



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 25 April 2019

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 25 April 2019

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

General Question Time

Ferries Resilience Fund

1. **Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how its resilience fund to reduce the risk of ferries breaking down has been spent. (S5O-03144)

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): Since the announcement of its introduction in August 2018, the resilience fund has been used in 23 individual resilience projects across the fleet of vessels that are deployed to provide the Clyde and Hebrides services. Based on information presented to us, that investment should result in a significant improvement to fleet resilience this year. The projects range from upgrades to the full propulsion and bow thruster controls on four vessels to a replacement water mist firefighting pump on another. Further upgrades are planned to reduce the risk of technical failures impacting on service reliability.

Dr Allan: As the minister will be aware, last week, ferry services to the Isle of Barra suffered serious disruption due to technical problems that affected the MV Isle of Lewis, leaving the community there without a link to the mainland for far too long. What lessons can be learned from that incident, particularly with regard to ensuring that communities are less reliant on either replacement parts or engineers having to be flown in so that vessels can be repaired?

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise the key role that ferry services play in supporting island and remote mainland communities such as those that Dr Allan represents. I appreciate the disruption that was experienced when the MV Isle of Lewis was recently removed from the Oban to Barra service for a three-day period due to a problem with its bow thruster exhaust system and the connection to the hull.

I am pleased to say that the vessel is now back in service. Caledonian MacBrayne is working with Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd—CMAL—to assess the scope of works that could be carried out at a future dry docking of the vessel, to ensure that those can be tackled proactively the next time that it is there. That may widen the scope for more preventative measures to be carried out in the

future. We are looking at such measures to ensure that that situation is not repeated elsewhere in the fleet.

However, Dr Allan is absolutely right about looking at initiatives such as the purchase of spare parts, which is being done. Given that some vessels were built many years ago and parts for them are no longer available on the market, the operator has been involved in commissioning production of replacements for what are thought to be obsolete parts, to ensure that they are in place in advance. It is working hard to ensure the availability of parts so that those that are most likely to fail can be replaced—and vessels returned to service—quickly.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I have much sympathy with Dr Allan's question. Recently, it seems to have been a case of groundhog day, with so many vessels having come offline. I ask the minister whether that has had anything to do with the fact that half of CalMac's fleet are beyond their 25-year life expectancy. Given that the two newest ferries that are due to enter the fleet are already over a year late, will he agree that the status quo is simply unacceptable and is letting down Scotland's island communities every day?

Paul Wheelhouse: First, I accept that the delays to the two new vessels 801 and 802 are greatly disappointing. That is a matter of record; I have said so myself. The Scottish Government is concerned to ensure that those vessels are delivered soon so that we can introduce them to the fleet to provide more capacity. That will help enormously with the need to cascade vessels across the Clyde and Hebrides routes, and is an objective that I am sure we all share.

However, I challenge Mr Greene's assertion that communities are being let down on what he appears to suggest is a routine basis. I acknowledge that there have been difficulties. [Interruption.] Mr Greene might complain from a sedentary position, but I am trying to respond to his question. Let us not forget that CalMac has a very good record otherwise. It has high levels of customer satisfaction despite the issues that I acknowledge have happened in the past year, which are not satisfactory and must be addressed—I am not running away from those. However, let us not detract from the fact that, generally speaking, CalMac delivers a good service to communities. It is recognised as a lifeline service and its staff work very hard on behalf of the communities that it serves. I ask Mr Greene to reflect on the tone of his question, but I accept that there are issues that must be addressed.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): In his reply, the minister mentioned cascading ferries across the different routes. At the moment,

the new MV Loch Seaforth can use only three ports. In addition, my understanding is that operating the two new ferries that are on order will require substantial changes to be made to the ports that they will use. Therefore, it will be impossible to cascade ferries across different routes. Surely the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should be looking at a way to ensure that ferries can fit into any port, so that they can be used in such circumstances.

Paul Wheelhouse: At the heart of Rhoda Grant's comment is a genuine point and one that we acknowledge. Historically, vessels have been designed for specific routes and perhaps not enough thought has been given to how they could be interchangeable across the network. There are local conditions that are limiting factors on the use of vessels, including depth of water, harbour approach conditions, orientation of berths and, not least, the fact that larger vessels cannot navigate in tightly confined spaces, as the member would acknowledge.

However, we are making progress on the interchangeability of vessels across the network, and we are looking at the vessel replacement deployment plan and how we can work with CalMac and CMAL to develop greater resilience, which will be designed in from the start. That cannot be done overnight, as I am sure that Rhoda Grant would acknowledge. It is an issue that we recognise and are working to try to address.

