of mobility is another barrier that is faced by women, particularly those who are housebound, as a GP visit for a screening is not always possible. Emma Harper spoke about a potential pilot, which I would warmly welcome. Elaine Smith spoke about the thought of attending a screening being particularly difficult or traumatic for women who have experienced sexual violence. The procedure itself, or having to discuss the process with a GP, can be a challenging barrier to overcome. I highlight specialist clinics, such as the My Body Back Project's clinic in Glasgow, and urge the Government to make additional funding available for those oversubscribed services.

Having accessible information on cervical screenings in a range of languages is also vital. We need to be smarter about how we communicate with women about attending regular screenings. The more women-focused and responsive appointment systems can be, the better the chance of reversing the decline in uptake. Nationwide text or email campaigns could reach new audiences; indeed, reminders to attend a screening have been popping up on Twitter timelines. More innovation like that is needed, especially because there are gaps in the data on who is not attending. Better data—for example,

collecting HPV vaccination status alongside smear results—would allow for more targeted activity and save money and resources in the long term.

With regard to the call for self-sampling pilots, better data systems could improve the reliability of the pilots' results, too, and overcome some of the barriers around getting time to attend a surgery. Eighty per cent of women who were surveyed by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust said that they would prefer to do an alternative screening themselves at home—and the figure rises to 88 per cent among those who have put off getting an appointment. Taking the test into their own hands could empower women who have experienced sexual violence.

We need to look at how to incentivise GPs to help boost uptake rates—some actions that are taken by GPs are already incentivised. Much can be done to address the decline. We need to be better at collecting data if we are to fully understand why some women struggle to attend—and why some are loth to do so. Developing the reliability of self-tests at home should also be prioritised as a way to help the most vulnerable women.

17:33

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I add my thanks to Monica Lennon for bringing this important debate to the chamber. The speeches that we have heard have driven home just how vital it is to highlight the issue. Some fantastic points have been raised.

Cervical cancer is the 14th most common cancer in females in the UK, accounting for around 2 per cent of all new cancer cases. Almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by a common virus called human papillomavirus, or HPV. Cervical cancer screening is a great NHS success story. It has been available all my adult life and can pick up any abnormalities at an early stage, which allows painless treatment that prevents cancer. All women aged 25 and 64 are invited to attend cervical screening, and I can honestly say that I do not think I have ever missed receiving a reminder. The system works, and it saves 5,000 women's lives a year throughout the UK.

In 2017-18, 378,382 cervical screening tests were processed in Scotland. For the past 10 years, the HPV vaccine has been offered to girls from secondary 1 to S3 in Scottish secondary schools, which is a fantastic public health initiative. The immunisation helps to protect against the types of HPV that cause 75 per cent of the cases of cervical cancer.

As we have heard, according to the report by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, 72.8 per cent of eligible women in Scotland aged 25 to 64 were

recorded as having been screened yet, alarmingly, in Glasgow just 56 per cent of young women attended screening.

In Scotland, cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women aged between 25 and 35. As we have heard, research shows that, for most women who do not attend, the reason is that they are scared or embarrassed. We must reach out to young people and stress how important it is that they take the test. The test is to prevent cancer, not to find it.

I agree with Monica Lennon on trauma-informed screening and with Emma Harper on the self-test screening, which is positive news.

The test can be uncomfortable, but it takes less than two minutes—and that may be the most important two minutes a person can spend.

The take-up of screening is poorest among younger women and increases with age to peak at 50 to 54. In addition, the take-up of screening is highest among women from the least-deprived areas and falls with increasing deprivation. That is really worrying, as Alison Johnstone mentioned. Elaine Smith made a vital point about homeless and marginalised women not being screened, which is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Any abnormality will be picked up and dealt with. In 2017-18, only around 1 per cent of tests showed high-grade abnormality, with 7.2 per cent showing low-grade abnormality and almost 92 per cent being clear.

The take-up of cervical screening is higher in HPV-vaccinated women of all ages than in non-vaccinated women. That may be due to immunised women being more aware of the risks involved thanks to their education during the immunisation programme. Education is a key part of getting the message across. My hope is that screening becomes the norm for women and girls, just like going for dental check-ups or eye examinations—no big deal, just something that we have to do.

Let us get the message out loud and clear to women and girls: the test is too important to miss; it will give you peace of mind that everything is okay and, more important, it could save your life.

17:37

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I thank Monica Lennon for bringing the debate to Parliament during cervical cancer prevention week.

