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Wednesday 13 March 2019

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 13 March 2019

[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:59]

Portfolio Question Time

Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The first item of business is portfolio question time. As usual, to get in as many members as possible, I request nice short questions and nice succinct answers. I live in hope.

Traffic Management (A90/A944 Junction)

1. Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will consider traffic management options for the A90/A944 junction. (S5O-02973)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): Technical advisers are closely monitoring that location. Should the monitoring indicate that enhancements are required, considerations will be discussed with the local authority. In the meantime, we ask everyone using the new route to proceed with additional caution until they are fully familiar with the layout.

I offer my deepest sympathies to those who were affected by the accident on the A90 last night. As police investigations are on-going, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this time. As part of standard policy, I have asked my officials to meet representatives of Police Scotland and the operating company to obtain more information.

Mark McDonald: I echo the cabinet secretary's remarks in relation to yesterday evening's tragedy.

The A90/A944 Kingswells south junction at the Aberdeen western peripheral route has caused concern for my constituents. Although the AWPR has been a great boost to the area and has reduced journey time significantly, there are issues at peak times with the queuing of traffic and the difficulty of negotiating the roundabout at the A944. Given that temporary traffic lights, which operate at peak times, exist further along the A944 at Kingswells, is the cabinet secretary open to considering that option for this junction to ensure the smooth flow of traffic? If so, what timescale would there be for that?

Michael Matheson: As Mark McDonald will appreciate, with a major piece of infrastructure such as the AWPR, there can be a period of bedding down before local traffic plans are developed for the use of the new road and how it impacts on secondary roads that come off the road. That work is presently being evaluated to see how travel patterns are being established, including at the very junction to which Mark McDonald refers.

Technical advisors are undertaking assessments now. They will then evaluate whether further measures need to be taken, including the suggestion that Mark McDonald has made. They will report back to Transport Scotland, which will engage with the local authority to explore what further measures might be necessary at that junction.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary mentioned assessments. I am sure that he recognises that the welcome impact of the AWPR extends beyond the immediate vicinity of the new road and to the wider road network. Does he agree that judgments on future road network development across the region should be based on traffic assessments that take into account the impact of the AWPR?

Michael Matheson: The AWPR is having a significant positive effect on north-east Scotland, and it will have implications for other road developments in the area in the years ahead, including the proposals for the A96 with regard to how it might link in with the AWPR and how traffic flows might change. That is why it is important, during the bedding-down period, as people start to establish use of the route, that any information that is used to take forward proposals for other road developments reflects the changing patterns of road use in the area. Decisions on any other major trunk road investments in the area will be informed by up-to-date data.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I, too, echo the cabinet secretary's comments in relation to the tragic events that we heard about.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that years of real-terms cuts to funding by the Scottish National Party mean that Aberdeenshire Council is now the worst in Scotland with regard to the standard of its bridges. Many of them cannot meet the demands of modern traffic, especially that arising from road developments. What support will the Scottish Government provide to Aberdeenshire Council to repair or replace its deteriorating bridge infrastructure before it is too late?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That question is a bit wide of the mark from the A90/A944 junction. It is up to you, cabinet secretary, whether you answer it.

Michael Matheson: It is a bit rich to hear a Conservative talking about cutting budgets, given the track record of the Conservatives at the United Kingdom level.

As Liam Kerr is aware, if the bridge is on a local road, which is the responsibility of the local authority, it will be for the local authority to decide on the action that is taken.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study

3. Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the Levenmouth sustainable transport study. (S5O-02975)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): Further to the members' business debate in Parliament, Transport Scotland is leading the transport appraisal work for the Levenmouth sustainable transport study in collaboration with Fife Council.

Since I last spoke about the study in Parliament, the preliminary options appraisal has been completed and the six options emerging from that stage have been published. Transport Scotland and Fife Council have nearly completed the technical review of the preliminary options appraisal report, and the work on the final detailed options appraisal is under way. That reflects the most recent update that was sent to the member and other stakeholders on 28 February 2019, which was also published on Transport Scotland's website.

Jenny Gilruth: Will the cabinet secretary tell my constituents when he expects the final detailed options appraisal to be published and how that information will be shared with elected members and the Levenmouth community?

Michael Matheson: Transport Scotland officials and their consultants gave a commitment to elected members and other stakeholders at the most recent workshop—which was held in Leven in November—that they would continue to keep stakeholders up to date on the study, including by inviting elected members and other stakeholders to a further session in Leven to update them on the outcomes of the final study report.

It is not possible to provide a date for the publication of the final study report while work on the final stage of the study is on-going. However, I will ask my officials to update the programme on the project website as soon as possible and to highlight that to stakeholders in their newsletter.

I reassure the member and her constituents that I am committed to completing the Levenmouth

sustainable transport study. Although I understand the frustration around the time that it has taken, it is important that the study is carried out robustly and in line with the Scottish transport appraisal guidance, as any transport investment decision has to be based on robust evidence.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The cabinet secretary is right that there is a lot of impatience in Fife because it has taken an age just to get to this stage. I welcome the support of the cabinet secretary, but I urge him to accelerate the process from now on. After the options appraisal process and once the options are published, he should accelerate the next stage, because people in Fife are running out of patience on the issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is a question in there somewhere, cabinet secretary.

Michael Matheson: I recognise the concerns that the member raises. The local member, Jenny Gilruth, has raised the issue with me previously. I assure Willie Rennie that as much work that can be done is being undertaken. However, he will appreciate that the work is a collaboration between Transport Scotland and Fife Council and that sufficient time is required to allow that work to be undertaken appropriately. Everything that can be done to make progress with the reports is being done, and I hope to have them published in due course.

Queensferry Crossing (One-year Review Report)

4. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government when it will receive the report of the one-year review of the operation of the Queensferry crossing. (S5O-02976)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): Transport Scotland is undertaking an evaluation of the Forth replacement crossing project, in line with guidance, to compare conditions one year after the motorway regulations came into force, in February 2018, with the forecasts that were made during project design and development. I expect that the one year after evaluation report will be completed in the autumn. Further evaluations will be undertaken three and five years after the opening of the motorway.

The new crossing has increased resilience for the more than 70,000 vehicles that use it each day. Since it opened to traffic, there have been at least 22 occasions—possibly now 23 after the storm last night—when it has remained open when the Forth road bridge would have been closed or restricted to heavy goods vehicles.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Since the Queensferry crossing opened, it has fundamentally altered

traffic volume and flow in the royal burgh of South Queensferry, in my constituency. Let me pre-empt the review by telling the cabinet secretary that we need a box junction on the bridge access roundabout; better traffic management on the motorway slip roads; local access to the southbound M90 from South Scotstoun; and a pedestrian crossing on the Bo'ness road, which has seen a huge spike in traffic outside Echline primary school.

On publication of the review—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can you conclude?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I will conclude, Presiding Officer. Will the cabinet secretary ensure that Transport Scotland commits the necessary resources for those structural changes?

Michael Matheson: I hear the list of issues that the member wants to see addressed. However, I will not pre-empt the study; I will allow the study to be undertaken and its findings to be considered. Transport Scotland will then consider what further measures might be necessary as a result of the findings.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The final completion date for outstanding snagging works has been pushed back three times. Will the cabinet secretary explain to the chamber why that has happened and whether all works will be completed by the end of 2019?

Michael Matheson: The contractors intend to complete the remaining snagging work this year.

Glasgow Queen Street-Maryhill-Anniesland Train Services (Delays and Cancellations)

5. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress—I nearly read out someone else's question, Presiding Officer.

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to alleviate peak-hour delays and cancellations on the ScotRail Glasgow Queen Street-Maryhill-Anniesland service. (S5O-02977)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is a good job that I was temporarily distracted.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The public performance measure for the Anniesland route has been consistently above 90 per cent over the past 12 periods. That is better than the performance of ScotRail services as a whole. In the most recent railway period, the PPM was 93.4 per cent, as opposed to 89.8 per cent for ScotRail as a whole. However, the level of cancellations on peak services experienced by passengers across the country, including in Bob

Doris's constituency, has been too high. ScotRail's remedial plan is currently being reviewed by Transport Scotland.

Bob Doris: Those statistics belie the reality of peak-hour cancellations on my line. I previously called for an improvement plan that is specific to the Maryhill line to address those issues, and I have met the managing director of ScotRail, Alex Hynes. I have had sympathetic words from ScotRail, but no discernible action or improvement. Will the cabinet secretary commit to arranging a meeting with ScotRail and me so that we can establish an improvement plan and ensure, once and for all, that my constituents get the train service that they deserve?

Michael Matheson: I understand the concerns that Bob Doris has raised. However, in period 12, 240 planned peak services were due to run between Anniesland and Glasgow Queen Street, and 11 of the 240—that is, 4.8 per cent—were cancelled. As I have stated in the chamber, I expect ScotRail to continue to improve services across the country through its remedial plan. However, I appreciate the concerns that Mr Doris has raised about busy peak services, and I will make arrangements for him to meet me and the senior management of ScotRail to discuss those matters further.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Transport Scotland will have received the first of two remedial plans from ScotRail. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the Government's response will require ScotRail to hit the targets that it is paid £960 million a year of taxpayers' money to deliver, including the punctuality target of 92.5 per cent? When does the cabinet secretary think that that target will be reached?

Michael Matheson: Colin Smyth will have the opportunity to look at the details of the remedial plan and the Scottish Government's response to it when the plan is published.

Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (Targets)

6. **Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made on meeting the targets set out in the Tayside and central Scotland transport partnership's "Regional Transport Strategy 2015-2036 Refresh". (S5O-02978)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): It is the duty of each regional transport partnership to draw up a strategy for transport within its region that has regard to the current national transport strategy. The monitoring of performance against regional transport

strategies is a matter for the relevant transport partnership.

Bill Bowman: Section 5.2.4 of the strategy refers to health and transport. It aims to

“Improve equality of access to healthcare”

and ensure that healthcare is “readily accessible”. At Ninewells hospital in Dundee, there is inadequate access and parking, which affects the hospital and surrounding residential areas. That causes difficulties and stress for staff, patients and local residents. Dundee City Council and NHS Tayside seem to be unable or unwilling to act to remedy that. What will the cabinet secretary do to remedy it?

Michael Matheson: The issue that Bill Bowman raises is for the local transport strategy and local transport partners, which include the local authority and the health board. He would be better addressing his question on the actions that will be taken to address those matters directly to them.

Broadband (Business Access)

7. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that there are no barriers to businesses accessing broadband. (S5O-02979)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): The digital Scotland superfast broadband programme has extended fibre broadband access to businesses across Scotland, with more than 920,000 homes and businesses connected to date, and the roll-out will continue throughout 2019. The R100—reaching 100 per cent—programme will build on that success and ensure that every business in Scotland has access to superfast broadband.

We are also providing a range of support services for businesses, including the digital boost programme via business gateway, which offers one-to-one support and advice for companies as well as seminars and workshops throughout Scotland. The digital development loan is also available for registered Scottish small and medium-sized enterprises that are looking to invest in their digital capabilities and skills.

Dean Lockhart: In evidence to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, Nora Senior, the chair of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board, highlighted that only 9 per cent of businesses in Scotland embed digital in their business operation, whereas the figure in other countries is 43 per cent. What steps are the Scottish Government taking to address the low level of digital uptake by businesses in Scotland? Does the cabinet secretary agree with our calls to

create a dedicated institute of e-commerce to improve digital support to businesses in Scotland?

Michael Matheson: As the member will be aware, we are taking forward a range of actions to support businesses in digital uptake. A key part of that work is the DSSB programme, which will ensure that businesses have access to fibre broadband in their premises so that they can capitalise on digital capabilities. We are extending that work through the R100 programme. The member will recognise that accessing fibre broadband is key to the ability of many businesses to capitalise on digital capabilities. For example, in his region, fibre coverage in Clackmannanshire has increased from 55.9 per cent, in January 2014, to 99.8 per cent. That increased coverage has supported businesses and individuals.

Increased connectivity, through having access to digital fibre broadband, is key to enabling businesses to access the digital markets that they want to utilise. That is why it is good news that the DSSB programme has not only achieved but exceeded its target. The R100 programme will build on that success.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary confirm that since September last year, 95 per cent of properties in the Stirling area have been able to connect faster, thanks to Scottish Government spending on infrastructure? That is 16,000 more properties connected than would have been connected if the issue had been left to the United Kingdom Government. Dean Lockhart needs to get real.

Michael Matheson: The member will recognise that digital connectivity is wholly reserved to the UK Government. Given the UK Government’s failure to tackle the issue effectively, the Scottish Government has needed to step in and take action to address it.

The member makes a good point. In January 2014, fibre coverage was at 58.6 per cent in the Stirling Council area. As a result of the Scottish Government’s DSSB programme, the figure is now at 95.8 per cent. Had we left the issue to the UK Government, we would have been nowhere near meeting the target. Given that there is still a gap of almost 4 per cent in his constituency, the member should be reassured that the R100 programme has a particular emphasis on rural areas. The programme will focus on covering the areas in our rural communities that do not have access to fibre broadband. The Scottish Government is investing £600 million in the programme, whereas the UK Government is contributing only £21 million, despite the fact that the area is its responsibility.

M8, M73 and M74 Improvements Project (Evaluation)

8. Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made following the one year after Scottish trunk road infrastructure project evaluation of the M8, M73 and M74 improvements project. (S5O-02980)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): My officials at Transport Scotland are undertaking an evaluation of the M8, M73 and M74 improvements project, in line with Scottish trunk road infrastructure project evaluation guidance. Evaluations are being carried out to assess the impact of the scheme by comparing conditions after one year with forecasts that were made during scheme design and development. Three years after opening, a further evaluation will be undertaken. Given the scale of the investment, a third evaluation of the project will be undertaken five years after opening. The one year after opening evaluation report—the first of the three evaluation reports—will be completed in the autumn of this year.

Margaret Mitchell: Is the cabinet secretary aware that there are numerous post-completion problems with projects? For example, the replacement of Bothwell mini roundabout with traffic lights is causing congestion on Hamilton race days and tailbacks on approach roads, where none existed previously. Will he take the necessary measures, which are supported by South Lanarkshire Council, businesses and commuters, to reinstate the roundabout?

Michael Matheson: The member will be aware that the Bothwell Road signalling junction was constructed in a way to ensure that it complied with the guidance for linking into the M8, M73 and M74 improvements project. Work has been commissioned to introduce a vehicle actualisation system and to ensure that it works properly. Operations are being maintained, and the signals are now under the control of South Lanarkshire Council. Any changes to operations would be a matter for that council to look at.

Justice and the Law Officers

Knife Crime

1. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to prevent knife crime. (S5O-02981)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): First, I take this opportunity to wish the young boy injured in a knife incident in Glasgow this week a full and speedy recovery. My thoughts are very much with him and his family.

Alongside tough enforcement, our approach is firmly focused on prevention and early intervention. We have invested more than £17 million in violence prevention, and through the work of the Scottish violence reduction unit, Medics Against Violence and our many other partners, cases of handling an offensive weapon recorded by the police have fallen by 65 per cent. However, reducing incidents of knife crime further is clearly a key priority for this Government, and I will be meeting Niven Rennie and Christine Goodall on Friday to discuss that. Alongside that work, we will continue to invest in violence prevention initiatives such as our “No knives, better lives” youth engagement programme, which specifically aims to reduce the incidence of violence and knife carrying among young people.

Brian Whittle: In East Ayrshire, the number of crimes involving a weapon recorded between April and December 2018 has increased compared with the same period last year. New stop and search guidelines for the police, which restricted constables’ powers, were introduced in 2017. I recognise that a balance has to be struck, but what research has the Scottish Government undertaken to ensure that the new guidelines do not unduly hamper officers’ ability to detect and prevent such violent crimes?

Humza Yousaf: I thank Brian Whittle for his question, which I know he asks in good faith. I also know that he has a genuine interest in the matter, but I sincerely and genuinely caution him that it can be dangerous to look only at quarterly statistics or a snapshot of one year’s statistics. We have to look at the long-term trend, which, in Scotland, has been positive. As I said, cases of handling an offensive weapon have been reduced by 65 per cent over a decade. In addition, emergency admissions to hospital due to assault with a sharp object have fallen by 59 per cent.

As for the substance of Brian Whittle’s question, he will be reassured to hear that I regularly engage with the Scottish Police Federation and, as he will know and expect, with the chief constable. When such matters are raised, I look at them seriously, but our focus absolutely has to be on prevention, and that is what the Government is investing in.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): The cabinet secretary has rightly highlighted the role of the VRU and the importance of taking preventative steps. However, the Scottish Police Federation has been very clear about the pressures on local policing in terms of response officers and other officers in local divisions. We can argue about the meaning of reductions in local divisions, but surely any reduction in the capacity of local divisional officers to carry out such

proactive and preventative measures is a concern if we want to reduce knife crime in our streets.

Humza Yousaf: The number of police officers has increased by about 940 since we inherited power in 2007, and, as the figures that I have just mentioned show, we have seen knife crime fall drastically. We need only compare the situation here with that south of the border, where certain types of crime have risen, and that has undoubtedly been attributable in part to the severe reduction in police officer numbers. We will continue to invest in the police by protecting the resource budget and increasing numbers, which we have done since we inherited power in 2007, and I will continue to listen to what the Scottish Police Federation, the chief constable and others have to say about what more we can do to tackle the scourge of knife crime in our society.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware that knife crime in North Ayrshire has fallen by a remarkable 77 per cent under this Scottish National Party Government. Although there can be no room for complacency, what lessons can be shared with institutions south of the border, which are currently grappling with a surge in knife crime, particularly in London?

Humza Yousaf: Our Scottish Government officials have had very good engagement with the administration in London as well as the United Kingdom Government. As the member will remember, Sadiq Khan said not too long ago that he would put in place a London VRU that was very much based on the violence reduction unit model in Glasgow and Scotland, and that view was informed by the very positive engagement that his officials had in Scotland.

Moreover, just today, the spring statement contained an announcement of £100 million for tackling knife crime, with a portion of that money being invested in a UK VRU, again informed by experiences in Scotland. We are not complacent—and Kenny Gibson is right to make that point—but where we can share expertise and the successes that we have had with other parts of the United Kingdom or, indeed, more widely, we will of course do so.

Sectarianism (Reduction and Prevention Funding)

2. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how much funding it provides to organisations that aim to reduce and prevent sectarianism in society. (S5O-02982)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): The Scottish Government has invested £13.5 million to support anti-sectarian education in

schools, prisons, workplaces and communities over the past seven years, which has supported more than 100 projects to deliver anti-sectarian education and activity across Scotland. In 2018-19, that includes £515,000 for nine projects, including Nil by Mouth and sense over sectarianism. We intend to build on that work in 2019-20 by ensuring that there is a real-terms increase to the funding for work in the area. I will shortly make an announcement about the specific work that will be funded in 2019-20.

James Dornan: It is clear from the cabinet secretary's answer that third sector organisations are undertaking a lot of work to eradicate sectarianism in Scotland. They include the aforementioned Nil By Mouth as well as the West of Scotland Regional Equality Council and North Kelvin Sports Development Group, all of which are members of my cross-party group on combating sectarianism in Scottish society.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that, although sectarianism is undoubtedly a societal issue, football is a huge part of Scottish society and therefore football, too, must play its part in the eradication of this terrible problem, which so often rears its ugly head in football stadia?

Humza Yousaf: I thank James Dornan for raising that issue. He has raised it many times in the chamber, for which he should be given credit. I know that he has suffered a lot of abuse because he has raised his head above the parapet to mention the issue very publicly in the chamber. I thank him for that.

James Dornan is absolutely right that sectarianism is a wider societal issue, and therefore the work that has been done in communities is very important. However, it would be silly and ignorant of us—we would be burying our heads in the sand—to ignore the obvious recent unacceptable conduct in that regard in and around football. I have said many a time, but I will repeat and re-emphasise it, that football clubs have to take real responsibility in this area; if they do not, the Government of course reserves the right to act.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary has talked about where the funding is going, but a written answer that the Scottish Government provided to me in October revealed that, of the nine organisations that are funded by the Scottish Government to tackle sectarianism, only one—Nil by Mouth, which James Dornan mentioned—takes its message to workplaces. Education in schools is of course vital, but what steps is the Scottish Government taking to improve the number of initiatives that are aimed at working-age adults?