The MV Loch Seaforth is one of the most reliable vessels that we have. It is very reliable and has experienced only one incident of note so far. I hope that Rhoda Grant will accept that point.

Falkirk District Growth Deal

2. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last discussed the proposed growth deal for Falkirk district with the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S5O-03145)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): I last discussed the Falkirk growth deal with the Secretary of State for Scotland on 8 March, at the signing of the heads of terms for the Ayrshire growth deal, in Ayr. I encouraged the secretary of state to visit the Falkirk area and commit to a deal for Falkirk as soon as possible.

The secretary of state visited Falkirk and met several partners involved in the Falkirk deal proposal on 17 April. Regrettably, however, the United Kingdom Government has yet to formally commit to a deal.

Angus MacDonald: I am aware that the leader of Falkirk Council, along with other members of

the local economic partnership, met the secretary of state last week and impressed on him that any growth deal for Falkirk district would be not just a local deal, but a national deal, given the significant contribution that Grangemouth makes to the Scottish economy.

Given that the gross value added in the Falkirk area in 2018 was £3.3 billion, which was 2 per cent of total national output, and that Falkirk's large manufacturing sector is forecast to be a key contributor to future economic growth, does the cabinet secretary agree that there is no time to waste in setting up a Falkirk growth deal and that it should be done sooner rather than later?

Michael Matheson: I agree. There is a need for us to press ahead with the Falkirk growth deal, given the significant contribution that the Falkirk area makes to not just the regional economy, but the national economy of Scotland. I will continue to press the UK Government to commit to a Falkirk growth deal and, when I next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland, I will continue to highlight what I believe to be the huge potential benefits of a growth deal to the Falkirk area and beyond.

As the member will be aware, the Scottish Government has a clear commitment to achieving 100 per cent coverage of Scotland with growth deals, which will deliver real benefits to local communities in the form of new jobs and the wider economic opportunities that that will drive. I will continue to press the UK Government to match our commitment to ensure that we have 100 per cent coverage of growth deals, including in the Falkirk area.

Air Traffic Incident (Kirkwall Airport)

3. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd regarding the incident on 5 April 2019 when a plane left Kirkwall airport without air traffic control clearance. (S5O-03146)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson): Loganair and HIAL advised us that an aircraft left Kirkwall on 5 April without an ATC service being provided, even though the request to start the engines was made before the airport closed. To avoid inconveniencing passengers, a decision was made by Loganair and the captain, in agreement with HIAL management, to depart without ATC provision—but with the airport fire service in attendance—having satisfied themselves that it was safe to do so. The flight operated normally with ATC cover after departing Kirkwall.

Operating at airports without ATC cover is not uncommon for Loganair's pilots, but it is

uncommon at Kirkwall, which is why Loganair notified the Civil Aviation Authority.

Rhoda Grant: It is extremely concerning that the flight left Kirkwall without ATC cover. If the argument is that that posed no danger, it begs the question why the Civil Aviation Authority demands air traffic control presence at all.

Can the cabinet secretary assure me that that will never happen again and that people will not be put at risk in that way?

Michael Matheson: ATC cover at Kirkwall airport is not part of its licensing provision. Fire cover is part of its licensing provision in order to comply with Civil Aviation Authority regulations. The member will recognise that there is a standard set of regulations for undertaking a flight of this nature, where ATC cover is not required. On this occasion, HIAL and Loganair went through that procedure and applied it to this particular flight. As they are required to, they reported it to the Civil Aviation Authority to consider whether they applied all the appropriate regulations for dealing with such matters.

Endometriosis

4. Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports research into and the treatment of endometriosis. (S5O-03147)

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): The Scottish Government's chief scientist office is providing £162,000 for a preliminary study on laparoscopic treatment of endometriosis, which will pave the way for a larger study into the safety and effectiveness of the treatment.

The CSO also contributes financially to United Kingdom-wide research programmes that are run by the National Institute for Health Research, which enables researchers in Scotland to apply to those programmes. A £1.7 million NIHR-funded study, which is being led from Scotland, is looking at a hormone treatment to prevent recurrence of endometriosis.

Three specialist endometriosis treatment centres have been established in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow, with the Glasgow treatment centre opening this month.