Put simply, cervical screening saves lives. Despite that, however, one in four women is not taking up their invitation for a cervical screening, putting themselves at risk of having undetected cervical cancer. It is key that we try to understand

why screening attendance is falling, what the barriers are to women getting the test done and how we can ensure that every woman has the information and opportunities that they need to access cervical screening. Bearing in mind that screening is a free health test that is available to every woman in Scotland, it is essential that we acknowledge the barriers and factors that are preventing women from taking up their invitation.

As we have heard, the test can be uncomfortable and slightly embarrassing for many women. It is one of those tick-box exercises that, if put off among a list of countless other things to do, may have no immediate or obvious repercussions. A survey of more than 2,000 women by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust found that a third of young women were too embarrassed to go to their test because of their body shape.

For some women, it is much more difficult to go, possibly because they have had a bad experience at a test or an experience of sexual violence. That is why I was encouraged to hear from Emma Harper about the piloting of self-tests, which I welcome. It is paramount that women are given the information to allow them to overcome those barriers.

If women feel embarrassed about having the test done, they need to be informed—through a public campaign or social media—that they can specify that they want a female nurse, that they need only undress from the waist down and that, for most people, the test is not painful at all.

When reading around the topic, I was encouraged to see celebrities posting on social media about their own smear test experiences. Ten years ago, Jade Goody sadly lost her life to cervical cancer, after which cervical screening rates rose thanks to extensive media coverage and her work to raise awareness.

However, 10 years later, numbers have dipped. Most alarming, in Scotland, the biggest fall in cervical screening take-up is among 25 to 29-year-olds, with more than one in three not taking up their invitation. As cynical as we sometimes might be about social media, the power to raise awareness among that group is great. There are many great campaigns out there that young women and men can join to spread the word among their friendship groups. As we have heard, the #smearforsmear campaign encourages people to share smeared lipstick selfies along with tips and words of support during cervical cancer prevention week.

Innovation is also key. In my hometown of Glasgow, I have had the pleasure of meeting representatives from Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust at the be cervix savvy roadshow, once on Buchanan Street and once in George Square as part of its

mobile unit service. It was easy to see how information could be easily shared in such prime locations.

Like Monica Lennon, I was pleased to see in the local press last week the initiative of a Glasgow beautician who is offering a free wax treatment to anyone who has a confirmed smear test appointment.

I again thank Monica Lennon for bringing the debate to the chamber during cervical cancer prevention week. We cannot allow the take-up of cervical screening to slip any further or we run the risk of seeing a rise in diagnosis rates of what is often a preventable cancer. There is no quick fix to turn around the situation, but I hope that, by working together and raising awareness, we can save lives.

17:41

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): I thank members who have contributed to the debate today, and Monica Lennon for bringing it to the chamber.

Cervical screening is unique. Not only can it detect cancer early, but it can prevent cervical cancer before it begins. The screening test detects precancerous cell changes that are mainly caused by the human papilloma virus, which 80 per cent of us will get at some point in our lifetimes, and treatment as a result of screening prevents eight out of 10 cervical cancers from developing.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the cervical screening programme saves lives: it is the best protection against cervical cancer. As a woman who has been for a smear test, I believe that we must do all that we can to encourage eligible women to take up their cervical screening invitation. I agree with members that it is disappointing that uptake rates for cervical screening continue to decline. Latest figures show that just 72.8 per cent of eligible women attend screening in Scotland. That is down from 73.4 per cent in 2017 and about 80 per cent 10 years ago. The trend is not unique to Scotland; it is mirrored across the UK.

In my Rutherglen constituency, the most recent uptake data range from a high of 84.7 per cent to a low of 62.4 per cent. Uptake of screening was highest among women from the least-deprived areas and fell with increasing deprivation levels.

What is putting women off getting tested? Evidence shows that there are a number of barriers, from complex emotional obstacles such as fear, body shame and embarrassment to practical barriers such as struggling to attend an appointment due to work commitments or childcare. New research from Jo's Cervical Cancer

Trust and the Scottish Government shows that two thirds of Scottish women are unaware that not attending cervical screening is the biggest risk factor for developing cervical cancer. Awareness raising is therefore very important, but we must also recognise that uptake is lowest in our least-affluent communities.

The Scottish Government's cancer strategy is investing up to £5 million in our NHS national cancer screening programmes, including cervical screening, in order to improve outcomes. The funds are supporting innovative projects, working to tackle inequalities and encouraging participation in screening programmes in communities from which individuals are least likely to take part.