Humza Yousaf: That is a good point. As I said, I will shortly make an announcement on the specific work that will be funded in 2019-20. We have to work in schools, workplaces, prisons and communities. I will have another look at the organisations that we are funding, and if we think that we can build on that and do more in specific sectors or areas of society, we should do that. I am afraid that the issue is a society-wide one that goes from young people all the way to old people, and we should cover as much of society as possible. I will reflect on what the member says. As I said, I will make an announcement on the matter shortly, but I am happy to keep the conversation going with him and with anybody else who has an interest in tackling this scourge.

Veterans (Prison Population)

4. **Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how many of the prison population are veterans. (S5O-02984)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): As at 6 March 2019, 255 people in Scottish Prison Service care disclosed that they were veterans.

Keith Brown: What steps are in place to identify veterans on entering the prison population, and what supports are in place to ensure that their often distinct needs and circumstances are addressed?

Humza Yousaf: I put on record my thanks to Keith Brown for his obvious interest in issues to do with veterans, which he has championed for many years.

When individuals enter custody, they are asked whether they are military veterans, and the SPS is committed to providing care and support to veterans who are sentenced to custody. Each prison has a veterans in custody support officer, who provides information and co-ordinates activities and services. The officers meet nationally, and organisations such as Poppyscotland, the Royal British Legion Scotland and Apex Scotland attend those national meetings.

The services that the officers provide differ from prison to prison, but I will give the member a flavour of them. Barlinnie has successfully arranged residential places on release for veterans with specific support issues, such as mental health issues and addictions. In Her Majesty's Prison Edinburgh, coffee mornings are held every month for veterans in custody, which are usually attended by 40-plus individuals. Other prisons provide more one-to-one and peer-to-peer mentoring support. I can give Keith Brown more information in writing. A lot of support is provided,

but I do not doubt that more can be done to support veterans in custody.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Can the cabinet secretary say how many of the veterans who are currently serving prison sentences in Scotland's prisons have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder?

Humza Yousaf: I do not have the figure to hand—I will go back and see whether we have it. A number of people in our care in custody in Scotland present with mental health issues, and a big part of the work that the veterans in custody support officers do is on mental health issues. I will see whether I can extract the information and provide it to Maurice Corry, who has raised an important issue.

Scottish Legal Aid Board (Project Funding)

5. **Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has had with ministerial colleagues regarding the impact of reductions to Scottish Legal Aid Board funding on child poverty. (S5O-02985)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): The main legal aid fund is demand led. Unlike the position in England and Wales, the wide scope of legal aid has been maintained in Scotland, including for civil and family cases.

In addition to the main legal aid fund, over recent years, the Scottish Legal Aid Board has managed, on behalf of the Scottish Government, a variety of specific time-limited projects and funds to deliver access to justice and advice services, including for families. Decisions on the criteria and allocation of specific grant funding are taken in the context of our policy priorities, including our absolute commitment to reduce child poverty as well as to ensure the most efficient use of resources and transitional arrangements to any new funding schemes.

Neil Findlay: That commitment sounds a bit hollow because, although 230,000 Scottish children live in poverty and the number is rising, the Government is cutting the funding to the Scottish Legal Aid Board, which provides funding to citizens advice bureaux to deliver the making justice work programme. The Government is replacing that funding with a much smaller grant, for which bureaux will have to compete. Why is the Government doing that at a time when child poverty is rising?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: In fairness, minister, the question was on the Scottish Legal Aid Board. You may answer, if you wish, on CABx.

Ash Denham: The tackling child poverty delivery plan, which was published in March 2018,

sets out action across Government to contribute towards reductions in the child poverty level. The plan, which covers the period 2018 to 2022, is backed by a multimillion pound package of investment, including a new £50 million tackling child poverty fund.

In relation to the other part of the member's question, the Scottish Government will provide SLAB with £2.7 million next year to continue to fund 27 projects that are focused on helping vulnerable people with debt and legal issues. SLAB was always clear that those projects were for specific purposes, subject to annual review and not to be relied on as core funding.

I note that Labour's only budget proposal this year, from Alex Rowley, would have resulted in further reductions to the justice budget. It is clear that, under Labour, the Scottish Legal Aid Board and citizens advice bureaux—and, by extension, the vulnerable families that Neil Findlay has spoken of today—would be worse off.

Legal Assistance (Island and Remote Areas)

6. Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports people in island and remote areas in accessing legal assistance. (S5O-02986)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): An independent strategic review of legal aid was announced to Parliament on 2 February 2017. The chair of the review, Martyn Evans, reported back to the Scottish ministers in February 2018. In his report, the chair commented on the availability of legal assistance in rural areas and recommended that a new payment model that takes into account geographical difficulties be set up. I am pleased to say that the first meeting of the expert payment advisory panel will be on 15 March 2019. It is vital that key stakeholders work together to make the panel a success. With that in mind, we are implementing a 3 per cent increase in legal aid fees, which will come into effect on 26 April 2019.

The panel's work will be longer term and some changes will require primary legislation. In the shorter term, we will continue to ensure that individuals who are entitled to it will continue to receive access to justice.

In the event that private criminal solicitors are unavailable, public defence solicitors, who are directly employed by the Scottish Legal Aid Board, are able to assist. In some rural areas, including the Highlands and Islands, civil legal aid offices are able to assist in some types of civil case. We also continue to allow private solicitors to access payments for travelling time to remote or rural areas of the country, if that is required.

Dr Allan: One constituent has been unable to find a local agent in the islands or a solicitor on the mainland who is prepared to travel to her location. Solicitors have repeatedly cited her location as the reason for that. As a result, she has been left to represent herself on a matter of family law. What can be done to ensure that people's prospects of representation are not determined by where they live?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Ash Denham: I am sure that the member will understand that it is not appropriate for me to comment on the specific circumstances of that constituency case without having the details. However, I recognise that a range of factors can impact on someone's ability to secure legal assistance. I thank Alasdair Allan for raising the case. If he forwards me the details, I will raise it directly with the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): As Alasdair Allan said, there is very limited legal aid provision in the islands, with the result that most people who seek representation now have to look south. Despite what the minister said, SLAB's reluctance to fund travel means that clients often meet their lawyer only on the day of the court hearing. Therefore, I ask the minister to work with the panel to ensure that the provision of legal aid can be island proofed to ensure that my constituents have access to the legal assistance that they need.

Ash Denham: I thank Liam McArthur for raising that issue, which we are taking on board in the review process. With the panel, we want to ensure that we have a legal aid system that is fit for the future and that provides fair and equitable access to justice for people right across Scotland. However, I will take note of the issue that Mr McArthur has raised.

Health and Social Care in Prisons

7. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the progress being made by the health and social care in prisons programme board. (S5O-02987)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Healthcare in prisons is the responsibility of the national health service. My colleague the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing wrote to the Health and Sport Committee on 22 February 2019 to update it on the progress of the health and social care in prisons programme. Developments include better integrated health and social care provision, improved clinical information technology and an innovation fund to improve joint working between the NHS and the Scottish Prison Service. For further information, the letter is

available on the Health and Sport Committee's page on the Parliament website.

Mary Fee: Last year, it was revealed that more than 3,800 people who left prison between 2016 and 2018 identified as homeless to local authorities. Without a home, people with convictions struggle to register with general practitioners and to continue with the vital health and social care progress that was started while they were in prison. What measures will the Scottish Government take to ensure that people with convictions have a house to return to and can access vital GP services after their release?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Humza Yousaf: I thank Mary Fee for that question, because she raises a hugely important issue. I know that she has a long-standing interest in such matters.

I have met the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning on a regular basis to talk about the sustainable housing on release for everyone—SHORE—standards, which Mary Fee will be familiar with. Pre-liberation and post-liberation throughcare is extremely important in ensuring that someone who comes out of prison has access not just to housing and health services, which Mary Fee rightly mentioned, but to addiction services and so on.

Bearing in mind the need for brevity, I undertake to write to the member with more detail on what we are doing. I would also be happy to meet her to discuss the matter in more detail.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Jenny Gilruth has a supplementary. You must be brief, please.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that a sensible way to reduce Scotland's prison population is by extending the presumption against short periods of imprisonment and putting greater emphasis on community sentences, which was backed by 85 per cent of respondents to the Government's consultation?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: A yes or no will do, cabinet secretary.

Humza Yousaf: Yes, and I hope to get parliamentary support for that. I will bring forward the order at Easter, and I hope that we will have that in place by the summer.

Incident Recording (Gender Identity)

8. **Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether Police Scotland and the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service record incidents according to the alleged perpetrator's birth sex, or by self-declaration. (S5O-02988)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): With regard to victims, witnesses and suspects, Police Scotland and the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service record incidents according to a person's self-identified gender. Police Scotland requires no evidence or certification as proof of gender identity other than a person's self-declaration, unless—it is important to emphasise this—it is pertinent to any criminal investigation with which they are linked and it is evidentially critical that Police Scotland legally requires such proof.

Joan McAlpine: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer, but I think that many people will be shocked to hear it. He will be aware that offending rates vary significantly according to biological sex, with males accounting for 84 per cent of violent crime and more than 95 per cent of sexual crime. Longitudinal studies elsewhere suggest that male-pattern offending remains the same even if men self-declare themselves to be women. Does the cabinet secretary agree with criminologists that, if data shows a rise in female sex offending, for example, including rape, that is misleading when those crimes are actually committed by men?

Humza Yousaf: I will try to give the member some reassurance. Of course, I would be happy to see the longitudinal studies that she mentions. I have to say that I meet criminologists regularly and none of them has raised this issue with me, but I am happy to look at any studies that exist.

If we should have an unexpected result, such as a rise in the number of women being recorded as committing sexual offences, we would, of course, investigate that further. However, I would say that the statistic that the member quotes—men accounting for 96 per cent of sexual crime—is, in itself, evidence that there is certainly not a pattern of behaviour of those who are born biologically male self-identifying as women to either commit sexual offences or manipulate statistics.

If the member would like to provide me with details of those studies, she can, and if she would like to have discussions with criminologists, as I regularly do, I am happy to explore the issue further in detail.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. I thank members on the front bench, because we managed to get through all the questions and supplementaries.

Year of Young People 2018

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-16267, in the name of Maree Todd, on the year of young people 2018—a celebration, a chance and a change.

14:41

The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd): The year 2018 may have come to an end, but the lasting effects of the year of young people will continue to impact on our country for many years to come. The year gave Scotland a fantastic opportunity to strengthen our relationship with young people and show them that we are fully committed to making Scotland the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up in.

The Scottish Government wants young people to be at the heart of decisions that affect them. We want our young people to have the confidence and skills to influence decisions, participate effectively in civic society and be part of shaping the future Scotland that they want to live in. That is why we dedicated a full year to celebrating young people aged eight to 26 and provided them with an opportunity to take the lead in a meaningful and genuine way.

The year of young people was co-designed from the beginning, with young people deciding the aim, objectives and themes and ensuring that the focus was on areas that mattered most to them. They then worked with us to deliver and achieve those goals.

I will briefly remind members of our themed years programme and how we got to this point. Our innovative themed years programme has been successfully delivered since 2009. Partners have collaborated across sectoral boundaries to create a strong platform on which to promote Scotland through a celebration of its assets. We have invited locals and visitors alike to celebrate things that are outstanding in Scotland, from food and drink to history and heritage. As far as we know, 2018's theme was a global first, in that it celebrated and showcased the talents and achievements of our country's young people while continuing to engage the tourism industry and present Scotland as a dynamic, welcoming and inclusive country.

The year of young people stretched beyond the reach of a normal themed year. It was an opportunity to really show our commitment to our nation's incredible young people. The support from partners was overwhelming, with the majority of local authorities running their own bespoke

activities, and a huge following online from schools, businesses and the third sector.

To our country's fantastic young people, who grasped every opportunity that the year presented them with, I say that I personally thank every one of them for everything that they achieved in the year. Scotland's young people well and truly shone in the year and, through them, Scotland shone. I also thank Young Scot, Children in Scotland, the Scottish Youth Parliament and YouthLink Scotland for their support throughout the planning and delivery of the year and for their dedication in showing the country the impact that young people have when they are meaningfully involved in the design and delivery of services.

Now I will go back to the young people—the year was theirs. The young people who drove activity in 2018 included almost 400 ambassadors from around Scotland, who championed activity in their communities—I am sure that members will have met them in constituencies and seen them splashed across social media, always in their identifiable ambassador hoodies. Communic18—our co-design leaders for the year—was a group of 34 truly inspiring and committed young people who provided a crucial central voice for the year's ambitions. They played a key role in ensuring that young people were at the heart of 2018.

The ambassadors and Communic18 were critical in supporting organisations to understand co-design, how to engage young people in decision making and the impact of that on the organisations and the young people. The groups took part in more than 80 co-design sessions in 2018, working with organisations from the Scottish Government to Archaeology Scotland, Edinburgh zoo and Universities Scotland. Those fantastic young people gave up a significant amount of their time to volunteer in that role, in addition to the vast quantity of other engagements in which they participated. Their dedication was incredible; I thank every one of them for their commitment and I wish them all the best in what life brings them next.

Young people were at the heart of the year's funded events programme, with more than 4,000 involved in the co-design of the events. More than 100 events were delivered through the funded programme and 61 of them were funded through the create18 fund, to which young people applied for funding to plan and deliver their events in their communities. Create18 provided an incredible opportunity for young people to take the lead and engage their communities and they really did that.

In Rothesay, a group called the Incredibles put on a fantastic event during refugee week to celebrate and bring together different cultures. In Dundee, the Purple Dragons—a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex youth group—

created and delivered a youth zone event as part of Dundee pride 2018, which was a prime example of how young people contribute significantly to ensuring that Scotland is one of the most progressive countries in Europe for LGBTI equality.

The EventScotland funded events programme was also a huge success, with 49 events taking place. Nationwide youth engagement projects bookended 2018 at Edinburgh's hogmanay spectaculars, where #ScotWord and #ScotArt set the world alight. That started with a word that young people felt best described being Scottish—"braw"—and, most recently, young people's wicker sculptures were the beating heart of the country, as their portrayals of images that depict their regions were set alight for the world to see in the middle of an outline of Scotland.

From Shetland to the Borders and from Argyll and Bute to Aberdeenshire, we reached every pocket of the country. More than 450,000 people attended the events and more than 8,000 young people supported their delivery. In taking part in such events, the young people had a fantastic opportunity to develop their skills and confidence.

I cannot mention them all, but some events stand out for me, including those in Dumfries and Galloway. The council there embraced the year by creating a huge array of activities. A highlight was Youth Beatz—Scotland's largest free youth festival. A massive 48,000 tickets were allocated to young people from across Scotland; with the support of the funded events programme, the festival doubled in size and gave young people the opportunity to take part in a broad range of activities and experiences.

Another highlight was the youth urban games that took place in Glasgow, where young athletes from across Scotland and beyond had their moments in the spotlight with displays of parkour, skateboarding and BMX. That was the first event of its kind in Scotland.

The groundbreaking V&A museum was showcased to the world in 2018 and attracted 22,600 attendances in its opening two days. It fully embraced the ethos of the year of young people with its spectacular opening ceremony, highlighting the amazing creativity of Scotland's young people through the 3D festival, which provided a unique opportunity for young people to make their mark on the future of Dundee.

I had the absolute privilege of being at the BIG Takeover event in Shetland and watching as the islands' young people delivered a full-on programme of more than 80 arts, culture and sports activities—events on a scale that had never been seen before on the islands. Those young people have well and truly left their mark.

Not only did young people make their mark across the events programme, but the Scottish Government embraced their voices as an opportunity to shake up how we as a Government do business. I am pleased to say that young people have always been a fundamental part of policy development, but we knew that we could do better, and 2018 gave us an opportunity to make the engagement of young people the norm across every directorate in the Government.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am grateful to the minister for giving way. I am sure that she acknowledges that the incorporation of the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is recognised as the global standard for including children in policy development. Will she assuage the anxiety that is felt in the children's sector that parliamentary time is moving on and we might not have time to incorporate the UNCRC during this parliamentary session?

Maree Todd: Last year, the Scottish Government made the landmark commitment to incorporate the UNCRC's principles into Scots law. The plan is to consult on models early this year, and we hope that we are still on schedule to introduce legislation in this parliamentary session.

Early indications are that there were nearly 200 opportunities in 2018 for young people to be part of decision making and help to shape policy and co-design improvements to services that affect their lives. Young people have been and will continue to be truly heard as a central feature of our business.

Another fantastic opportunity for young people to have their voices heard in 2018 was the inaugural First Minister's question time for young people. More than 100 children and young people put their questions to the First Minister and more than 81,000 tuned in to watch the event on television. I know that the First Minister thoroughly enjoyed that and that she found the questions challenging, as they covered topics including mental health, education and youth homelessness. FMQT for young people will continue as a fantastic legacy from the year, with the next edition taking place this April.

The examples that I mentioned are just a few from a long list of highlights, but they have all had an impact. They highlight just some of the platforms that we have created for our country's young people to have their voices heard. Our commitment to continue to provide that open and welcoming platform is the legacy from 2018.

I am determined that 2018 will not be a one-year wonder. We are fully committed to ensuring that Scotland's young people believe that they are

valued, wanted and vital to our country's future and that their voices continue to be heard.

In 2018, we set out to change perceptions of our young people and change the country's relationship with them. The year challenged our thinking; it gave us new perspectives and has been the catalyst for creating mutual respect and developing an improved understanding between generations.

Young people have benefited from the experiences. Organisations have benefited from their young people and the energy and creativity that they bring. The nation has benefited and will continue to benefit from empowered and able young people taking the lead.

I welcome the opportunity that today's debate gives us to shine a spotlight on Scotland's young people and to celebrate everything that was achieved in 2018. I look forward to hearing members' contributions and, in particular, to hearing about the impact that the year had across the country and about the plans to ensure that young people will continue to be involved beyond 2018.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland's Year of Young People 2018 inspired the whole country to look at its young people in an open and positive way, celebrate their achievements, value their contribution and give them a platform to have their voices heard and acted upon; welcomes the ambition that the year has set in continuing to engage young people in matters that affect their lives, ensuring that they are a core part of decision making, policy development and democracy in Scotland, and agrees that the Parliament and the Scottish Government will continue to ensure that young people are seen, heard and viewed as valuable members and key contributors to Scotland's society, culture and economy.

14:54

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Usually I would welcome a debate on the achievements of young people and would congratulate the Government on securing parliamentary time to celebrate them. However, I cannot do so today. It has not been comfortable for me to lodge the amendment in my name, and I have derived no satisfaction from doing so.

Of course, I support the year of young people. I am astonished by the achievements that we have heard about and the energy that they have generated. We should all be justifiably proud of those, but I cannot willingly sign up my party to the false sense of consensus that the Government seeks to build this afternoon. I cannot sit back and ignore the fact that the legacy of the year of young people could have been so much more. However, through failures of omission and of commission by

the Government, it has not been met with the public policy response that it deserves.

I have worked with and for children and young people for all my professional life, and I have learned so much from them. Daily, I am reminded of their brilliance, creativity and resilience. They may make up only a small section of our population, but they are the entirety of our future. As such, they deserve the full intensity of the Parliament's focus. They should be our first consideration and the last word in all that we do, and we should never presume to know their minds.

When this place gets it right, it really gets it right—and I pay tribute to the Government and all parties for that. In the increase in the age of leaving care to 21, in the extension of the franchise to 16-year-olds and in the recognition of the needs of young carers, the Scottish Parliament has moved mountains. My amendment does not detract from that. Instead, it seeks to recognise that, in many areas of public policy and service delivery for children and young people, we have unfinished business, while in other areas we have simply chosen the wrong course of action.

I say again that we cannot pretend that the year of young people has delivered the legacy that we had intended it to. If we really want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up, we have to be better than we are. Nowhere is that more self-evident than in the field of child and adolescent mental health. If a child fell off her bike and broke her arm, her parent could reasonably expect her to be in plaster by the end of the day, but if she came to them with anxiety or self-harming behaviour she could expect to join one of the longest queues in our national health service. In Scotland, the disparity between physical and mental health services remains pronounced for all demographics, but it is particularly egregious in the case of children.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton that the mental health of children should be paramount. Does he welcome the development of school counsellors, which was announced by the Government last year and for which a lot of members campaigned?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I absolutely welcome that development. I am working with members from across the chamber to ensure that it is delivered on the ground, and we are working with experts to see what the barriers to that might be.

The 18-week waiting time was established in 2014. However, by the end of last year we saw health boards posting the worst waiting time statistics for child and adolescent mental health services on record, with some children having to wait for as long as two years for first-line

treatment. Moreover, in December it was revealed that more than three in 10 children continue to wait beyond that 18-week target, which is utterly unacceptable. To children and their parents, it must feel like a lifetime. Such children represent some of the most vulnerable in our society, so the policy response to their difficulties should command total commitment from the Government, and the lion's share of resource. However, it still does not do so, which remains a national scandal.

The second part of my amendment speaks to issues of children's rights. I am aware that opinion in the chamber is divided on the pre-eminence that such rights should enjoy, but my amendment merely lays out a statement of fact. The Government has received rebuke and intervention on its record on children's rights, from both the international community and domestic stakeholders, and in certain cases it has chosen roundly to ignore both. Let us take the example of the age of criminal responsibility—

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I would like to make progress.

I have changed my mind—I will let Bruce Crawford in.

Bruce Crawford: Everyone in the chamber recognises the important issues that Alex Cole-Hamilton has raised, why he has done so and the fact that he has always felt very strongly about them. However, does he feel that this is the right place to raise that point? We could have a specific debate—held in the Liberals' parliamentary time, if he so wished—to highlight that issue. However, today's debate was not seen to be about that particular matter.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before Mr Cole-Hamilton responds, I say to Mr Crawford that Mr Cole-Hamilton is speaking to an amendment that has been accepted by the Presiding Officer.

Bruce Crawford: I do not doubt that in the slightest.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I take your point, Mr Crawford, but it is acceptable. To Mr Cole-Hamilton I say that there is time for interventions, so you should not be anxious. If you take an intervention, you will get your time back.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I recognise the point that Bruce Crawford makes and I am sure that my party will bring a debate of that kind to the chamber in our time. Nevertheless, I am speaking to my amendment, which I think is important. I will come on to why it is not incongruous with the subject matter that is before

us. We should not try to sugar coat the Government's record when it comes to children and young people.

An example is the age of criminal responsibility. I am aware that members of other parties do not agree with my attempts to lift the age of responsibility to at least the new international minimum of 14. There are reasoned arguments that they use in opposition to that position. I do not agree with them, but I respect them. When the Council of Europe demanded that we use the opportunity of the bill on the subject that is before this Parliament to increase the age of criminal responsibility to 14 immediately, the Scottish Government should have articulated its reasoning and the arguments behind its opposition to that call.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Do I have time, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have time for a brief intervention. I can hardly say no, given what I said before.

Liz Smith: Does the member accept that those of us who have different views have thought very carefully about our stance, with evidence?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you move towards a conclusion, please, Mr Cole-Hamilton?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Absolutely. I recognise that, and I am just about to come on to it.

Instead, the Government sought to lean on a perceived sense of exceptionalism. According to the Minister for Children and Young People, the international standards should not apply to us, not because we do not agree with them but because we are different. We are amazing at caring for our children and, as such, we do not need those standards. The minister's response to the intervention was an international embarrassment, and she was rightly called out for it.

It is a perfectly reasonable thing, as Liz Smith said, for someone to decide that they do not agree with a particular standard that has been laid down by the international community. I recognise that, but they should have the courage to defend their opposition to the standard with evidence, as Liz Smith described. I know that colleagues in both the Labour Party and the Conservatives would be prepared to do that.

Maree Todd: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I am afraid that I do not have time.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill is not radical. It is not even progressive. It falls short of the de minimus standard of international expectation and leaves us on a par with the four most socially conservative countries in Europe. We cannot lead the world on human rights from the back of the pack. The Government seeks plaudits for governing the children of this country with love and inclusion, and it does that—that is, until they break the law.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats will continue to press for more investment in child and adolescent mental health services. We will fight for the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law and address our internationally recognised deficiencies in the field of children's rights. My amendment does not tie other parties to any of those aims, but it lays out important realities that we cannot escape.

I can no longer be part of attempts by this Government to sugar coat the conduct of its public policy towards children, and that is why I move amendment S5M-16267.1, to insert at end:

“; but, despite the goodwill generated by the Year of Young People, regrets that children and young people in Scotland still have to wait months and even years for access to first-line child and adolescent mental health services, and recognises that the Scottish Government still draws criticism from the international community and stakeholders on some aspects of children's rights that it appears to disregard.”

15:02

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): As my party's spokesperson for children and young people, I am delighted to be opening in this debate for the Scottish Conservatives. There is much to celebrate when we look back at 2018 as the year of young people, and I echo the praise that the minister gave to the projects all round the country that took full advantage of the year.

Following its announcement, several years of planning went into the design of the year of young people 2018. Planning decisions were made with five key aims at their heart. First, the year was to provide a platform for young people to have their views heard and acted upon. Secondly, it was to showcase all the fantastic talents of young people through a series of events and media projects. Thirdly, it was to develop a stronger understanding and level of respect between generations. Fourthly, it was to recognise the impact of teachers, youth workers and supporting adults on young people's lives. Finally, it was to provide opportunities for young people to express themselves through culture, sport and other activities.

From the outset of planning for the year, young people were at the heart of the decision-making

process. The Scottish Government commissioned the Scottish Youth Parliament, Young Scot and Children in Scotland to engage directly with young people to help to decide how the year of young people ought to look. Overall, more than 2,000 young people were involved in the planning process. Eventually, that led to the establishment of six key themes for the year: participation; education; health and wellbeing; equality and discrimination; enterprise and regeneration; and, finally, culture. Those themes set the tone for the events that were scheduled throughout the year.

With everything planned, all that remained was for the year of young people to start and, in late 2017, it was officially launched by the First Minister.

Over the past year, many events and creations have showcased Scotland's young people across the country. From February to March, Glasgow hosted its international comedy festival's school of stand-up, which gave young participants a chance to perform a short set of original material based on their life experiences. From March to April, the Edinburgh international science festival put on an event called “Existence: Life and Beyond”, which looked at the diversity and wonder of life on earth—that event was created specifically for the year of young people, in partnership with the science festival's youth consultation group.

There were many more projects throughout the year, including: Social Bite's wee sleep out; the Glasgow youth film festival; a TED talk focused on young people; the first youth urban games; and the 3D festival, which enabled young people to be among the first to see the new V&A museum in Dundee.

In my region of Central Scotland, in May, the Falkirk Community Trust hosted STEM@theHelix, which set out to encourage young Scots, visitors and families to explore science, technology, engineering and maths through the creation of a science hub that was based at the Kelpies and which hosted a full programme of events. There were many more events and activities throughout the year, involving young people at every stage of their development.

Today's motion is titled “Year of Young People 2018: A Celebration, a Chance and a Change”. I am sure that other members will join me in acknowledging the many events that took place throughout 2018. I have spoken about the chances and the celebration of the year of young people, but there is still far more that we can do on the change aspect.

It is our job as parliamentarians to step in and make changes where we can. Although it was great to see such an effort put into so many projects highlighting the success of young people

throughout the year, in life after the year, we should look further at improving the foundations for young people here in Scotland, so that their successes can speak for themselves.

There are worrying trends in our education institutions that could present difficulties for young people in the future. A previous Public Petitions Committee arranged an evidence session with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, and I wonder whether members of the current committee would consider having an on-going programme of such sessions.

Many people from older generations have worked for decades contributing to our society and helping it to get to where it is today. Similarly, younger generations, who have grown up in this society, need to be able to feel their stake in it and know that they can have positive input to how it is shaped. The aim of increasing understanding between generations was, therefore, very important. The rate at which things are changing in our society can lead to greater divides between generations, which we must try to bridge, so that mutual respect and differing views can co-exist. If we want to do that, we will have to go out of our way to find out about divides wherever they exist and come up with solutions in co-operation.

I conclude by echoing the minister's warm congratulations to all those who took part in making the year of young people 2018 a success. The year set a strong example of what young people in Scotland can accomplish. I hope that we will continue to provide opportunities for young people to develop and showcase their talents and to involve them in the organisation and planning of events and decisions that will affect them in the years to come.

15:08

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The first time that we debated the year of young people 2018 was, like today's debate, not in 2018 at all; it was in December 2017, and I think that I am right that it was Ms Todd's first debate in her then new role as Minister for Children and Young People. On that occasion, she said:

"If there is one aspiration that I hope we might share for 2018, it is to ensure that our young people feel and believe that they are valued, wanted and vital to our country's future and that their voices are heard and listened to ... Young people make a significant contribution to our society and our communities, and we should celebrate that contribution."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 2017; c 13.]

Therefore, the first thing to consider is whether that has been achieved.

There is no doubt that it has been achieved for some—indeed, many—young people. Only last weekend, at the Scottish Labour conference in

Dundee, I met a group of youth ambassadors from around Scotland and heard about their experiences of the year of young people, which included organising local events and participating in national ones, such as the First Minister's question time.

We will all have met many of those ambassadors at the receptions that took place in Parliament throughout 2018 to showcase how different sectors were engaging with the year. It is fair to say that real efforts were made to ensure that the year had an impact in many parts of Scotland, not only for those youth ambassadors, but for many other young people as well.

In my constituency of East Lothian, there were a great many events, from a literacy festival to a celebration of sport. Funding was provided for a wide variety of initiatives, from reducing plastic waste to rolling out a mental health app that was developed by pupils at North Berwick high school. Young carers were acknowledged at their own festival, while the East Lothian champions board brought decision makers to a powerful event at Queen Margaret University, which focused on listening to and supporting care-experienced young people. The showpiece was probably East Lothian's first-ever youth summit, which drew together over 100 young people from across the county not only to hear speakers such as the Children and Young People's Commissioner but, much more important, to talk about their ideas for change and their solutions to the problems that they face in everyday life. I am sure that colleagues will have similar stories of successful engagement in their constituencies and regions.

In the debate some 16 months ago, the minister also said:

"There will be little point in the year of young people if we get to next December, put away the toolkits and pack away the activities with no fundamental shifts to point to or to take forward." —[*Official Report*, 12 December 2017; c 16.]

Certainly those ambassadors whom I spoke to at the weekend were very focused now on the legacy of 2018 and on ensuring that young people's voices are heard and acted on as a matter of course, not just for a themed year. I am pleased that East Lothian Council continues to work through the recommendations from the youth summit, and I know that other councils have also formalised acceptance of similar consultations. The minister should ensure that that is happening everywhere.

We should also not forget that youth work goes on day in, day out, whether in a themed year or not. This evening, that will be reflected at the national youth work awards, in which my money is on Alan Bell, nominated as youth worker of the year. Alan runs Recharge in Tranent—a brilliant project in any year—which engages one way or

another with almost all the young people in the town and raises many of them to positions of leadership in their own lives and in their community. My fingers are crossed for Alan this evening.

For all the successes of the year of young people, we must acknowledge the failures, too—not of young people but of us and Government. Mr Cole-Hamilton is right that in the debate around the age of criminal responsibility, we have resisted rather than embraced children's rights; on access to mental health services, we continue to fail young people every day in life; and, only yesterday, we saw statistics showing that children with additional support needs in school are being denied not only the support that they need but their rights in law. Only a couple of weeks ago, we saw school children taking to the streets in Argyll and Bute to protest cuts to youth services and, globally, they will be doing so again this Friday to protest our failure on global warming.

I say to Mr Crawford, as gently as possible, that it is always time to consider human rights and children's rights; there is always time for a degree of self reflection and humility, even as we acknowledge successes such as the year of young people 2018. For that reason we will support both the Liberal Democrat amendment and the Government motion.

15:14

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I thought that I got in just under the wire last year to be a young person in the year of young people. At the time, reflecting on the near decade that I had spent campaigning on issues of importance to young people, I felt that my time clinging on to that status was probably coming to a close. The teenagers in my youth club certainly do not miss an opportunity to remind me how old I am now.

I am not going to lie: I was quite chuffed to find out that we were to debate the year of young people again today, because for a few more weeks, I still meet the year of young people definition of a young person, and I plan to milk it for at least the next six minutes.

The year of young people was an excellent initiative and I commend the Government for it. There was increased engagement at many levels and young people were given the opportunity not just to have their voices heard but to take a lead in their communities. I can attest to that, given the experience in my church, which ran three youth services in 2018. However, I cannot recommend directing a nativity play at half 10 in the morning, having finished writing it at half 4 in the morning.

On one level, the year of young people worked well, and we have heard many examples of that in

the debate so far. However, as other members have said, it will only truly have been successful if the structural and cultural changes that were made in 2018 to include more young people last well beyond that year. Before the end of this parliamentary session, I hope that we will have the opportunity to assess those lasting changes and see where the successes were.

Looking to the more immediate future, I return to some of the issues that I raised during our first debate on the year of young people, because it would be a dereliction of duty for us to congratulate ourselves and act as if all is well. I know that the minister and the Government will agree with that.

Members of this and other Parliaments, and of every elected body, must take responsibility for the consequences of our actions, and we in the Scottish Parliament must take responsibility for the consequences of our actions for Scotland's young people. There are those in a number of political parties whom I congratulate for their sincere work to make Scotland and the wider world in which we live better for our children, but I cannot ignore that there are members of this Parliament and of other elected bodies who advocate and advance policies that do the opposite.

A quarter of a million children in this country live in poverty—that is one in four children. Around the United Kingdom, the number is 4 million and rising. That is a crisis, but it has been with us for so long that it is not attacked with the urgency that is required. It is a systemic failure. Our economic and political systems are not set up to deliver the transformational change that our society is more than capable of making and that our young people deserve. We should not for a second think that that is good enough.

Young people today face a world that is quite unlike the world that generations before us faced. We are set to be the first generation in modern history to earn less over our working lives than our parents earned, and our working lives will be longer than theirs. The average person of my age already earns the equivalent of £8,000 less than those in the previous generation. More than 1 million people around the UK are on zero-hour contracts, which is about six times as many as in 2010, and a disproportionate number of those people are young. Homelessness charities such as Centrepoin have been quite clear about the link between those exploitative contracts and young people becoming homeless.

As I said in the 2017 debate, the greatest generational injustice is the one that is playing out right now with our climate. As Iain Gray mentioned, on Friday, thousands of young people around Scotland will join hundreds of thousands of others elsewhere in walking out of school, college

and university to protest not just that Governments and corporations have failed to stop the climate crisis, but that they have been the bodies responsible for causing it. Those young people are rebelling against those who have sold off their future for the sake of short-term profits. They are striking against the greed and selfishness of those most responsible and the intransigence of those who knew better but failed to stop it.

I will support the school strike for climate on Friday, because the fight is as much mine as it is theirs. If, by my 35th birthday, we have not radically transformed our society and got the climate crisis under control, it will be too late. That is why the young climate strikers are rejecting incrementalism, why they want immediate and fundamental change, why they will not compromise on keeping fossil fuels in the ground and why they will not stop. Neither will we.

Last month was the hottest February on record in Scotland. It was also the month when we got the latest round of transport statistics, which showed that car and plane use is up and bus and bike use is down. That is not a coincidence. Our world is beginning to break down. The effects might be relatively minor here for now, but Scotland is in a position of privilege. For the teenage climate refugees I met in Lampedusa, the children whose home towns have burned down in California and the young people who are losing their lives to cyclones and typhoons in the Pacific, the climate crisis is not an abstract threat in the future. Those young people, and those who rally outside this Parliament every week, have no time for backslapping and self-congratulation in this Parliament.

Every new motorway project, every public handout to an oil company and every time that a politician cannot bring themselves to say that the era of North Sea oil and gas has to end is a moral failure. We do not have time for that.

The science is abundantly clear. It is the one area above all in which evidence-led policy making is a must. We need transformation. We need a jobs-rich green new deal that lifts people out of poverty with decent, lasting jobs. We need a public transport revolution that young people can afford to be part of. We need the courage to think beyond the next electoral cycle, because, as I said, there are only two parliamentary sessions left before the climate breakdown becomes unstoppable.

This Parliament is united by our commitment to make Scotland the best place in the world in which to grow up. Let us be united by the courage to stand up and do what we know needs to be done to save our world. Let that be what we are judged on by the generations who come after us. Let that be the legacy of Scotland's year of young people.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We now move to the open debate. Speeches of six minutes, please. I have a little time in hand for interventions, if people wish to make and take them.

15:20

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): As I am a decade older than Ross Greer, I will not even try to pretend that I still qualify as a young person.

It is a privilege to speak in this afternoon's debate, which is a timely reminder of the year of young people in 2018 and an important opportunity for us all to reflect.

The year of young people was unique because it was the first time that any country in the world dedicated an entire year to its young people. It was also a year of recognising the future and Scotland's potential, with young people acknowledged as one of our greatest assets. I hope that that is record that we can all be proud of.

Last night, I attended a Scotland's Futures Forum event in the Parliament on the future of our education system. Professor Graham Donaldson cited a quote from a former Finnish education minister, who said:

"a school system is never finished, and teachers are the change makers."

If the year of young people taught us anything, it is that our young people can also be the change makers—and so they should be.

On that note, I was disappointed to see that the Green Party amendment was not selected for the debate, because any modern studies teacher worth their salt would encourage their pupils to take part in direct action and realise their right to be heard by the politicians and adults whose decisions will predetermine their future.

The year 2018 was also unique because—perhaps for the first time—young people were suddenly being asked for their views across every Cabinet portfolio, not just education.

In March last year, I sponsored a parliamentary reception for Scottish National Heritage that celebrated the year of young people. It was a particularly powerful event, not least because of the number of people who stowed out the garden lobby. For once, it was not about MSPs swigging free wine; it was about young people who were excited to be in their Parliament.

One of the best parts of the event was the requirement for us all to post our commitment to young people—what would we pledge to do? I committed to hold a pupil surgery in every one of

the high schools that I represent, which was one of the most valuable experiences of 2018 for me—I encourage other members to try it. At Glenwood and Glenrothes high schools, young people told me about their frustrations with our privately owned town centre. However, they also told me about their pride in their town and in Fife.

More recently, I visited Pitteuchar East primary school to learn more about their science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics showcase. Engineering was not promoted when I was at primary school, or indeed at secondary school. However, here were primary 2 pupils explaining—at age six—the science behind hydropower and outlining why the world needs to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

As class teacher, Lorna Hay, explained to me, research suggests that if children are not interested in science, technology, engineering or maths before the age of 10, they will not go on to choose those subjects at high school. If we want to challenge the gender gap in the STEM subjects, experiencing those subjects at primary school is pivotal; it is arguably too late by the time that pupils reach secondary 2 or 3. That is perhaps a timely reminder for fellow Education and Skills Committee members, as we are shortly to begin our inquiry into subject choice.

In the time that I have left, I want to tell a short story about a young woman who some MSPs already know. During the 2015 election, I did a lot of campaigning for my friend and colleague, Stephen Gethins MP, in the Leven area. On the night of the election, I was sent from my polling station to Sainsbury's in Leven shortly before the close of polling to purchase a pair of scissors to cut down our posters. Standing in the alcoholic refreshments aisle, I suddenly heard the words, "All right, Miss Gilruth? What are you doing here?" A pupil had spied me, clad in full yellow SNP ensemble and clutching a bottle of wine and a pair of scissors—it was not a good look. However, all that that pupil saw was her teacher in Leven—and her logical question was why I would be in Leven, when I taught her at a school in Dunfermline. That pupil was Jeanette Miller.

When Jeanette was growing up, she felt as if she was always seen as a trouble maker. The fact that she had been in care made no difference. I did not know on the day that I met her in Leven that she had lived in a children's home since the age of 14 and that every day she took a taxi to school in Dunfermline.