So far, we have committed more than £2.7 million to support 25 projects. Cervical cancer prevention week gives us the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the good work that is currently being undertaken to tackle inequalities of access and to raise awareness of cervical screening in Scotland.

The Scottish Government warmly welcomes the input of Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust to the Scottish cervical screening programme, and we work closely with the trust to encourage women—especially women in hard-to-reach groups—to attend for screening. Under the cancer strategy, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has received funding for a Glasgow outreach service that targets specific groups in which there are significant health inequalities and a higher rate of non-attendance. It works with local general practices, sexual health clinics, community groups and volunteers to improve access to, and uptake of, cervical screening. Last year, Jo's ran its first ever Scottish "Be cervix savvy" roadshow, which visited high streets and retail parks around Scotland. It increased awareness by addressing public knowledge of cervical screening and cancer. I was pleased to learn that two community workers from my constituency were trained as volunteers and joined the roadshow when it travelled to Lanarkshire.

The Scottish Government's cancer strategy supports Clyde Gateway—Scotland's biggest and most ambitious regeneration programme company—in tackling inequalities in access to screening. The Clyde project includes the creation of additional monthly cervical screening clinics. That gives women the choice of a more convenient appointment time, which increases flexibility and accessibility.

Elaine Smith: Do any of the projects that have been mentioned work with women who are homeless?

Clare Haughey: I was going to address that point further on in my speech. I will do that, if that is all right with Elaine Smith.

The Clyde project has developed a community health pathway in the community of Burnhill in Rutherglen, which is the second most deprived community in South Lanarkshire. Through engagement with residents on the street, door to door and via local activity groups, the project has consulted 337 local residents.

Those are a few of the excellent projects that are currently under way. I have only just touched the surface.

It is vital that we continue to explore how screening can be more effective at reaching those who are in the greatest need. We will bring together all the learning that we have gathered from the projects into a cohesive and co-ordinated strategy to reduce screening inequalities.

We are complementing that work with our “Flower” cervical screening awareness campaign, which started running in cinemas yesterday and will be run across digital platforms from 28 January. The campaign targets 25 to 35-year-old women, who are less likely to attend. The campaign encourages women to take up their screening invitations and recommends that women who missed their last appointment—or who have never been screened—contact their general practitioner. I thank all the people who undertake vital work to raise awareness of the importance of cervical screening.

Finally, I will mention our cervical cancer vaccination programme, which we introduced in 2008. Since we introduced the programme, uptake rates have remained high and continue to exceed 80 per cent. The programme has been evaluated since it began and already shows encouraging and positive signs that the rate of cervical cancer that is caused by the HPV virus will reduce in the future. However, the vaccine does not protect against all cervical cancers. Therefore, regular screening is still important and will continue to be an essential part of our armoury for many years to come. We must continue the work to get that message out to young women.

I will address a couple of the issues that members raised during the debate. Emma Harper spoke about self-screening. Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board is carrying out a small-scale pilot in its area. We are looking at the possibility of a national pilot. The UK National Screening Committee is looking at the evidence for self-sampling, and we are awaiting its advice before proceeding further with that.

Miles Briggs and Alison Johnstone asked me about the potential of digital communications to encourage people to take up the invitation for

screening. As part of the work under the cancer strategy, we will use learning—including digital and other technology—to develop future communication plans.

Elaine Smith asked me about homelessness. Through the cancer strategy, there are a number of projects in which we are looking at how screening services can be improved for hard-to-reach groups—which, of course, include women and men who are homeless, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health issues.

We who are here tonight share the same ambition—to make cervical screening accessible to all women across Scotland, regardless of where they live, by understanding and reducing the barriers that women face.

We all have a role in sharing the potentially life-saving messages about cervical screening with all the women in our lives. Together, let us nip cervical cancer in the bud.

Meeting closed at 17:49.

Correction

Jeane Freeman has identified an error in her contribution and provided the following correction.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman):

At col 3, paragraph 3—

Original text—

In November, the bacteria *Cryptococcus* was identified in one patient. That patient was discharged for palliative care and, sadly, subsequently died in late December, but *Cryptococcus* was not a contributory factor in their death.

Corrected text—

In November, *Cryptococcus* was identified in one patient. That patient sadly, subsequently died in early January, but we were advised that *Cryptococcus* was not a contributory factor in their death.

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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