Throughout the year of young people celebrations, Jeanette played a pivotal role as a Young Scot ambassador. I asked her before today's debate what the year of young people meant to her. She told me:

"the Year of Young People has meant that I can help to give a platform for young people on both a local and a national level. It has also meant that I can help change the negative stereotypes of young people. I have also been able to challenge top decision makers and hold them to account where necessary. The Year of Young People has also made me more confident and determined to make positive change for the people of Scotland."

Jeanette has held the Minister for Children and Young People directly to account, and she is the only person I know, who, after meeting with the First Minister, used a filter on Snapchat to enhance their selfie.

We know that care-experienced young people face barriers that others do not, from higher exclusion rates in schools to being more likely to end up in our criminal justice system. Inequalities remain for that group of young people in Scotland. That is systemic and, unfortunately, setting aside a year will not cure it.

I am extremely proud of Jeanette's successes, but she has succeeded in spite of the system—in spite of the social worker who told her that she would never get her higher national certificate and the professionals who often made her feel that her voice did not count.

We all have a duty to ensure that the year of young people is not just a one-off. Its legacy must challenge all parliamentarians to do better for the future of our country.

15:25

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a director of the Centre 81 community and youth centre in Garelochhead and a member of the southern regional committee of the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association.

I welcome the debate and the opportunity to reflect on the year of young people in 2018. How we choose to use that celebration of young people's accomplishments is most important. Engaging with young people means engaging with Scotland's future. Having the designated year 2018 to celebrate Scotland's youngsters has allowed us to see what they can achieve with the right platform and support.

It is not hard to see the positives of promoting the year of young people. On the aim of including young people in their local sports clubs and in arts and enterprise initiatives, for instance, their inclusion has gone some way to help lay the foundations for young citizens' participation.

The underlying theme of participation really resonates with young Scots. I hope that we will see a new wave of innovative thinking that is

inspired by the very people whom such thinking will hope to impact in the future.

The year 2018 opened up more opportunities for young people to drive change. I hope that those opportunities have spurred them on to try new things, to get stuck in and to explore what they want to achieve with the right resources and support in place.

In my region, I have seen the benefits of celebrating and promoting what young people can achieve and offer. Only last week, I had the privilege of visiting Go-Wright, which is a small construction company that is based in Dumbarton, to meet young apprentices as part of Scotland's apprenticeship week. Their involvement and enthusiasm for gaining new skills is nothing short of inspiring. Expanding apprenticeships, which our manifesto calls for, would help to increase awareness of the options that are available to our young people in considering their next steps after school.

With more apprenticeships, we need more diverse apprentices. Regardless of the person's age, gender or prospects, everyone should have the right to explore that pathway. I hope that the SNP Government will take the chance to open up a more ambitious framework for those who want to undertake an apprenticeship. With the skills shortage having doubled since 2011, surely that must be a priority. Having been a general apprentice with Coats Patons at the Coats mills in Paisley, I am a staunch advocate of apprenticeships in Scotland.

Last year, Argyll and Bute Council ran a consultation that gave more than 1,000 young people a say in what outreach they wanted to see in their local community. It was a pleasure to see those youngsters rewarded at the Argyll and Bute youth awards last year for the difference that they make to others. Through volunteering, starting enterprise initiatives and raising money for great causes, they have shown incredible talent and drive.

With regard to community safety, I am particularly impressed by Police Scotland's youth volunteer programme, which has created a practical link that encourages young people to become active citizens who care about their local community. As a spokesman for the armed forces and veterans affairs in my party, I fully support the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force cadet forces, with which more than 42,000 girls and boys volunteer across the United Kingdom. That encourages them to grow in confidence, determination and skill. I congratulate the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association and the Lowland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for supporting and giving incredible help to our cadets in Scotland.

All those ideas and initiatives encapsulate the future of our young people at their core, which is important. The year 2018 provided a platform to showcase what our young people can do, but we cannot afford to ignore the on-going issues that are barriers to excellence and opportunity for many other individuals. For example, how can Scotland's young people be the leaders of the future if problems such as poverty and inequality still go unsolved? They cannot reach their potential as long as discrimination on the grounds of their gender, background and age still exists, as the Equality and Human Rights Commission has found. With the concerning likelihood that the Scottish Government will fail to meet its child poverty targets, our young people are losing much-needed chances.

A quarter of Scotland's children live in poverty, and homelessness is on the rise. For those who live in deprived areas, the option of going to college or university is far less likely to be achieved than it is for those who live in more affluent areas.

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I appreciate Maurice Corry's comments about youth organisations. However, he mentioned young people and poverty. As we heard from Ross Greer, the Conservative Government is responsible for austerity. Maurice Corry must acknowledge that when he comes into this Parliament. Will he commit, with all of us, to do what we can to address child poverty? Will he also commit to addressing the issue with his Westminster colleagues?

Maurice Corry: I assure the cabinet secretary that we do everything that we can to tackle the issue. The UK Conservative Government increased the national living wage, which benefited 117,000 people in Scotland, and the increases in the personal allowance have lifted hundreds of thousands of the lowest-earning people in Scotland out of paying tax altogether. Those are examples of what our party is doing.

The year of young people sought to remove barriers that often unfairly put young people at a disadvantage in life. Those barriers, which include financial strain, a young person's background or underlying prejudices, will exist unless the Government answers the systemic and societal issues with real and effective solutions.

The year of young people in 2018 was underpinned by a positive and intentional ethos in Scotland, but that ethos needs to be further championed to fix the current problems that young people face. That is how we can achieve further and permanent change for our young people in Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that we have a little time in hand, which can be used to take interventions if members want to do so.

15:31

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I associate myself with Jenny Gilruth's comments about her constituent, Jeanette. I take this opportunity to mention my constituent, Ryan McShane, whom I have talked about in the chamber previously and who is known to the minister and others because of his excellent work in promoting care-experienced young people up and down the country.

I want to refer to the tie that I am wearing. It was given to me as a gift from Chryston high school, which is in my constituency. When I was given it some time ago, I promised the pupils that I would wear it during one of my speeches in the chamber, and my office has let the school know that I am doing so today. I cannot think of a more appropriate time to wear the tie than today's speech.

Chryston high school and all the other schools in my constituency have done so much during 2018, and every other year, for their young people. For example, the school recently launched its *Young Ambassadors Newsletter*, which provides information about clubs, upcoming events and achievements. Young ambassadors' role is to promote sport by motivating and inspiring young people to get more involved. Chryston high school has also launched an innovative programme in which mental health ambassadors raise awareness of mental health issues among their peers, and normalise discussions when pupils are not feeling themselves.

As I stay in the Chryston area, I want to mention the absolutely fabulous Bedlay Community Football Club for girls, which is linked to the school. The club is run by Debbie Horn, who has been nominated for various awards in the past. It is worth recognising again the work that she does. Recently, it has come to my attention that she is struggling to access pitches, which is disgraceful, given that we should be promoting such activity. She will be delighted to hear me say that I will be calling on North Lanarkshire Council and others to ensure that she can continue her great work.

Still on sport, I want to draw attention to the sportscotland young people's sport panel and our young ambassadors who play such a vital and positive role in leading sporting activities and in encouraging young people to access sport. We all know the positive impacts that sport can have on us—not just in a physical sense, but for our mental health. Sport is also the basis of many friendships

and can help young people to build up their social and team-working skills.

I am very proud of Ibrahim, from my Coatbridge and Chryston constituency, who is a sports leader, an ambassador at his school and a member of the young people's sport panel. In his biography on the website, he says that he has taken the role because he thinks that

“sport can help anyone and everyone, even if they aren't good at sport or they don't normally like sports. Sport ... gives us the opportunity to associate ourselves with others and to engage with our communities.”

I entirely agree with that sentiment.

I will focus the rest of my speech on the importance of youth work. I thank Sarah Paterson from YouthLink Scotland for her briefing prior to the debate. I am also grateful for her work and that of others on the cross-party group on children and young people, of which I am co-chair.

A great practical example that I want to highlight is Coatbridge youth action, which, like the individual in Iain Gray's constituency, has been shortlisted at tonight's awards, in the community youth work project of the year category, for its work in bringing together young people and giving them access to fantastic opportunities. I really hope that it does well.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I absolutely recognise and associate myself with Fulton MacGregor's remarks about youth work, but does he recognise that the cuts that have been handed down to local authorities by the Scottish Government are putting youth work services at abject risk?

Fulton MacGregor: I thank the member for his intervention, but I will not associate myself with his remarks. In fact, the Scottish Government has continued to support youth work at national level. I am just going to talk about how we can work together to support it at local level.

The Coatbridge youth action project allows youngsters in the area to be heard and provides them with support through a youth work team. Coatbridge youth action is the youth voice vehicle for young people in Coatbridge, and is part of North Lanarkshire Council's youth participation and engagement structure. It has created the sound minds programme, which is a mental health support group, and it even arranged the “Party in the Plug” event, which was a great success in the town. I encourage the CYA to organise even more youth events; after all, what better way to engage with young people than by involving them in the organisation of their own events?

Coatbridge youth action is a great example of the positive impact of youth work. Indeed, we see the same in every part of Scotland, with thousands of talented and switched-on youth workers, many

of whom are volunteers, supporting young people to realise their potential and make a positive impact on their own lives and towns.

There is also a preventative aspect that links with Alex Cole-Hamilton's amendment. If we can invest more in youth work and programmes such as Coatbridge youth action, there might be less need for CAMHS and other services further down the line.

I draw members' attention to a motion that I have lodged today highlighting youth work in general and the local action group. As there is nothing controversial in it, I hope that members will be able to support it; it simply says that we need, as Alex Cole-Hamilton has pointed out, to continue to prioritise and fund youth work across the country and follow the Scottish Government's lead on the matter,

In concluding, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Brexit chaos that is unfolding and to ask where the young people's voices are in all of it. After all, it is about their future. As for the young people who are also European Union citizens or who have a black or minority ethnic background, it is important that we recognise and thank the volunteers, workers and agencies in Scotland who, in these uncertain and difficult times, are giving those individuals a voice. I mention in particular Khaleda Noon, who has worked tirelessly to set up Intercultural Youth Scotland. I encourage everyone to get along to its launch event on 26 April; it will be a fantastic evening.

The year of young people 2018 was a fantastic success that helped to focus minds on young people. I commend the Government for the initiative, and I fully support the motion.

15:38

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): First, I say to Ross Greer and Jenny Gilruth, for avoidance of doubt, that I do not qualify as a young person this year and, indeed, have not for many years.

Nevertheless, I am happy to be involved in the debate, and I am happy to celebrate the year of young people 2018 and the achievements of the young people who were involved in it and who took the opportunity that they were given to make a huge difference. It will have changed their lives. Our challenge is to ensure that, as a result, other young people get the chance to change their lives. This is not about only the experiences of the young people who were engaged; it is also about the lessons that have been learned for the future.

In these fragile times, it is good to welcome any celebration and to have a debate about things that are interesting, challenging and worthy of being celebrated. However, no matter how positive the

debate might be, we need to go beyond congratulation. I recognise what Alex Cole-Hamilton is doing, and I do not think that it is enough to respond to him by saying, "This debate is not the place for that." We must always be alive to the fact that more can be done.

I have said in many a recent debate that it would be good if the Scottish Government were to give substantial time to a debate on education so that we could explore some of the huge issues that matter to our young people. The Government is not using its debating time for those substantial issues, so it is perhaps not surprising that they emerge in debates such as this. Regardless of whether it is appropriate to discuss such matters today, they will not go away, so it is absolutely critical that there be a substantive debate on them. We can disagree on the issues, but we agree about the outcomes and goals that we seek to achieve.

That said, it is good to celebrate the optimism, energy, thoughtfulness and ambition of young people. However, even at my old age, I am interested in how we understand the different experiences of young people. To me, the age range of eight to 26 feels substantial—in reality, it covers a generation—so I would welcome comments from the minister on what has been done to recognise the different challenges that the various age groups experience.

We know that young people in our constituencies are active in volunteering, youth clubs, uniformed organisations, campaign groups and faith communities, and that they are involved in a huge range of initiatives to make a difference locally. I am always grateful for the opportunity to celebrate those young people, who have an amazing commitment to their communities and take on opportunities to campaign for the young people around them, often without getting any benefit from it. They do not do it because they will be celebrated; they do it simply because they see that things need to be done.

Young people have so much to offer in challenging traditional thinking, which is another term for "old people's thinking", so it is no surprise that young people are at the forefront in pursuing environmental issues, including issues to do with plastic. I know from the young people around me that they are taking action on how they live in order to make a difference. I am fascinated by the fact that young people are choosing to live as vegans or vegetarians as part of their broader political view. They are making choices that they believe will make a difference to the world in which they live.

Many of the groups that have given us briefings for the debate have mentioned intergenerational working, in which I should perhaps declare an

interest. I would welcome comments from the minister on how policy on that will be developed. The idea of communities of interest and people of different age groups coming together, when in the past they might have been seen to be in conflict, is worthy of exploration.

We need to listen to the voices of young people speaking up about the challenges that they face. Young people often talk about fragile work and exploitation in a way that is hard for people of my generation to understand. Somebody has told me that, because they are paid the minimum wage, they are no longer paid for extra work that they do in their workplace. We think that we are doing something good in pushing the minimum wage, but young people are living with the unintended consequences of that. They are exploited in their workplaces and have no expectation of entitlement or rights.

Young people also face a housing challenge. I celebrate the work of the Edinburgh Student Housing Co-operative Ltd, which has developed imaginative ways of finding students accommodation that is not as exploitative as that which is otherwise provided in the market.

It is crucial that we understand the importance of social media to young people and that we hear about solutions to the issues without giving the knee-jerk responses that we sometimes get.

We have to meet young people's needs. We know about the levels of stress, anxiety and pressure that young people describe, but when we talk about how to address them, we sometimes move too quickly to consideration of available medical interventions. We need to fund local authorities properly so that they can engage those who can support young people in their communities, and we need also to ensure that peer support is available.

We are conscious that some young people are simply not engaged and involved. We hear such stories about young carers, so it is important that we redouble our efforts to identify and support them. In our schools and elsewhere, it is essential that we address the needs of neglected young people. I am in awe of the young people whom I taught and who got themselves up and out into education. We need to offer such young people the support that they require.

Some young people are falling out of the school system, which I contend is in part because resources that might have been there in the past to support them are no longer there. I am talking about excluded young people such as the young people with autism who are excluded inappropriately from school or are on part-time timetables. That is education masquerading as opportunity.

If there is to be a legacy of the year of young people, I think that all members accept that it should not just be about events but about a proper understanding of the experience of all our young people, so that we can redouble our efforts to ensure that support is provided to them.

I will make one final point. We cannot do any of it without funding. I make a plea to the Scottish Government to reflect on the choices that it is making in its budgets. If it cuts resources for local authorities, the most disadvantaged young people will suffer most.

15:45

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Pablo Picasso was not only a genius when it came to art, playwriting and poetry; he was also a great thinker. Members might be wondering why I raise the spectre of Pablo Picasso in this debate. It is because he once said, "Youth has no age." There is a comforting thought, though I suspect that when he said that he was closer to my age than 20.

Today's debate is an opportunity to celebrate and reflect, not on the chronologically challenged, such as me and others whom I can see in the chamber, but on the year of young people and the fantastic contribution that young people make to society in Scotland today.

An important aim of the year of young people was to encourage young people to take on leadership roles, to enable them to make significant contributions across a range of sectors.

One such sector is tourism. At a meeting of the cross-party group on tourism, we were privileged to hear from representatives of Young Scot. We learned about the incredible work that some remarkable young people have been involved with in the tourism industry, as part of a programme of events across the country. Those young people are true ambassadors for their generation in this country.

Young Scot is just one of a range of organisations that worked incredibly hard and innovatively to make the year of young people the success that it was.

In this debate, it is also important to recognise the wide-ranging work that local authorities throughout Scotland undertook during the year of young people. I will use the Stirling constituency that I represent as an example. Stirling Council assembled an impressive range of activities and programmes to help to engage young people in substantial projects, including the highly successful Stirling marathon and Stirling highland games—two events that have quickly become important occasions on the Stirling calendar,

which bring to the area thousands of visitors who contribute significantly to the local economy.

Young people were also put at the heart of designing Stirling Council's new year celebrations at Stirling castle.

I have been impressed with the established Stirling youth forum—this is not all about one particular year, because work goes on all the time. The forum gives young people a voice on issues that are important to them. In meetings and exchanges, young people in Stirling told council officers that their biggest concerns are mental health and wellbeing support, transport to and from the city centre and things for young people to do in the city centre.

I understand that council officers have facilitated further discussions with wider partnership organisations in the city, to assess what action is needed to improve young people's lives in the area. That is a good example of how to utilise young people's experiences to improve the local area—for all people in Stirling, not just the young people who were involved.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Does Bruce Crawford recognise that, in the very next year after the Parliament passed the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which included young people and made real their rights for the first time, half of Scotland's 32 local authorities lost their children's rights officer, and with that, the inclusion that he is describing?

Bruce Crawford: I fully recognise the seriousness of the points that have been raised by Alex Cole-Hamilton, Iain Gray, Johann Lamont and others. I do not want to diminish anything that they have said, but I want to concentrate on celebrating the role of young people in Scotland today, and I will not be diverted from that purpose. That is why we are here. If time is needed to discuss the specific issues that have been raised, time should be set aside for that. As Alex Cole-Hamilton has said, he might seek to debate such matters in his party's time.

As far as I am concerned, Stirling Council's leadership in the year of young people is an example of what can be done to celebrate our younger generations. All of the more immersive activity that Stirling Council engaged in ran alongside lots of local events for young people in Stirling. One project in my area that I am particularly excited about is the establishment by Creative Stirling of the creative hub that is now located on King Street in Stirling city centre. Made in Stirling is an inspiring store and workshop that has room for hot desking, as well as a commercial kitchen where people can learn new skills and develop products. That has the potential of young people written all over it, and I am delighted to

have learned that young people were involved in its establishment.

A more important issue for the future is the legacy that all those efforts—the events, the focus groups and the project groups—will leave us with. If we have spent a year celebrating young people and their contribution but we fail to gain from what future young generations have to offer, it will all have been for nothing. However, in common with all members, I am determined that that will not be the case.

Over the course of 2018, the involvement of a large number of organisations demonstrated what can happen if we empower young people and give them the tools to get involved. What all that activity tells me is that, as a society, we would no longer have to strive so hard to reach young people if the mechanisms for their involvement and influence were hardwired into daily life. The inclusion of young people in every part of society is a mutually beneficial investment in all our futures. I therefore urge all governmental organisations, businesses, charities, social clubs and community groups to look to young people and to consider how best they can hardwire them into their thinking and planning.

I started with a quote and I will finish with one. This time it is from the former Conservative UK Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who said:

"The youth of a nation are the trustees of prosperity."

It is not often that I have said this, but I agree whole-heartedly with that Tory Prime Minister.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am in a state of shock.

15:52

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to follow that quote from my learned friend. I am delighted, too, to have the opportunity to speak in the debate and celebrate the achievements and contributions of young people, not only in the year of young people but on an on-going basis.

When we give a voice to the younger generation, we must exercise caution and be prepared for what they could say. Last weekend, I was out walking the dog with my two grandsons and my youngest daughter, all of whom are children of perpetual motion. They ran off shouting, "Paps"—that is me, Papa Brian—"see if you can catch us." I shouted after them, "If I do catch you, you'll have to recognise that you'll have been caught by a grandad," to which they replied, "But you're a fast very old grandad," which was not the response that I was looking for.

When my youngest grandson was in primary 1—the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs has heard this story before—the class was being visited by a policeman and the question was asked, “Which animals do the police use?” My grandson quickly put his hand up and said, “Giraffes.” When he was asked why he chose giraffes, he said, “So that they can see in the top windows of people who are committing crimes.” I agree—I think that giraffes should be part of the police force.

Seriously, Presiding Officer, I agree wholeheartedly with the premise that the views of young people not only should be heard but will positively contribute to society, culture and the economy. I want to use my time to discuss how important it is that we give our young people an input into decisions that, as well as affecting them, will have much wider implications across society.

As you are aware, Presiding Officer, I have more than a passing interest in health and, in particular, the preventative health agenda. I submit that, if we allowed more input from young people to this issue we would get to solutions much more quickly than we are currently doing. For example, if we asked our young people for their input into school meals, I am confident that we would end up with a completely different model of procurement and preparation than we currently have. I am also sure that, if you asked their opinion on the level of food imports that make it to their school meals tables or into our hospitals through a Scotland Excel contract, they would ask why we could not source the same food from the farm next door. Allowing their input into the school meals menu would enable their buy-in, which would make them much more likely to participate in school meals.

When speaking to school pupils, it is obvious that they are well aware of what a healthy diet should look like. The missing piece for them is being afforded the opportunity to apply that learning. I am sure that they would recognise that high-quality, local, fresh produce is far preferable to lower-quality imported produce. They would recognise the need to support our farmers and the rural economy by buying home-produced food wherever possible. In a time when there are great concerns about the environment and climate change—an issue that has been mentioned in this chamber more than once—they would recognise the carbon footprint that is involved in transporting food from abroad. The much-vaunted good food nation bill would do well to include input from our young people.

The same is applicable to sports and physical activity. If young people were asked for their input in relation to how they would want to participate, I am certain that the outcomes would be far better than they currently are.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Brian Whittle: Oh, for goodness' sake. I would be delighted to take an intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I was surprised when I saw where that request came from. I was looking around the chamber to see who had spoken.

Rachael Hamilton: I have never before intervened on one of my colleagues, but I will take this opportunity to do so.

The Border Union Agricultural Society in Kelso has a facility that it uses for its annual show. As I have mentioned to the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, before, the society opens it up to primary 4 schoolchildren for a countryside day. I think that there is a fantastic opportunity for Scotland to replicate that best practice right across Scotland. Does the member agree?

Brian Whittle: I would not dare disagree with my colleague. I will address the importance of outdoor learning later.

What I am talking about is young people's access to opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them, through means such as having an input into where the food that is in their school meals come from and how it is prepared, as I have already mentioned.

If we are going to tackle long-term health issues, we must include young people. I am fed up hearing about the obesity crisis in our young people. How about asking them for their input? If we do that, we empower them, we build their confidence and we ensure their buy-in, which, in turn, leads to engagement. We must stop imposing solutions and afford them the chance to develop solutions. When it comes to sporting activity, opportunities to participate need to be accessible.

Last week, I marvelled at our athletes performing in Glasgow at the European indoor championships. My youngest child was there to watch her heroine, Laura Muir, destroy a world-class field. She has taken that experience with her into her training on the track. She can do that because she has access. It is not like me to agree with Fulton MacGregor—I am thankful that he is not in the chamber to hear me do so—but I very much agree with him on the impact that sport can have not only on physical health but on mental health. However, sport, like music, is becoming the bastion of the middle class. It is becoming more difficult for young people to access out-of-school music, arts and sporting activity. It is important that extracurricular activity in school is

available irrespective of background or personal circumstance. That is why I am a supporter of outdoor learning. I want people to have that opportunity to learn through experience.

Education is the solution to health and welfare issues. I have always believed that. We need to look not only at the opportunities that we have had but the opportunities that have been missed to help our children find that passion in art, music, drama and sporting activity, to the benefit of their physical and mental health. As Poole said,

“Play is the absence of stress.”

As Albert Einstein said,

“Play is the highest form of research.”

In making Scotland a great place in which to grow up, we must give young people the opportunity to participate, and remove the barriers to their ability to do so.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that the member is just closing, so he cannot.

Brian Whittle: Much as I would have loved to do so.

We must be prepared to remove the barriers. Children cannot bounce off the walls if we remove the walls.

15:59

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Like everywhere else around Scotland, my constituency was chock-full of events that were run by young people to celebrate the year of young people, and I was delighted to be invited to the Aberdeenshire year of young people legacy event that was hosted a few weeks ago by Meldrum academy to showcase just some of its achievements and the huge amount of work that has been done by young people to amplify their voices. In particular, it was great to see the young people’s organising and campaigning group; in 2017, its members were my guests in Parliament in order to show their film about cared-for children’s experiences to the First Minister. That film is now being used for teacher training in the University of Strathclyde.

I will use my time today to talk about another hugely successful film project. Young film makers from North East Scotland College worked with me and YoungScot to improve awareness of internet safety and the sharing of intimate images online, which are major issues for young people. As part of my share aware campaign to improve awareness of the issues, I handed the reins over to the higher national diploma creative industries television students at the college and asked them

to script a short film that they believed would make a difference. We got a team of Young Scot ambassadors to be the judges. There was no use in a middle-aged politician saying what she thought a campaign film should look like; the most effective way of engaging a young audience was to ask their peers to create the kind of material that they thought would be relevant, engaging and—most of all—not embarrassing. I know that some schools are still using videos from the 1980s in sex education, which were bad enough when I was subjected to them in the 1980s.

My goodness—the students of NESCol did not disappoint. So much so that our judging panel of Young Scot ambassadors chose two script ideas and Young Scot funded two productions. Those films are “Cyber Attraction” and “Overexposure”. If anyone wants to see them, they can find links to them on my Facebook and Twitter accounts, or they can put those names into the YouTube search engine. I urge all MSPs, when they are doing school visits, to mention the films as a tool that schools can use to discuss the issues in personal and social education classes. They can also be a tool to enable us clueless parents to get to grips with the issues and have informed conversations with our sons and daughters. Are they uncomfortable viewing? Yes—that is just one aspect of their brilliance and effectiveness.

I sincerely thank the students of NESCol for their creativity and hard work, and the staff team at NESCol for letting me and the Young Scot people borrow their considerable talents. I also thank Young Scot for funding the productions, putting its faith completely in the hands of those students, and for hosting those powerful films on its website. Last year, in February, I hosted the college film makers, their lecturers and the actors from the drama department, along with YoungScot, to premier the films in the Parliament as part of Young Scot’s “Digi, aye?” campaign and the year of young people. The minister came along to watch the films and congratulate the film makers on their work. The event coincided with the Government’s debate on cyberresilience, and it was great to see the young film makers and actors in the gallery.

However, that was just the start. What has happened since then? In the year since those films were produced and launched, they have had, between them, over 1 million views. That is absolutely incredible. They have been used in schools throughout Scotland, they have been viewed by parents and young people alike, and I hope that they have provided the springboard for discussion of the issues of intimate image sharing. A look at the number of comments from young people around the world on the films on YouTube—in particular, on “Overexposure”—is indication enough that the films are extremely

powerful and that they have had an international reach. They get hundreds of new views every day. That is a legacy for the year of young people that was created by the young people of Scotland.

That got me thinking, “Why stop there?” Young Scot is currently working on highlighting consent issues. I said at the time of the share aware campaign that we should think about running a film competition like that with colleges every year. What better legacy could there be from the year of young people than to throw open again the challenge to young film makers to tackle one of the issues that affects them most?

We have seen how powerful the voices of young people are. I pay tribute to the young climate change campaigners, who are proving that young people’s voices can effect real change. It was great to see them mentioned in Ross Greer’s proposed amendment. I, too, was disappointed that it was not accepted, not least because it might have been the last amendment about the year of young people that he could have had accepted as a young person himself—but that is an aside.

I applaud those young people’s efforts to highlight what is arguably the most pressing issue of their and our generations—all power to them. To those wizened old commentators taking to Twitter to whinge about kids missing school, I say this: you are part of the problem. I would be proud if my 15-year-old daughter took to the streets to protest about something so important. I would give her the train fare to go down to Edinburgh and protest on Friday. That is not a hint—except that it is.

The year of young people might officially have ended as the clock struck midnight on 31 December 2018, but here’s to every year that follows in which young people’s voices are front and centre in our deliberations and the decisions that we make in this place and in every area of society. We should never presume to speak for them, but we can support them and open the doors wider to give them the space to be heard loud and clear.

16:05

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): It is no coincidence that the First Minister chose the Oasis centre in Dumfries as the place to launch Scotland’s year of young people, in November 2017. As Maree Todd rightly highlighted, Dumfries and Galloway Council’s excellent youth services team and the region’s talented young people very much led Scotland in grabbing the opportunities that the year offered, delivering a programme of events not only for young people living in the region but for those living across Scotland.

Those events were led by young people for young people. They began planning for the year 12 months before the launch, with the establishment of a youth steering group supported by youth representatives from 30 local organisations, empowering young people to shape how they wanted the year to unfold. Their vision was to celebrate the personalities, talents and achievements of young people in Dumfries and Galloway and to showcase the best of our region to the rest of Scotland.

The group consulted fellow young people on their plan, gathering views, including from young people in hospital, from those with care experience and from those in our most rural communities, who often feel physically and digitally cut off. In fact, 800 young people in total from across Dumfries and Galloway fed into the plan.

That plan involved seven signature events, including two youth conferences—#ROOTS in Lockerbie and Collabor’18 in Newton Stewart—and the hosting of two national organisations in the region for the first time. The first of those came in April, when the LGBT national gathering organised by LGBT Youth Scotland was held at the Easterbrook hall in Dumfries, bringing together more than 200 young people from across Scotland. Michael McGowan from Dumfries, LGBT Youth Scotland’s international youth representative, said of the event:

“Having grown up in a rural area, I always felt somewhat isolated. But this was a great way of showing every young person in Dumfries and Galloway that we are not alone. I got to meet so many people, hear so many stories, and felt so proud to be able to play a part in making lives better and pushing for a more equal society.”

In June, a second national organisation, the Scottish Youth Parliament, held a national sitting in Stranraer for the first time. On 31 June and 1 July, the region also hosted Youth Beatz, the UK’s largest free youth music festival.

I was fortunate enough to be a councillor on Dumfries and Galloway Council when we voted to set up and fund the very first Youth Beatz event, 11 years ago. I recall getting quite a lot of criticism for that decision at the time, and, for several years, each time we voted to fund the event, people asked why we were running a free concert. If that is all that Youth Beatz was, maybe the critics would have had a point, but Youth Beatz is far more than that. This year, it ran over two days for the first time. One of the centrepieces is “The Toon”, an interactive drama designed and run by more than 50 young people for young people.

This year, I was pleased to watch a preview of “The Toon” along with Richard Leonard, and I know that Maree Todd, the Minister for Children and Young People, also had that privilege. I have

to say that it is not for the faint-hearted. Young people act out, in a pretty brutal fashion, real-life experiences about road safety, knife crime, mental health, alcohol, drugs and sexual exploitation. They do that not only at Youth Beatz itself, but at schools across the region, reaching thousands upon thousands of young people. It provides peer advice, support and empathy to those who may well be facing the same challenges and who can see that they are not alone.

Whenever anyone asks me why I voted to fund Youth Beatz for a decade as a councillor and why I continue passionately to support it, I tell them, "Because it saves lives." We should never shy away from the need to invest in our youth services and mental health services, which is becoming deeply challenging at a time when council budgets are under significant pressure.

After Youth Beatz, the signature events in Dumfries and Galloway kept coming, including a fantastic youth leadership festival in Kirkcudbright that was run jointly by the council's youth work service and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. In December, the closing event was the first annual Dumfries and Galloway youth awards ceremony, at which young people were rewarded for their participation, talents and achievements. At that event, Maisie Anderson from Kirkcudbright scooped the top award of young person of the year for her tireless, successful campaign to enable the skin sensor FreeStyle Libre to be made available to those who, like her, live with type 1 diabetes in Dumfries and Galloway—a campaign that she brought to the Parliament's Public Petitions Committee.

However, what made Dumfries and Galloway's celebrations for the year of young people successful were not just the big signature events but the many other events and initiatives that took place in communities right across the region—all of which, crucially, were led by young people. I therefore pay tribute to the young people who made the year such a success in the region. They include all the members of the youth steering group, including those I had the privilege of meeting a number of times during the year—chairperson Jordan Todd; the region's outstanding youth ambassador, Lauren Asher; Sophie Blair; and Emily Davies—all of whom hosted events. They also include Dumfries and Galloway Council's award-winning youth services team, led by the formidable and too-modest Mark Malloy, supported by excellent youth officers such as Kelly Ross. There was also strong political leadership from the administration, including the council's first ever youth champion, Councillor Adam Wilson, whose role will be a legacy of the year.

It is on the issue of legacy that I will finish. The chances and experiences provided for our young

people last year were fantastic, but one-off opportunities are not enough. In Dumfries and Galloway, the council has pledged that the year's legacy will include a new young people's services plan for the region, and it is currently seeking the views of over 10,000 young people who live there to develop that plan. A new Dumfries and Galloway youth council will also be established to ensure more involvement of young people in decision making and to hold other elected representatives to account. A secure future has also been established for Youth Beatz as a two-day event, and the Dumfries and Galloway youth awards will now become an annual event to celebrate the achievements, talents and participation of our young people.

I hope that the Government will match the ambition of the young people and the council in Dumfries and Galloway and that it will deliver a clear legacy plan, supported by investment in young people's services, to ensure that the year of young people in Scotland is not one year but every year.

16:12

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate to highlight the fantastic contribution that the year of young people 2018 had on our country in enabling and inspiring young people to take up new opportunities, experiences and adventures. My contribution will focus on the importance of the year of young people, as well as highlighting the work that has been carried out by dedicated people across Dumfries and Galloway in my South Scotland region, all of which contributed to the year's success.

As I am on my feet right after my South Scotland colleague Colin Smyth, I am sure that we will have heard lots of mentions of Dumfries and Galloway by the end of the afternoon. I echo my colleague Jenny Gilruth's comment that the year of young people 2018 allowed Scotland to be the first country in the world to dedicate a whole year specifically to our young people. It was also the first themed year in which people were recognised as one of Scotland's greatest assets, adding to our already established reputation of being a world-leading, inclusive and fair country.

As members will be aware, the year was underpinned by six key themes—participation; education; health and wellbeing; equality and discrimination; enterprise and regeneration; and culture—and most of the events during the year were aligned closely to those. An event that branched into all those areas was the Youth Beatz festival, which Colin Smyth has already talked about. It was part of the year's official events programme, and I was happy to attend its launch

by the First Minister at the Oasis youth centre in Dumfries on 13 November 2017, just ahead of the start of the year.

Youth Beatz, which is now in its tenth year, ran over two days and saw a wide range of events to engage young people aged from eight to 25 in a whole host of activities, including music from world-renowned artists such as Tinchy Stryder, Bars and Melody, Basshunter and Sigala—who knew? Arts and crafts were also presented, together with workshops and engagement sessions to raise awareness of important issues that affect young people, such as sexual health; a service that offers support against bullying; and LGBT support groups.

The event was split into three main parts. The Youth Beatz fringe celebrated a week of activity in a variety of venues across Dumfries and Galloway; the main Youth Beatz event saw the festival undergo a significant expansion to become a two-day event and it offered young people a wide range of activities, performance acts and opportunities each day; and “The Toon”, which has already been mentioned, was a hard-hitting, interactive theatrical production, designed and delivered by young people, that addressed key issues that are faced by young people in Scotland every day.

The event was a real success, and I put on the record my thanks to the youth work service in Dumfries and Galloway, EventScotland, Young Scot, VisitScotland, Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Scottish Government, which was well represented by both the First Minister and Maree Todd, for providing practical and financial support to make the event as successful as it was.

Another event that took place in Dumfries and Galloway was the amaze me LEADER programme, which was an exciting adventure experience for young people aged 18 to 29 that brought youth from all over Scotland and Europe to Dumfries and Galloway for a week in August 2018. The programme allowed young people to explore living in a rural context and the challenges that are associated with that. The event was delivered by the community interest company Sleeping Giants and managed by Debz McDowall and Nicola Hill on behalf of Dumfries and Galloway LEADER. LEADER is the main European Union funding programme that supports rural communities across Scotland.

The young people who participated in the event formed teams and drove across Dumfries and Galloway in 10 people carriers, stopping off to participate in a range of community-based events and activities across the region, many of which were funded by LEADER. I thank my colleague Bruce Crawford MSP for sponsoring a parliamentary reception just last week to raise

awareness of the importance of the EU LEADER programme.

Although the year of young people was a huge success and we should pay tribute to everyone who was involved, we must recognise that proportions of the funding for many of the events, such as the amaze me LEADER programme, which I have just mentioned, came from the European Union. Johann Lamont mentioned continuing funding. Leaving the EU will have a huge impact on children and young people and they will have to live with the consequences of the decision for much longer than many of the members who are sitting in this chamber this afternoon.

I remind the Parliament that Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain a member of the EU, and a majority in every local authority area across our country voted to remain. The vote to remain was even stronger among younger people, with YouGov polling showing that 71 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds voted to remain in the EU in the referendum.

I welcome the fact that the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that the voices and concerns of children and young people are heard. Children and young people have the biggest stake in future relations with the EU, and we must do all that we can to protect what matters to them.

In conclusion, I reiterate the success of the trailblazing year of young people. I would love to see the legacy continue to have a positive impact on people both across the South Scotland region and throughout Scotland. I ask the Scottish Government to continue to protect Scotland in any way that it can from any harmful impacts of Brexit on our society and our economy and, most important, to protect our young people and support a positive legacy.

I support the motion.

16:18

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to speak in today’s debate, and I am delighted to be the third speaker from Dumfries and Galloway. I will make no apologies for repeating lots of what has been said already, because it stands well to be repeated and emphasised. I especially welcome the chance to celebrate young people’s achievements as the father of two university students and someone who is only 83 sleeps away from welcoming a new young person into the world. With Douglas Ross MP becoming a father last night, no one can suggest that the Scottish Conservative are not doing their bit to reverse falling birth rates.

As the member for the rural constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, I know that the challenges for young people are often made greater because of isolation due to poor rural infrastructure, poor public transport and a lack of opportunities. There have been years of failure and neglect by centralising Governments to address those rural inequalities, and that includes a lack of mental health support, which Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned.

Our rural youth are very resilient, but we as the decision makers must listen to them in order to ensure that they can thrive and that they have same choices as other young people and the right options available to them. That includes being able to stay in rural areas to learn and work and bring up their own families.

I was delighted that Dumfries and Galloway played a key role in the year of young people, with the First Minister launching the year during a visit to Dumfries in November 2017. I put on record my praise—like that of Colin Smyth, which echoed the voices of many young people and youth organisations across Scotland—for the amazing work of Mark Malloy and his outstanding team in the youth work service of Dumfries and Galloway Council. Like many others, the service has seen cuts but, amazingly, it seems to deliver increasingly more support for our young folk across the constituency.

It could be argued that the youth work service led the way by promoting the importance of young people's views long before 2018 with the launch of the Youth Beatz festival, which was first held in 2008. Over the years, I have stood on top of an open-top bus listening to Basshunter and my absolute favourite, N-Dubz, much to the embarrassment of my daughter, Vicky. The event is the UK's largest free youth music event and attracts eight to 26-year-olds to Dumfries from across the country. Last year, the combination of the 10th anniversary of Youth Beatz and the year of young people meant that the event was even bigger than before. It included a Youth Beatz kidz zone, a brand new comedy tent and a young entrepreneurs marketplace—the event brimmed with opportunities for youngsters.

Since my election, I have stood up for the rural communities that I serve across Galloway and West Dumfries, young or old—or less young, I should say. I am determined to give everyone a voice on the issues that matter to them: education, health services, broadband, farming and fishing, or whatever they may be. People in the region have always had a feeling that, in decision making in this place, they are far too often forgotten by the central belt-facing Government. That is why it was pleasing that the Scottish Youth Parliament sat in Stranraer for a weekend back in June during the

year of young people, giving youngsters—including local residents and MSYPs Neal McCulloch and Emma Curry—the chance to air their concerns.

The action-packed weekend featured workshops, discussions, debates and a keynote address by Judith Robertson, chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. Importantly, it was a chance for young people from all over Scotland to see the challenges that rural young people face and how magnificently they face and overcome those challenges. I was delighted to attend the Saturday evening gala dinner at the Ryan centre and join in the celebrations of our young folk, who had worked hard and deserved to be rewarded with a lot of fun. They were also given a special preview of my dad dancing skills—a category of dancing that I had not known existed until then.

As I said earlier, people in the region often have the sense that their voices are not heard and that there is a lack of opportunities for their youngsters, who feel that they have to go further afield to further their careers and job prospects in our largest cities. I hope that today's announcement of £345 million for the Borderlands growth deal and the forthcoming south of Scotland enterprise agency will help to address that situation, not just in the east but right across rural Dumfries and Galloway to Stranraer in the west, by providing investment in major projects and bringing businesses to address the needs of our young people across the region.

I will finish by highlighting one example of the remarkable youngsters in my constituency. Maisie Anderson, who has already been mentioned by Colin Smyth, was named Dumfries and Galloway's young person of the year in the council's first annual youth awards and also won the health and wellbeing award. She was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in 2014 and became seriously ill. After bouncing back, she has campaigned tirelessly, along with her mum, Soenaid, for Freestyle Libre devices to be made available to all type 1 diabetes sufferers in Dumfries and Galloway. I raised the matter with the First Minister, but it was Maisie's campaigning that made a difference and we were all delighted when the Scottish Government announced that the skin sensor would be made available on the NHS as a prescription. Maisie's story has a part to play in the year of young people, by providing a platform to showcase our youngsters who have gone above and beyond for the causes that are close to their hearts and who might not otherwise have been given that recognition.

We must not fail to build a legacy from last year. We must continue to create further opportunities for our youngsters, who are the key to a successful future.

16:24

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I am very happy to speak in the debate. We have had some terrific contributions from across the chamber.

As we have heard, the year of young people 2018 was a global first and demonstrated Scotland's commitment to its young people—the future generations who will take ownership of a fair, prosperous and inclusive society. Why did we embark on that initiative last year? The reason is that we value everything that young people bring to our society and want to encourage them to be all that they can be. As we have heard, the year of young people included an exciting programme of events and activities for the people of Scotland and our visitors to enjoy. In my constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden, Erin and Hannah were on the sportscotland sports panel, and I know that they have had a year that they will not forget.

An important aspect of the initiative was that young people had a key role in the development and delivery of activities, which ensured that an inclusive approach was taken throughout 2018 and beyond, hopefully creating a lasting legacy for the year of young people. The Scottish Government worked in partnership with Young Scot, Children in Scotland, the Scottish Youth Parliament, VisitScotland and local authorities. The input of young people helped to directly inform public policy priorities.

During Scottish apprenticeship week last week, I was privileged to speak at a youth conference in Bearsden that was organised by Tigers Ltd, which is an innovative Scottish training provider that specialises in the delivery of pre-employment training and modern apprenticeships. The theme was that everybody can be a leader. It was their first conference and a fantastic success. Young people filled the room to listen to motivational speakers and ask questions. I knew then that our future is in safe hands.

Last week, I also attended the amazing women awards in Glasgow. Young women from the age of 13 were celebrated for their fantastic achievements—whether in sport, facing adversity or social enterprise—and it was an emotional and inspirational event. In an age when the media often focuses on the bad news surrounding them, it made an optimistic and refreshing change to see young people being rewarded for their extraordinary achievements.

Our young people have so much potential and it is up to all of us—not just Government—to allow them to shine and to reach their potential. That is why initiatives such as the year of young people are important; they allow us to focus on the next generation and all that they have to offer.

I want to mention the 29,000 young carers in Scotland—and that is just the number that we are aware of. I never forget the incredible contribution that they make. When I met a local group of bright, fun-loving youngsters who are also carers, I was in complete awe of what they do every day of their lives. Thanks to a wonderful organisation called Carers Link they are allowed to be children for a few hours a week.

The rights of children and young people are paramount for the Scottish Government. We are working hard to create an inclusive Scotland that protects, respects, promotes and fulfils those rights. That said, the serious issues that have been raised by members in the chamber are completely valid and merit further debate.

Children and young people have a right to be heard on the issues that affect them, such as leaving the EU, which was mentioned by my colleague Emma Harper. That will have a huge impact on children and young people, who will have to live with the consequences for far longer than we will. As Emma Harper said, YouGov polling shows that 71 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds voted to remain in the EU. It is worth repeating, because it is astonishing, that we are to an extent robbing them of their future in the European family. We will ensure that the voices of children and young people and their concerns about leaving the EU are heard, and we must always listen to them.

Scotland should be very proud of the year of young people. It was a year to celebrate creativity; more than 100 cultural, music and art events that took place across the country gave young people a new platform to shine and the attention that they deserve. We should all carry on the legacy of 2018 and celebrate young people and their achievements every year.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move to the first of our closing speeches. I call Alex-Cole Hamilton.

16:29

Alex Cole-Hamilton: It is a great privilege to sum up on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. Bobby Kennedy once said:

“This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease.”

The public policy environment that we create in the Parliament to stimulate the free and abundant growth of those qualities matters so much. I do not doubt the commitment of every member in the chamber to that cause, or the love and compassion that they feel for our children and young people. That was brought home to me in

the past couple of days, because my daughter was urgently hospitalised at the weekend, and I thank the minister and all the members from across the political parties who extended private good wishes to me and my wife. Today's debate has been redolent of that feeling of care and love for our children, and in no way do I mean to diminish that.

With well-chosen remarks, the minister painted a great picture of the many events that have taken place in communities around Scotland, about which we have heard a lot in the debate. The one comment in her remarks that jarred with me—I am sure that it was not intended—was when she described the need to strengthen our relationship with young people. Young people are not a separate group and we should not regard them as such. They have every right to be at the heart of every aspect of our society. That perception is part of the problem. It is not Maree Todd's perception, but is one that we have inherited from our parents and their parents before them. That is why Iain Gray is absolutely right in saying that we need to include young people in every aspect of society.

The first step to doing that is to make rights real. When this Government was first returned to majority Government in 2011, it started to set the heather alight on the children's rights agenda and introduced to this Parliament a draft bill on the rights of children and young people. However, that was quickly conflated with what became part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. As I said in my intervention on Bruce Crawford, the passing of the legislation was coterminous with a rollback in the number of children's rights officers in our local authorities. Although, on the one hand, awareness of the UNCRC was raised, on the other hand, the ability of local authorities to deliver that reality on the ground was removed.

Iain Gray is also right to say that it is great to celebrate events such as the year of young people, but that we should never lose an opportunity to challenge ourselves on the rights of children. It is not just the rights landscape that we need to challenge ourselves about or to correct. Ross Greer, who is still an important voice among young people in Scotland, reminded us of the in-built disadvantages that the coming generations face due to economic and climate injustice. Perhaps we did not face those injustices when we were growing up, but our children and grandchildren certainly will, so he is absolutely right. It is small wonder that, globally, so many young people are responding for the first time with direct action. I am proud that my boys, Finn and Kit, will be part of the school climate strike on Friday.

The strike was referenced by Jenny Gilruth, who was a modern studies teacher and is much missed by my constituents who attend the Royal high school. When I visit them, they often ask how she is doing, which is quite frustrating, but never mind.

Jenny Gilruth told us of the case of Jeanette Miller, who was her pupil at a different school and who is care experienced. The care-experienced young people in our society still demand far more attention from this Parliament. We have started that journey—I referred to that in my opening speech with regard to the increase to the age for leaving care—but it is not finished. We need to give young people the right to return to care should they leave and decide that they have made the wrong decision. We certainly need to have a fatal accident inquiry whenever a care leaver dies. The corporate parent is the only parent in Scotland that still does not seek answers to the questions on the manner of a child's death if they die prematurely.

Bruce Crawford challenged me for poisoning the well of this debate with my amendment. However, I am certain that the many thousands of children who were involved in year of young people events would not have a problem with me laying this Government's failures at the door of the minister in this debate. This Parliament does not speak about young people every day and to suggest that I withhold those remarks until the Lib Dems are allocated business time—incidentally, that happens just twice a year—shows how reluctant the SNP is to grapple with those failures. I am sorry, Bruce, but, until these issues are resolved, I will continue to raise them again and again. While our children and young people are waiting two years for first-time child and adolescent mental health treatment, while we criminalise young people at the age of 12 and while we continue to erode access to youth work, I will keep raising them.

Scotland is getting better, but we are not there yet. As long as this country relies on Mosquito devices to dispel crowds of young people who are gathering and socialising in non-criminal ways, or allows physical punishment in the home, the challenge continues to lie before us.

Maree Todd: Will Alex Cole-Hamilton take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I will, if I have time.

The Presiding Officer: Yes, you do.

Maree Todd: I agree with the member that Mosquito devices are absolutely abhorrent. However, there is a limit to what we can do about that. I am delighted that the Government is supporting legislation to protect children from physical punishment. I am proud of my

Government's record on protecting children's rights.

Austerity—and the impact that it is still having on this country—has been mentioned a number of times in the chamber today. Are you proud that the UN stated that the coalition Government's austerity politics—when your party was in power at Westminster—were guilty of “grave and systematic violations” of the rights of persons with disabilities, including those with mental illness? Are you proud of that?

The Presiding Officer: Members should speak through the chair—do not use the terms “you” or “your”. That goes for all members in the chamber.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: There will come a day when Maree Todd has something else in the tank to attack my party with, but today is not that day. On my party's record in coalition, I am proud of the fact that we delivered free school meals, the pupil premium and the abolition of child detention in asylum cases. I would rather be sitting where I am today than presiding over the minister's woeful record on children's rights and child mental health.

I enjoyed hearing the many accounts of local events. Every one of the participants in the year's events would not accept that today's debate should be the sum total of the time that this Parliament affords to addressing the challenges and threats to children and young people in this society. I have enjoyed today's debate. It has been great to hear from Gillian Martin and Colin Smyth about examples of the local events that have been going on. What is going on in Dumfries and Galloway is fantastic.

I finish with a quote because I started with a quote, if that is allowed by Bruce Crawford, “Times are hard. Children no longer respect their elders.” That was said by Cicero in the first century. It is said every generation and, with the year of young people, we have the opportunity to turn that narrative arc around.

16:36

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The debate has given us an opportunity to reflect on the successes and achievements of the year of young people and to recognise the hard work of the organisations across Scotland that engaged with the year's activities. As the minister did, I thank all the volunteers, young and old; and I thank sportscotland, YouthLink Scotland and LGBT Youth Scotland for their briefings for the debate.

Adopting a theme for a year of activity was first introduced in 2009 for the year of homecoming, and the themed years have grown every year since then. They provide a focus for a calendar of

events, promote Scotland's strengths and attractions and are an important tool for our tourism sector—we have had two homecoming years and two years of food and drink. They can be seen as a contributing factor to the increase in visitor numbers from within the UK and internationally and can provide a boost to businesses and organisations whose focus is around the theme. The move to biannual years will provide more time for planning. As an MSP who represents Fife, I look forward to the year of Scotland's coasts and waters in 2020.

However, the benefits are much broader than that, and the year of young people is perhaps the best example of the wider impact that a themed year can have. Members have highlighted the achievements of young people across their constituencies, with Bruce Crawford in particular reflecting on the views of young people in Stirling. I recognise that many organisations already ensure that young people are active in their organisations, but the year of young people provided an additional focus for them to consider whether that engagement is sufficient and meaningful and enables young people to enact change.

It could be said that, too often, our society portrays young people negatively; that they are seen as a problem and are marginalised in our society—points that were raised by Jenny Gilruth's former pupil. The year of young people was an opportunity for us to send a clear message that young people are valued and important; that they have an important role to play in our society; and that they should be listened to and recognised as future leaders and citizens.

Colin Smyth and other members made excellent points about the need for a clear legacy strategy for the year of young people. Members have highlighted initiatives and projects that engage young people and involve them in decision making. That approach should be embedded in organisations and there are examples of organisations that have taken that approach. Audit Scotland, for example, is working with Young Scot and Youth Scotland to establish a youth advisory panel. There should be a clear expectation that involving young people is not a gimmick for a year and should continue to be meaningful, with support and advice on how to achieve that.

Ross Greer made sobering comments on child poverty and the future prospects of the current generation compared with those of previous generations. Those points are relevant to the debate if we recognise the importance of listening to young people's voices.

Johann Lamont talked about intergenerational work as a way to resolve conflict and foster

understanding, and she highlighted important, key campaigns in which young people are active.

Alex Cole-Hamilton made fair points in his amendment and in his speech about mental health and children's rights. I know from my Mid Scotland and Fife region that referral waiting times for CAMHS are far too long and that that causes increased anxiety and stress to families. Once a child's need to access those services has been decided, they should be delivered as quickly as possible. Waiting for over 12 months is completely unacceptable for anyone, but for a child or young person, it is extremely disruptive to their school life, their social life and their development.

I have supported families to access other services through which they can receive support and the child or young person can receive counselling or therapy, but they are often delivered by the voluntary sector, which is under significant financial pressure. The resources for mental health that the Government has announced and the focus that it intends to give mental health need to start to have an impact and to make a real difference to waiting times.

Fulton MacGregor highlighted the fact that lots of the activity with young people that took place in the year would not have happened without the central role of youth work. The Youthlink Scotland briefing that we received highlights its report on the impact of community-based universal youth work in Scotland. I recently met a group of Fife College students who are studying for a higher national certificate in working with communities who were passionate about youth work and its value to young people. However, as Alex Cole-Hamilton and Colin Smyth have said, the service is under great financial pressure. It is not a statutory service and many local authorities are being forced to reduce their support. However, youth work offers inclusive and friendly support for young people in their lives and provides valuable educational and leisure activities. Fulton MacGregor was right to emphasise the preventive nature of youth work.

The year of young people should have been an opportunity to expand young people's experiences and ensure that they are inclusive. The events that LGBT Youth Scotland highlighted, which members from the south of Scotland also highlighted, demonstrated how the year helped to foster collaborative working across young people's organisations to promote greater understanding and inclusivity.

Alison Harris outlined the themes that the year focused on. I want to focus on culture.

Cultural activity played a significant part in the year's celebration activities and creativity and young people's experiences were showcased. I

highlight the National Theatre of Scotland's futureproof festival, which was a nationwide festival of new work by young people and collaborators that was supported by the year of young people. I was lucky enough to be at a performance at the Rothes halls in Glenrothes of "Lots and Not Lots", which was created by 12 teenagers and the performance artist and composer Greg Sinclair. It was inventive, amusing and emotional.

Alongside the 10 productions was futureproof transmissions, which was a series of broadcasts created by young film makers that captured performance highlights, interviews, vox pops and behind-the-scenes action. Gillian Martin talked well about the power of film making as a medium for young people to express current issues for them. It was a great way to celebrate the year of young people and I hope that the National Theatre of Scotland will continue that level of engagement and that we will see support for an expansion of cultural opportunities for young people.

Brian Whittle made good points about inequality in sports and culture and the need for us to close the opportunity gap. Following the controversy over Creative Scotland's funding decisions last year, the Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee will look at funding for culture across Scotland. The year of young people has given a focus and funding for that activity, but we need to consider how to sustain those opportunities in these financially austere times.

This afternoon has been a time to reflect on the year of young people, celebrate the achievements of this generation and discuss how we can sustain the momentum of all that has been achieved.

16:44

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am not sure that we need to have a special debate about our young people to know just how lucky we are in Scotland to have such a diverse, talented and well-engaged group of young people across our society. Indeed, one of the greatest pleasures of the job is engaging with young people, listening to their views and working with them as the Parliament considers its response to key issues. I may be biased, but I think that the Parliament's Education and Skills Committee has a particularly strong record in that respect.

We should acknowledge the contribution that young people have made to many debates and evidence-taking sessions. Examples of current inquiries to which young people have contributed are those on music tuition, additional support for learning and skills development. I pay tribute to the young people involved for the information that

they provided, because it has made us better parliamentarians. Johann Lamont was right to say that young people's input has made us understand what life is like for them, rather than just seeing the issues from the political bubble

As co-conveners of the cross-party group on sport, Alison Johnstone—who is not able to be here today—and I want to put on record how much we appreciated young people's input on what we should be doing to develop Scottish sport at the elite end and at the grass-roots level. We should also pay tribute to young people for their volunteering. Particularly in the past two or three years, their input, as part of the legacy of the Commonwealth games, has been extremely impressive.

Having spent a great part of my career working with young people, I never fail to be surprised by their achievements and, in particular, by their ingenuity, their ability to adapt and their enthusiasm for learning in all sorts of circumstances. This afternoon, we should celebrate the enhancement of such experiences. The year of young people has provided a platform for young people to have their views heard and acted on. As Bruce Crawford rightly said, it has allowed young people to become leaders not just of their generation, but in their communities.

We have managed to develop a better understanding between the generations—maybe even between Ross Greer and the rest of us who are a little bit older. I thank Ross for his input on behalf of young people. I do not agree with all his views, but he has been a good ambassador for young people in the Parliament.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the year has been the opportunity for young people to participate in decision making. By including young people in the choices that we make, we have encouraged them to consider not only their rights—Alex Cole-Hamilton was correct to raise some of those issues—but their responsibilities. Rights and responsibilities go together; they do not exist in a vacuum.

Like the minister, I very much welcome the role that young people played in the creation of the year's programme.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: In the social contract, one of people's most important responsibilities is the exercise of their democratic right to vote. Does Liz Smith advocate extending the franchise to 16-year-olds for Westminster elections? Will she ask the UK Government to do so?

Liz Smith: The member knows that I am a keen advocate, having been converted during the independence referendum in 2014. The decision is for Westminster, but I would be very pleased if Westminster decided to extend the franchise to

16-year-olds. Some of the young people who participated in the referendum were the most articulate and well-informed people in the campaign. I very much welcome their views on a range of subjects, but particularly in the political process.

The debate needs to be more than a celebration, because we are duty bound to highlight some of the considerable pressures under which young people find themselves today. Those might relate to social media, as Gillian Martin explained; to exam pressure or mental health issues, as Alex Cole-Hamilton talked about; or to gang culture or bullying and prejudice. I have some sympathy for the first part of Alex Cole-Hamilton's amendment—although we will not support it—and would like to discuss at greater length, perhaps outside the chamber, some of the other aspects to which he referred.

At the beginning of the year of young people, my colleague Michelle Ballantyne highlighted two specific cases of young people being prepared to stand up and be counted in very difficult circumstances. She spoke about Samena Dean, a young worker with a Scottish grass-roots organisation that is against the criminalising of communities. Speaking to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee last year, Samena highlighted the growing level of Islamophobia that Muslim children face in Scottish schools. That was a bold move for her to make.

Michelle Ballantyne also talked about some of the work that has been undertaken by Stonewall, again, in difficult circumstances. I pay tribute to that organisation for the way in which it has changed some of our attitudes towards the LGBT community.

The third programme that I will focus on is the most important. As far as I am concerned, the no knives, better lives programme has been one of the most powerful initiatives that the Scottish Government has undertaken. It is particularly important in the context of the appalling knife crime in recent weeks. The very impressive performance by sixth formers that I saw in Perth had a very poignant message. We owe it to ourselves and—most important—our young people to take exactly what they said on board. It could not have come at a better time.

One of the things that has stayed long in my mind is the point about everyone having a story to tell, particularly young people. They have their whole life ahead of them and want to impress their stories on us. If there is one legacy of the year of young people, it is those stories, and our need to listen to them.

16:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I thank members for their contributions this afternoon, and I have to say that I particularly enjoyed that speech by Liz Smith. Clearly there is a lot of support across the chamber for Scotland's year of young people. I am proud of what has been achieved in the past year, and I am proud that the Scottish Government championed the year with, as Jenny Gilruth pointed out, every ministerial portfolio aligning activity in some form. The whole Cabinet was just as enthusiastic about the year as the Minister for Children and Young People and I were, and it highlighted to me the country's sheer commitment to the young people of Scotland and this Government's determination to ensure that Scotland is the very best place to grow up in.

I am proudest of our young people and what they have taught us. In what was a very thoughtful speech, Johann Lamont touched on that point and on the ways in which they challenge traditional thinking. Gillian Martin talked in her excellent speech about the films that her young constituents produced and which are now shown as part of teacher training. The films "Cyber Attraction" and "Overexposure", which were chosen by the young ambassadors for PSE, have now gone international, and I say to Ms Martin that I like the idea of having a regular film competition.

The year of young people was a new platform for putting the spotlight on the country's young people, turning up the volume on their voices and making sure that we listened to and acted on their ideas, experiences and opinions. We must not lose that momentum and that new-found relationship; instead, we must continue to show our young people that we believe in them and value the contribution that they make now and will continue to make in the future. They are catalysts for change. As Ross Greer said, we need to address the fundamental issue of climate change; indeed, young people will be integral to the Scottish Government's arctic day later this month, which is part of my portfolio and is about what we are contributing in policy terms to address this challenge.

As has been said, young people set the agenda for the year. I was at some of the co-design workshop sessions back in 2015, and I heard young people tell us what was important to them and what they wanted the year to focus on. The key point was that what was actually important to them was not what we thought it would be, and the themes of the year have been the catalyst for driving a shift in how our young people are viewed.

Just to recap, young people wanted to ensure that their peers had access to the arts and could shape the future of culture in Scotland, and I

welcome the remarks that were made earlier on that point.

Rachael Hamilton: I note that in the first quarter of 2017-18 there were 62 modern apprenticeships in the culture and creative sector, whereas in the first quarter of this year there were only nine. What more can the Scottish Government do to encourage more modern apprenticeships in the sector?

Fiona Hyslop: There are plenty of apprenticeships in the sector; in fact, the creative industries skills plan contains many of them. The same can be said of many organisations in my portfolio; for example, there are very strong heritage apprenticeships being offered by Historic Environment Scotland that have a focus on events as well as apprenticeships in the creative industries. Plenty of progress is being made in that area. Moreover, Claire Baker mentioned the contribution that young people can make to certain cultural activities and policy development.

Young people also wanted to ensure that their peers could shape national education policy by becoming leaders of their own learning, support inclusive economic growth by becoming entrepreneurs or setting up their own enterprises, participate in sport and physical activity, influence mental health services, and have a greater say in decisions that affect their lives at a national and local level. They also wanted young people with protected characteristics to have their voice listened to and more of the kind of intergenerational dialogue that Alison Harris mentioned to be encouraged.

I will focus on some of those, particularly the stand-out moments, as well as the long-term effects that the themed year will have in Scotland, which are critical. Young people were given new opportunities to have a greater say in how policies affect their lives and to play a part in helping to reshape areas that are of most importance to them. As Bruce Crawford highlighted in relation to his constituency, mental health was central to many discussions, which highlighted the depth of concerns that young people have on the issue. We listened, we took on board their views and we worked with them to turn their ideas into actions. Young people are now leading the way to reshape future mental health services that are available to them through the youth commission on mental health, in partnership with the Scottish Association for Mental Health and Young Scot—that is vital work.

We also had the biggest conversation that Scotland has ever had with young people on what mental health means to them, which was run by the mental health discrimination charity See Me Scotland. The charity has launched Feels FM, which harnesses the power of music to help

people across the country talk about how they feel. What young people are telling us through that mechanism is fundamentally important to our development of future policy.

There are long waiting lists, and they are unacceptable, but we are investing £250 million in the mental health strategy. We recognise that tackling stigma has created more demand. I say to Alex Cole-Hamilton that there are now double the number of CAMHS psychologists in Scotland than there were when the Liberal Democrats came to power. Creating and stimulating demand by removing stigma means that there will be a greater need for services, and we must come together to address that.

In my portfolio, the national youth arts advisory group will continue to inform and make decisions as it advises Creative Scotland. Young people's voices have also directly influenced education policy, improvement and decision making. Brian Whittle might be interested to know that we have introduced the Scottish learner panel, which will build on key strengths in our curriculum, through which we place a high value on the voice of learners in shaping the learning, life and work of their school.

We also listened to young people by welcoming them to the Scottish Cabinet. The most recent meeting of the annual youth cabinet took place last month, which included decisions on teachers, public transport, the UNCRC, bereavement and youth work, which Fulton MacGregor referred to in championing and promoting Coatbridge youth action. Officials are working on specific actions in those areas, information on which will be published soon.

Key partners for the year also opened up opportunities for young people in their organisations. VisitScotland did so with the creation of a future leaders group, to give a voice to younger staff who do not normally have an opportunity to influence organisational initiatives and decisions. That is just one of many commitments that we know of. Other organisations established youth boards during 2018, and many have decided to continue them simply because of the positive impact that young voices had during the year.

Maurice Corry spoke of the Police Scotland youth volunteers programme, and Rona Mackay talked about young carers. The point about intergenerational work that Johann Lamont and Alison Harris made is very important. There is a real strength in that work, which benefits both ends of the age spectrum. Colin Smyth, Emma Harper and Finlay Carson were right to compliment Dumfries and Galloway Council for its excellent contribution to the year. I hope that other councils can learn from that very important work.

When I asked young constituents from Winchburgh what the highlight of the year was, the Youth Beatz festival was mentioned as the best experience. More young people should be able to access and experience that.

As a result of the year of young people, there has been direct change in the way in which organisations involve young people in their work to ensure that their services are better suited to young people's needs. Collectively, we should commit to continue to listen to young people and take on board their views and ideas, and to continue to work with them to make it happen. Iain Gray was absolutely right to focus on the legacy of the year. In so many areas, we are not there yet, so we must commit to drive forward improvement.

The year of young people really made people sit up and listen and realise that Scotland's young people are the voice of today. They shape our society and we want and need their presence now, in the Scotland of the present. I thank each and every one of the many people who were involved in the year. Let us keep working in partnership with young people in Scotland and ensure that, here in their Parliament, we represent their views on the issues that matter most to them. Most importantly, let us continue to hear the loud, proud and strong voice of young people in Scotland. I commend the motion.

Business Motions

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-16290, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

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| Tuesday | 19 March 2019 |
| 2.00 pm | Time for Reflection |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Topical Questions (if selected) |
| <i>followed by</i> | Stage 3 Proceedings: Damages (Investment Returns and Periodical Payments) (Scotland) Bill |
| <i>followed by</i> | Committee Announcements |
| <i>followed by</i> | Business Motions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Wednesday 20 March 2019 | |
| 2.00 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 2.00 pm | Portfolio Questions: Culture, Tourism and External Affairs; Education and Skills |
| <i>followed by</i> | Scottish Labour Party Business |
| <i>followed by</i> | Business Motions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Thursday 21 March 2019 | |
| 11.40 am | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 11.40 am | General Questions |
| 12.00 pm | First Minister's Questions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| 2.30 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 2.30 pm | Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time |
| <i>followed by</i> | Portfolio Questions: Health and Sport |
| <i>followed by</i> | Scottish Government Debate: Land Reform in Scotland – Delivering for Now and the Future |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| Tuesday 26 March 2019 | |

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| 2.00 pm | Time for Reflection |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Topical Questions (if selected) |
| <i>followed by</i> | Stage 1 Debate: South of Scotland Enterprise Bill |
| <i>followed by</i> | Financial Resolution: South of Scotland Enterprise Bill |
| <i>followed by</i> | Committee Announcements |
| <i>followed by</i> | Business Motions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Wednesday 27 March 2019 | |
| 2.00 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 2.00 pm | Portfolio Questions: Communities and Local Government; Social Security and Older People |
| <i>followed by</i> | Scottish Government Business |
| <i>followed by</i> | Business Motions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| Thursday 28 March 2019 | |
| 11.40 am | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 11.40 am | General Questions |
| 12.00 pm | First Minister's Questions |
| <i>followed by</i> | Members' Business |
| 2.30 pm | Parliamentary Bureau Motions |
| 2.30 pm | Portfolio Questions: Finance Economy and Fair Work |
| <i>followed by</i> | Scottish Government Business |
| 5.00 pm | Decision Time |

(b) that, in relation to any debate on a business motion setting out a business programme taken on Wednesday 20 March 2019, the second sentence of rule 8.11.3 is suspended and replaced with “Any Member may speak on the motion at the discretion of the Presiding Officer”;

(c) that, in relation to First Minister's Questions on Thursday 21 March 2019, in rule 13.6.2, insert at end “and may provide an opportunity for Party Leaders or their representatives to question the First Minister”; and

(d) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 18 March 2019, in rule 13.7.3, after the word “except” the words “to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or” are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item is consideration of business motion S5M-16291, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the stage 2 timetable for a bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 10 May 2019.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-16292, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Carer's Allowance Up-rating (Scotland) Order 2019 [draft] be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

The Presiding Officer: Mark Griffin wants to speak against the motion.

17:00

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): Two weeks ago, I called on the Scottish Government to use the retail prices index to uprate carers allowance and supplement, in order to help unpaid carers. I did so because Parliament still has some way to go to show our appreciation for carers, who do tremendous work caring for loved ones. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Mark Griffin: Labour called for the RPI to be used, to shift away from George Osborne's decision to use the consumer prices index, and to support carers with an extra £33 next year. We did so to set the precedent that new powers would be used progressively to invest in the people of Scotland, and to afford carers the dignity and respect that they deserve.

We did so with the backing of national carer organisations including the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Marie Curie, as well as Energy Action Scotland and the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Those organisations recognise that the switch to the CPI has cost people billions of pounds; they recognise that carers are being short-changed by a Government that is using the cheapest possible uprating method. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People recognises that, too.

In the chamber debate on the carers allowance supplement, I said that the RPI is no panacea, and I said that a Government's choice of uprating mechanism is underpinned by how generous it hopes to be. However, the Scottish National Party Government used that debate to show its dogmatic support for the Tory's switch to the CPI, which is a cut that multiplies every year. The cabinet secretary demanded that we keep

decisions on uprating separate from decisions on benefits levels, but she knows full well that the CPI is just one Tory uprating policy, among others, that will slash the incomes of the most vulnerable people in Scotland by £1.9 billion.

In the Social Security Committee's meeting the following day, the cabinet secretary bemoaned the fact that the RPI is "erratic", but failed to point out that in 2009 the Labour Government responded to a negative RPI with a 1.5 per cent uplift, and that Scotland could take that approach, if it were needed.

The cabinet secretary also claimed that the CPI accurately tracks the cost of living, but failed to acknowledge the poverty premium and heightened cost of living that carers face. Rather than set a path to more generous uprating for carers, the cabinet secretary said in the committee that the CPI is "a choice", agency arrangements—and the multimillion pound bill in that regard—are "a choice", and the need for some carers to consider cutting their working hours is "a choice".

Later that afternoon, the cabinet secretary said in the chamber that carers will not see a single change to their allowance until after the transition—after 2024, which will be almost a decade after the supplement was announced by the First Minister. That is not a choice that Labour will accept for Scotland's carers—nor will we accept the use of the Tories' CPI system.

I secured the uprating of carers allowance and the supplement in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. I recognise how vital certainty is, but we will not accept an inferior Tory increase. I ask the cabinet secretary to withdraw the order and rethink.

17:04

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I am disappointed that the Labour Party wants to vote against an increase in the financial support for carers today. The draft Carer's Allowance Uprating (Scotland) Order 2019, on which we will vote at decision time, will increase the weekly rate of carers allowance by 2.4 per cent.

Through the carers allowance supplement, the Scottish Government brought the financial support for carers to the level of the jobseekers allowance. Because we uprate the supplement and carers allowance, the Parliament's agreeing to the order will mean that, for the first time, carers in Scotland will get a higher level of support than that which is provided by jobseekers allowance. That means that carers in Scotland will receive £452.40 a year more than their counterparts outwith Scotland. That is what the Labour Party will be voting against today.

We debated the uprating of carers allowance and the carers allowance supplement in the chamber on 27 February and at the Social Security Committee the following morning. On both occasions, there was extensive debate about the uprating measure that was to be applied and, on both occasions, there was support for the Government's proposal to use the consumer prices index. The CPI—not, as Labour claims, the retail prices index—is widely regarded as the most effective measure to ensure that the benefits retain their value.

I will take the opportunity to correct Labour's gross misrepresentation in debate in this chamber of the report by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, which it said supports the use of the RPI. In fact, the report highlights that the RPI, in its current form, is a flawed measure of inflation that requires improvements before it would be in any way viable for uprating purposes, and it recommends that the UK Government use the CPI for uprating purposes

"in all areas where it is not bound by contract to use RPI".

We do not have time to retread in full the facts surrounding the instability of the RPI or, indeed, the Labour Party's absolute invisibility during the budget discussions on carers issues in general. However, this Government, alongside every member of the Scottish Parliament, welcomes the immense contribution that carers make to society by caring for family, friends and neighbours. That is why I hope that everyone in the chamber will show their support for carers by voting for the order and ensuring that the carers allowance is uprated. If Labour members want to let carers down and vote against an increase in the financial support that we provide to carers, that will be on their conscience, and it will be for them to answer for.

The Presiding Officer: The vote on the matter will be taken at decision time.

The next item of business is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S5M-16293 to S5M-16297, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments, and motion S5M-16298, on substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Fishery Products (Official Controls Charges) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Jurisdiction and Judgments (Family, Civil Partnership and Marriage (Same

Sex Couples)) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment etc) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Procurement etc (Scotland) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Procurement etc. (Scotland) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Amendment Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that Bill Kidd be appointed to replace George Adam as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Justice Committee.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Decision Time

17:07

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-16267.1, in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S5M-16267, in the name of Maree Todd, on the year of young people 2018: a celebration, a chance and a change, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 30, Against 83, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-16267, in the name of Maree Todd, on the year of young people 2018, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland's Year of Young People 2018 inspired the whole country to look at its young people in an open and positive way, celebrate their achievements, value their contribution and give them a platform to have their voices heard and acted upon; welcomes the ambition that the year has set in continuing to engage young people in matters that affect their lives, ensuring that they are a core part of decision making, policy development and democracy in Scotland, and agrees that the Parliament and the Scottish Government will continue to ensure that young people are seen, heard and viewed as valuable members and key contributors to Scotland's society, culture and economy.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-16292, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, 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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 93, Against 20, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Carer's Allowance Up-rating (Scotland) Order 2019 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the remaining Parliamentary Bureau motions, if no member objects. The question is, that motions S5M-16293 to S5M-16298, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Fishery Products (Official Controls Charges) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Jurisdiction and Judgments (Family, Civil Partnership and Marriage (Same Sex Couples)) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Procurement etc. (Scotland) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Procurement etc. (Scotland) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Amendment Regulations 2019 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that Bill Kidd be appointed to replace George Adam as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Justice Committee.

Sir Hugh Munro

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-15678, in the name of Liz Smith, on the centenary of the death of Sir Hugh Munro. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises that March 2019 marks the centenary of the death of Sir Hugh Munro; acknowledges that he was a founder member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, eventually becoming the club's president; understands that Sir Hugh was the first person to publish a list of all of the mountains in Scotland with a height exceeding 3,000 feet in the club's journal in 1891, which are now known as Munros; notes that it remains a popular hobby among hillwalkers to aim to climb every Munro in Scotland, and recognises that over 6,000 individuals have achieved this feat to date.

17:11

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It gives me great pleasure to present this motion to Parliament this evening. I extend a warm welcome to the members of the Munro Society who are in the gallery, and congratulate them on the outstanding archive exhibition that they have mounted in the AK Bell library in Perth, which I enjoyed visiting on Friday and which accompanies the exhibition in Kirriemuir about Sir Hugh Munro's life. I also thank the representatives of other groups on whom we depend for the preservation of our magnificent mountain scenery across Scotland, and I welcome to the gallery a special climber whose name, fittingly, is Hugh William Munro, and who is hoping to compleat in a few months' time. I wish him well in that.

I was 14 when I was first told about Sir Hugh. I am not sure that I paid terribly much attention to him or to his mountains at the time, although I still have exceptionally vivid memories of walking the Lairig Ghru and seeing the great towering cliffs of Ben Macdui and Braeriach above it, which, perhaps subliminally, inspired me. I will say more about that inspiration in a minute.

Sir Hugh was born in London in 1856. He was schooled in Crieff, Winchester and Cambridge, but it was his early life around the family estate near Kirriemuir, with its scenic backdrop of the Angus glens, and then, specifically, a trip to Stuttgart to learn German, which he combined with a trip through the Alps, that sparked his lifelong love of mountains.

Sir Hugh spent some time in South Africa, working as private secretary to the governor of Natal, before returning to Angus to manage the family estate. Later in life, he worked as a king's

messenger, travelling to Asia, North America and Africa.

What members might not know is that Sir Hugh had a keen interest in politics, and he stood in 1885 as the Conservative and Unionist candidate in the Kirkcaldy Burghs constituency. It has to be said that he did not do so with terribly much success, as he polled precisely three votes for every Munro that he was later to identify.

It was in 1891, in the sixth issue of the journal of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, of which he was a founder member, that Munro published his original list of all the peaks in Scotland with a height of more than 3,000 feet. That list—the outcome of much painstaking research—was drawn up from Ordnance Survey maps of the time as well as from Sir Hugh's vast knowledge, gained from his trips to the hills. At the time, it contained 283 mountains, something that came as more than a little surprise to many within the Scottish mountaineering community who believed that there were only around 30 Scottish tops over 3,000 feet, albeit that the definition of a separate mountain is much clearer today than it was in his time.

Of course, the list has undergone several revisions since—infuriatingly so for some of the baggers among us who found out that an additional Munro had appeared or that one that we had already climbed had disappeared. As things stand, there are 282.

Sadly, Sir Hugh never quite managed to complete his own list—three summits eluded him. Those were the Inaccessible Pinnacle on Skye—I do not blame him for that, given my own experience on that iconic rock—Carn an Fhidhleir, which is a long trail out into the wilds from Linn of Dee, Glen Feshie or Glen Tilt, and Carn Cloich-mhuilinn in upper Deeside, which, at the time, he believed to be a separate Munro from Beinn Bhrotain.

As well as celebrating his life, we should celebrate Sir Hugh's legacy this week. We should celebrate his contribution not only to our mountains, but to Scotland in general, given the enormous popularity of Munro bagging both within the United Kingdom and abroad. He can have had little idea of the influence that he would exert on later generations of walkers and climbers. He would never have expected that his name would become synonymous with those mountains and he could not have foreseen the vast numbers of climbers who, more than a century later, would be using his tables as the basis for their leisure activities. He certainly could not have predicted all the books that have been written, the tourist trails that have been set up and the mythology that now surrounds our Munros.

The first recorded compleatist is believed to have been the Rev AE Robertson, who, in 1901, became the first person to climb all the Munros. However, a quite remarkable set of records now exists. Steven Fallon, from Edinburgh, holds the record for having completed 15 rounds of all 282 Munros, and Hazel Strachan from Bathgate holds the female record, with 10 rounds. The record for the fastest round of the Munros is held by Stephen Pyke of Staffordshire, who—without using any motorised transport—completed the round in precisely 39 days and nine hours.

I experienced my own conversion to outdoor education in my early teaching years and I learned almost all that I know about mountain craft from Ian Murray, who was a senior colleague and also a Munroist. It was during those early teaching days that I took part in numerous school projects at Loch Ossian, for which I have an enduring affection. Along with groups of pupils and colleagues, I made regular ascents of the 12 accessible Munros around Ossian, but it was not until the later stages of school projects that the Munro bug really captured me. I completed my round in 2012.

Over the years, that bug has taken me to some of the most wonderful places in Scotland, where I have met extraordinary people and tested my abilities—both athletic and mental—against all the challenges that the elements could throw at me. I have also had the privilege of good companionship, including that of two of my colleagues, Murdo Fraser and Miles Briggs, who will, I hope, also be compleatists—in the not too distant future, if their map reading gets better. *[Laughter.]*

I will finish my tribute to Sir Hugh by offering some thoughts on three important messages that we must take forward. First, we must do all that we can to pass on his great legacy to the young people of today—a generation for whom it is so tempting and too easy to stay indoors and ignore the great beauty of Scotland. We owe them our knowledge and wisdom when it comes to getting the best out of the great outdoors. Secondly, climbing Munros brings great enjoyment, but it also brings great responsibility—for ourselves, as we embark on challenging adventures in the wilds of Scotland, in weather conditions that can test our judgment at any moment, and for other people, as we guard their safety on the hills. The third message is to respect and assist all those who preserve and enhance Sir Hugh's great legacy in caring for the environment: those who build and repair the paths, those who look after the mountain bothies and moors, those who rescue people who get into difficulty, and all those who support them. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude because without them, we could not enjoy Munros in the way that we do.

I will finish with some words from the great climber Edward Whymper, who, with his ascent of the Matterhorn, inspired Munro. He said:

“Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime.”

Those are wise words, as we remember the legacy of Sir Hugh Munro. *[Applause.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will say to the gentlemen in the public gallery that we do not permit applause, much as though you wish to give it.

I call Emma Harper, to be followed by Murdo Fraser. I am looking forward to Mr Fraser's tales of going up Munros.

17:19

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I thank Liz Smith for securing the debate and I join her and the rest of the country in celebrating the life and legacy of Sir Hugh Munro, who was the first person to compile a definitive list of Scotland's mountains that are 3,000 feet or higher. As Liz Smith expressed wonderfully in her speech, Sir Hugh himself was unable to complete them all as he sadly passed away before bagging the final three on his list. However, his legacy lives on, encouraging thousands of people each year to hike Scotland's highest mountains, with the goal of one day bagging them all.

The legacy of Sir Hugh Munro is not just to encourage people to hike Scotland's Munros; it is to encourage them to enjoy all types of hills and mountains in Scotland. Although my South Scotland region is not home to a single Munro—not a single yin—we have plenty of Corbetts and Donalds to make up for it. My staff member Ross Cunningham assures me that hiking Munros and Donalds with his dug, Dex, is so enjoyable and rewarding.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club describes a Donald as a mountain in the Scottish lowlands that, at its highest, is 2,000 feet or higher. There are 89 Donalds, most of which are in Dumfries and Galloway, and the greatest of them all is the Merrick, which is the highest mountain in the south of Scotland. There are of course other beautiful mountains and hills in the south-west, such as White Coomb near Moffat, the lower slopes of which are home to the beautiful Loch Skeen and Grey Mare's Tail, which is one of the finest waterfalls in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

The views from the summit of the Merrick are breathtaking; it offers panoramic views across the Galloway forest and hills and, on a clear day, as far afield as the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland.

I have been passionate about promoting the south-west and bringing more tourists to the region, because we have so much to offer visitors, particularly given the region's role in the life of one of Scotland's great icons, Robert the Bruce. I encourage any hillwalkers planning to hike the Merrick to take in Bruce's stone at the foot of the mountain. It is a massive granite boulder with inscriptions commemorating Bruce's first victory in 1307 during the Scottish wars of independence.

Someone who has walked the summit of the Merrick on many occasions is a well-known friend of Galloway, Steve Norris. He is an author and journalist from Galloway and a keen hillwalker. Perhaps he is our south-west equivalent to Sir Hugh Munro. Born and bred in Wigtownshire, he has been climbing the Galloway hills since he was a wee boy. He wrote a series of articles on exploring the mountains in the south-west called "To the High Country". The series prompted many requests from readers for him to write books about his adventures in the hills, and he has now begun those books. He describes the Galloway hills as a magical kingdom. The first titles in the "Exploring the Galloway Hills" series, "The Cairnsmore of Fleet range" and "The Minnigaff Range" have been published and three more are in the pipeline.

It is good that Steve is inspiring people to explore and bag bonnie Galloway's upland hills and, further afield, to bag the Munros. I follow his hikes and photos with his dog, Ruaridh, on his Galloway Hills books Facebook page.

I want to say thank you to Scotland's mountain rescue teams. I am aware that many have been called out recently and been kept very busy. In the south-west we have the Galloway Mountain Rescue Team, which is a charity in Newton Stewart that provides rescue services in Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire. It was formed in 1975 and has responded to more than 420 incidents, including one as recently as last weekend. Like other mountain rescue teams, Galloway MRT is a charity that is run by volunteers who give up their own time when called on, which can put their life in danger, to rescue those who are injured or in distress on our mountains and hills. I encourage everyone to visit its website to learn more about its work and read about how to keep safe in the hills, whether they are bagging the Galloway hills or the Munros.

On this centenary of the death of Sir Hugh Munro, whether people are climbing the Munros named after him or the Donalds down in bonnie Galloway, our Scotland is the most beautiful country to explore.

17:24

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I congratulate my colleague Liz Smith on securing the debate and on her motion, which I was very pleased to support.

There cannot be many individuals who have a whole sport or activity named after them, but Sir Hugh Munro falls into that category. The pastime of Munro bagging, which now attracts many thousands of people to Scotland and many thousands of Scots into the hills every weekend and at holiday time, is a direct result of his efforts in compiling a list of Scottish peaks over 3,000 feet.

As Liz Smith set out earlier in the debate, Sir Hugh was a native of Angus and grew up on his family's estate at Lindertis near Kirriemuir. A few years ago, I had the privilege of attending the unveiling of a memorial stone to him in the centre of the town, where he is remembered as one of Kirriemuir's greatest sons. I have not yet had the opportunity of visiting the Munro Society's exhibition at the A K Bell library in Perth, but it is very much on my list of things to do in the coming days.

Sir Hugh never managed to complete the round of Munros himself, being driven off Skye by bad weather on more than one occasion, so he never made it to the top of the Inaccessible Pinnacle. In that respect, at least, I have one up on him, having completed all the peaks on the Cuillin ridge a few years ago. It was an unforgettable experience, and one far away from the perceptions that many have of Scottish hill walking just being about trudging over boggy moors that are infested by vicious midges—although a fair bit of the experience is about that, too.

Unlike Liz Smith, I have not yet completed the round of Munros. On my last count I was on 193, so I now have fewer than a hundred to go. I hope that I will get there one day. Last summer, I was able to take my son, who was then aged 10, up his very first Munro: Ben Hope, in the north of Scotland. I am not sure that that experience inspired him to try to climb many others—when he got to the top, he asked me exactly what the point of the exercise was—but I hope that, one day, he will be bitten by the bug, as many other climbers have been.

Munro's table sets out a list of peaks to climb, in a number that involves substantial effort, and which most people will complete over an extended period of time—perhaps a lifetime. However, for those who do so, there is not just a sense of great achievement; they will have experienced Scotland in comprehensive fashion, seeing all the different parts of the country, from the Angus glens and the Cairngorms in the east to the wild north-west, and

they will no doubt experienced the extremes of weather and, on occasion, pushed themselves beyond the limits of what they thought they could accomplish. I know that some climbers can be rather snooty about Munro bagging, but it is a popular and challenging way to experience Scottish hills, and many who started climbing the Munros have gone on to greater exploits elsewhere.

We should not forget the tremendous contribution that the sport of climbing Munros makes to the Scottish tourism economy. There are now thousands of people on the Munro trail, as is evident from the well-trodden paths that lead to the tops of even the most remote peaks. The whole industry of providing hotel beds, self-catering, meals, drinks and outdoor shops has been built around the existence of Munro's table. Finally, climbing Munros is about fresh air and exercise. It is a relatively inexpensive hobby that helps people to get fit—which we all need to do more of.

I am very pleased to support the motion, and I encourage those who have not had the experience of climbing Munros to get out there and do it. I am sure that we will all be celebrating Sir Hugh Munro's legacy for many years to come.

17:27

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I thank Liz Smith and congratulate her on having lodged the motion and securing this very enjoyable debate. I also congratulate her on being a Munroist. I take my hat off to her and to Murdo Fraser, for his impressive total of 193 Munros. I have to say that mine is slightly less than 50, but there is no less joy in that. I do not know whether I will ever complete them all, but it is certainly one of the most enjoyable pastimes that I have continued to experience since I was a young teenager.

It is a particular honour to speak in the debate, because I am a member for North East Scotland and represent Kirriemuir—Sir Hugh Munro's birthplace. I hope to visit the exhibition in Perth before it closes later this year.

I was interested to hear Liz Smith mention Steve Fallon, whose Twitter feed gives me a lot of encouragement on dark mornings when I am on my way to Parliament, knowing that I will not make it out again during daylight. He tweets pictures of the beautiful light and gorgeous scenery across our country. I wish that he would do so even more regularly, because the pictures gladden my heart every time I see them.

I have spoken previously about the importance of access to the outdoors, and a few weeks ago both Liz Smith and I spoke in a debate on the

importance of outdoor education. I feel particularly passionately about that, because there are so many children in Scotland today who are brought up in cities and have never even been to a beach, let alone up a mountain. The organisations across Scotland that are doing work to encourage access to the outdoors deserve to be marked today, and deserve our thanks and praise.

I want to mention in particular the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. I was not a participant in the organisation's award because it was not available when I was at school, but the organisation is now making a concerted effort to go into communities that perhaps do not have as much access to the outdoors or the resources to fund and facilitate that. I express our thanks to it, and I hope that the whole Parliament will encourage it as it proceeds with that project.

I echo Emma Harper's thanks to our mountain rescue teams. We saw just last week how important their service is. I also echo Liz Smith's thanks to all the organisations across Scotland that maintain pathways and the infrastructure that we need.

I note Murdo Fraser's point about the impact on the economy. I do not quite have the words to articulate this, but I will say that there are people who are a bit snooty about the Munro-bagging project. However, Murdo Fraser was right to point out that Hugh Munro really made it a thing, and when something becomes a goal for people to achieve, it becomes an accessible challenge for them. I do not think there is anything wrong with that, if it is about encouraging people into the outdoors.

I finish by drawing Parliament's attention to a project in memory of Sir Hugh Munro that will be launched next week, I believe, by the University of Dundee. It is called the Munro table project. It will ask members of the public, including experienced mountaineers and people who have never climbed a mountain before, to sign up to climb one Munro by the end of the year and to remove a small bag of rubbish as they walk. It sounds like a good environmental project, and I hope that people who are listening to the debate will explore it further.

17:32

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): I thank Liz Smith for bringing the debate to the chamber. She is probably the first Munro completist MSP. I do not know whether there have been any before her.

This is my second members' business debate in two days on two topics that I am interested in—yesterday's debate was on who owns the Munros, and today's is on the Munros themselves.

My diary indicated that I was meant to be at an Institute and Faculty of Actuaries event this evening, but I had a meeting earlier with Murdo Fraser and he has offered me a place in his taxi. I ask him not to run away, so that we can both get to it on time.

When I was a new member of the Parliament, I was not sure who among our number would share an obsession with Munros. If nothing else, coming to the debate has revealed some of them. I am not a Munro bagger as such, although I have probably climbed more than 200 of them. As a teenager, I was a member of the Ochils Mountaineering Club, and members there were starting to complete the Munros. I climbed regularly with someone who was a 99th completer. At the University of Aberdeen, however, I decided to stop counting, because that was the cool thing to do. I was in the Lairig club, which is the university's mountaineering club. I was president of it, in fact. There was another club called the exploration society, and we regarded its members as pond-life. They just went and walked, and they also went up Munros. It was cool, therefore, to distinguish oneself by not being a Munro bagger. If you were a Munro bagger, you were meant to be in the exploration society.

Nevertheless, I continued to enjoy, in winter and summer, wandering up hills both by less-strenuous routes and by some very strenuous routes, and I was content to keep climbing them. By that time, it had become too late to achieve a goal that I would quite like to have set myself. I think it was in Bob Scott's bothy in the Cairngorms that I committed myself to being the first person not to complete the Munros. Of course, all bar 6,000 people have achieved that including, I imagine, many members in the chamber—in fact, everyone bar Liz Smith. My goal was to be the first to climb them but to stop 10 feet short of the summit. That was a rather bizarre goal, but I cannot achieve it now.

In recent years, my family members have been quite enthusiastic. I got my "Munro's Tables" out, in which I saw all the pencilled ticks and dates, which petered out in the 1980s. As members have said, the outdoors have become much more popular over the past 20 years, which is, of course, extremely welcome. I was climbing Ben Cleuch—it is not a Munro, but it is a nice hill—a few weeks ago, and I was surprised and delighted to see so many young women out walking on the hills. When I started going to the hills—Liz Smith probably shares this experience—it was very much a male pursuit. Indeed, too many men went out of their way to discourage women and young people.

I find the modern obsession about Munros baffling, but also quite fascinating. I was delighted

to read a recent blog on the "FionaOutdoors" website by Munro bagger Anne Butler, which was based on an article that she wrote for *The Munro Society Journal* in 2016—I did not even know that there was a Munro Society, so I apologise for my ignorance. In September 2018, Anne became the 53rd full-house finisher, a full house being the completion of not only the Munros but the Munro tops, the Corbetts, the Grahams, the Donalds and the Furths—whatever they are.

Anne is now planning to complete another full house as well as her sixth and seventh round of the Munros themselves. Her article was entitled "There are no rules", and in it she asks some thorny questions about Munros that have to be reclassified and whether we need to go back up a hill that has been elevated to Munro status. She also drew our attention to the first person to have completed the Munros without a beard, who was a "J. Dow" in 1933.

She has a very interesting section called "How do you count yours?" about

"an age old problem ... that many would welcome a ruling on ... the on-going debate between Golfers and Bankers. The Purists, or 'golfers' as they are known, believe that you don't start a second or subsequent round until you have finished the last ... Then there are the 'bankers' who apply the cumulative mode of counting and simply start the next round on whatever total of repeats ascents that have already been achieved."

We can see how that gentle obsession can occupy people in many hours of entertaining conversation, which is perfectly delightful.

Scotland is blessed to have had Hugh Munro and his famous tables, which have set generations of folk a very demanding target for what otherwise might be a less demanding pastime. A good friend of mine from university was Andy Nisbet, who tragically died a few weeks ago. He is a good example of such people; he had completed his Munros by the time he was 19 and through his wide experience of the hills developed the interest, skill and the talent to go on to become, arguably, Scotland's most prolific and successful winter climber, with more than 1,000 new routes across the country.

May folk from Scotland, the UK and across the world continue to enjoy all that our hills have to offer. Much of that will be found on Munros, although a good deal will not be.

17:37

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): I am delighted to be here and to have the opportunity to close the debate tonight. It has been one of the best-natured debates that I have sat in on in the past while. I thank Liz Smith for her motion and for allowing us

the opportunity to celebrate the life of Sir Hugh Munro, and all that he achieved and his lasting legacy in Scotland.

I am excited to do that particularly because of the Angus connection. I do not quite represent Kirriemuir, which is in Angus South and is home to quite a few famous sons. Between Hugh Munro, Bon Scott and J M Barrie, Angus is quite the home for talent.

I welcome the visitors in the public gallery, although I was really disappointed to hear about Willie Munro not quite completing the challenge yet; I look forward to hearing when he has completed it.

I thank Liz Smith for all the background and history that she provided. I did not realise that Sir Hugh Munro had been a Conservative candidate and had stood for election. There are jokes in there about Tories and elections, but I will not go there tonight; the debate has been relatively good natured, so I will leave that well alone.

I really looked forward to this debate, because I am passionate about our Munros, our hills and the wider landscape. My constituency of Angus North and Mearns is home to Scotland's most easterly Munro, Mount Keen, which I go to often; if it is visited from the Glen Esk side, people pass the Queen's well, which is a crown-shaped structure that was built in granite to commemorate the site where Queen Victoria passed by on an outing from Balmoral.

I like to think that I have ambitions to be a Munro bagger, although it seems quite competitive, given the numbers of Munros that people have told us tonight that they have scaled: Murdo Fraser has done 193, Liz Smith has completed them all, and Jenny Marra has done around 50. Andy Wightman could have done 200 or he could have done them all, but he is too cool to count, so who really knows. *[Laughter.]* They make my paltry eight sound a bit pathetic, but I have done some of them a lot more than once.

Some of the most special and memorable moments of my life have been the days when I have been up climbing the hills, especially when on my own, although I am something of a spring-time walker and only really do it in the good weather. That is when you can see the whole of Scotland laid out before you. It really makes your heart swell when you see what a fantastic and incredible landscape you live in. One of the most memorable moments of my life was when I was climbing Mayar and Driesh and the snow came down. I lost my car key at the top and only discovered that at the bottom—sorry, it was my mum's car key, because I had borrowed her car. I had to go back up with a metal detector two days later, only to get a phone call at the top from the

ranger based at the bottom to tell me that someone had sat down next to the car key that day and brought it back down. That was a bit of good luck. That is enough about my personal attachment.

It is important that we take a moment to reflect on how far we have come in Scotland since devolution. One of the Parliament's early successes was the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Our two national parks, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms are thriving areas that showcase the best of natural Scotland. The Cairngorms also has some of the highest Munros in Scotland, if one takes a walk up through Ballochbuie forest to Lochnagar, or up to the west side of the Lairig Ghru to Cairn Toul. By the side of Loch Lomond is the most southerly and one of the most often-climbed Munros, Ben Lomond, which now commemorates at the Ben Lomond national memorial landscape those who died in the first world war. It is a poignant reflection that Sir Hugh Munro himself lived just long enough to see the end of that war. There is no doubt that he would have seen the Ben Lomond national memorial landscape as a fitting tribute to the death and suffering of so many at that time, having served with the Red Cross himself.

Then came the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. I have no reservations in saying that all our Munro baggers must be grateful for that ground-breaking legislation, which brought Scotland's access rights into the 21st century. The access rights from which our climbers and walkers now benefit are world leading in terms of their extent, scope and clarity. The Scottish outdoor access code leaves a legacy of inclusion of which—I like to think—Hugh Munro would be justly proud, and our core paths plans provide access closer to where people live.

Later, the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 secured our best landscapes as the suite of national scenic areas. They are secured special protection within the planning system to ensure that they will always remain attractive to our global visitor markets.

Even those who do not go on to become full-blown mountaineers can get huge physical and mental health benefits from getting outdoors and challenging themselves, including by walking our Munros. As Emma Harper highlighted, it is about not just the Munros but getting out and about in general and enjoying our scenery across Scotland, including the Corbetts and the Donalds.

The Scottish Government has a vision of a Scotland where more people are more active, more often. Physical activity is about getting people moving. Walking in Scotland's natural environment is free, and we know that being active outdoors is good for both physical and mental

health. Emma Harper mentioned Ross Cunningham in her office, who has talked about the subject recently and has done pieces about it with the BBC.

In 2017, the Scottish household survey showed that recreational walking has consistently been the most common type of physical activity in which adults participate. Participation has risen from 57 per cent in 2011 to 70 per cent in 2017. We are working with partners to promote green exercise, support local green health partnerships, and maximise investment in green infrastructure.

Playing, learning and having fun outdoors helps to improve wellbeing and resilience, is associated with a wide range of health benefits in children, and allows children to use the natural world to help to develop curiosity and science skills. A growing body of research shows a positive impact on educational attainment. The right to play outdoors everyday has been enshrined in the Scottish Government's national health and social care standards and we are a signatory to Scotland's outdoor play and learning coalition position statement.

Liz Smith was absolutely right, towards the end of her speech, when she talked about the three great lessons that we should heed, the first of which is to pass on Sir Hugh Munro's legacy to our young people and encourage that spirit of adventure. Murdo Fraser should not worry that his son has not picked up the Munro bug yet. I say that as somebody who feigned illness to get out of their bronze Duke of Edinburgh award. The bug hit me only later in life, and I am very much addicted to it now.

That takes me on to the vital point that Jenny Marra made about the work of the Duke of Edinburgh award and what it is trying to do with our young people; she also talked about a current environmental project, which is happening in Dundee. We should probably set such a challenge for people across the chamber. I hope that climbing one Munro by the end of the year should not be too much for anybody to manage.

We heard about the massive impact on tourism, and 50 per cent of respondents to VisitScotland's visitor surveys cite Scotland's scenery and landscape as their top reason for visiting. It is the number 1 reason for visiting Scotland for people in all markets, whether they are resident in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK, or are European or long-haul visitors.

Nature-based tourism, which includes activities that are based on Scotland's landscapes and wildlife, makes a substantial contribution to the tourism sector, with tourist spending on nature-based activities being worth nearly 40 per cent of all tourism spending. Its value to Scotland's

economy is £1.4 billion per year and it supports 39,000 jobs.

Scotland's natural environment is a huge asset and our Munros are a key part of that, so I thank Liz Smith for bringing the debate to the chamber this evening to give us the chance to celebrate and remember Sir Hugh Munro. Unknowingly, he created one of the great challenges to hillwalkers in Scotland, the UK and around the world. I encourage people within and outwith the chamber to get outside, to explore and to enjoy Sir Hugh Munro's fantastic legacy to Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes a very entertaining debate. I close this meeting of the Parliament.

Meeting closed at 17:46.

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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