Angela Constance: I am grateful to the minister for that answer. Will she commit to working with endo warriors West Lothian in my constituency, and with others, to develop a Scottish national action plan and a database for endometriosis care? That would provide a platform for improving awareness, understanding and—crucially—treatment of, and research into, endometriosis. That is important, given that one in 10 women

suffers from this debilitating condition, including those who have associated chronic pelvic pain.

Clare Haughey: The introduction of three specialist endometriosis centres across Scotland came about as a result of a review that was set up by the chief medical officer. The three centres will go some way towards raising awareness among the public and, importantly, healthcare professionals. The centres will ensure that women who are living with endometriosis have access to speedy diagnostics and the best treatment available.

Further, we are already considering the needs of women and girls with pelvic pain as part of the work of the Scottish access collaborative gynaecology specialty group. The group is identifying a number of improvement opportunities, including improved access to information for patients to self-manage, easier access to nationally recommended guidelines and pathways for general practitioners, and support for primary care cluster groups to develop expertise in women's health.

On working with endo warriors, we have been in dialogue with the group about developing educational resources for schools about menstrual health. Education Scotland has offered to review the resources and consider them for inclusion in the national improvement hub, through which all schools can access and distribute resources to pupils. The founders of endo warriors West Lothian—Candice McKenzie and Claire Beattie—are to be congratulated on the work that they are doing in the area.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Endometriosis can have a detrimental impact on mental health, which the minister touched on. Can she advise what psychological support services are available to women with endometriosis and how much funding is available for that support?

Clare Haughey: Various toolkits are being developed following the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines that were launched in the UK, as well as other educational resources, including e-learning. I am happy to come back to the member with information on specific psychological support.

Hospital-acquired Infections

5. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to prevent hospital-acquired infections. (S5O-03148)

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): Scotland has made significant progress in tackling healthcare-associated infections. Since 2007, Scotland has seen significant reductions in infections such as C

difficile, which is partly due to improved use of antibiotics in hospital and community settings.

Not all healthcare-associated infections are preventable, however, and our national infection prevention and control manual makes it easy for our front-line healthcare staff to apply effective infection prevention and control practice. The NIPCM ensures that the assessment and escalation of infection outbreaks and incidents are far more robust.

Our well-established national infection surveillance system provides national health service boards with rich intelligence that can be used to target quality improvement interventions and improve patient safety. The Scottish patient safety programme has truly become a national safety movement that attracts interest from all over the world. Since 2012, there has been a 21 per cent reduction in sepsis mortality rates in Scotland.

Anas Sarwar: The minister will be aware of the tragic deaths that are associated with the Queen Elizabeth university hospital. Will she take this opportunity to express her condolences to all the families who were impacted by those tragic events? Will she update the Parliament on the progress of the independent inquiry into the structural issues at the Queen Elizabeth hospital? The health board is considering legal action against those who designed and built the hospital? What is her view on that? What reassurance can she give to patients and their families that they will be safe going into the Queen Elizabeth hospital?

Clare Haughey: Our thoughts are of course with the families who were affected; I am sure that that sentiment is echoed around the chamber.

The board is taking all the necessary steps to manage the incident and ensure patient safety. Mr Sarwar will be aware that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport updated the Parliament on 26 February, when she announced that she had commissioned an independent review. Dr Andrew Fraser, director of public health science at NHS Health Scotland, and Dr Brian Montgomery, former NHS medical director and interim chief executive of NHS Fife, have agreed to act as co-chairs of the independent review.

In order to ensure appropriate membership of the review committee, the independent chairs—Dr Fraser and Dr Montgomery—have been taking advice from experts on who will be best able to contribute to the review, as well as analysing and reflecting on the work that has been done to date. From that, they will determine the review's precise remit and the resources and support that they will require. I expect that the independent chairs will shortly be able to consult on a draft remit.

Northern Isles Ferries (Freight Capacity)

6. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that freight capacity on northern isles ferry routes meets future demand. (S5O-03149)

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): The next northern isles contract will provide flexibility to allow for additional sailings and vessels to be made available to meet demand.

Transport Scotland regularly discusses freight services with the haulage and aquaculture sectors through established forums. That close engagement will continue, and we will review all mitigation options, including flexing timetables as and when appropriate, being mindful of the prevailing resource pressures.

Options for this year are being considered, and we will analyse all evidence and liaise with the operator to ensure that there is sufficient freight capacity to service the northern isles.

Liam McArthur: Last September, the First Minister assured me that the Government was committed to addressing the growing demand for additional freight capacity on the northern isles ferry routes to meet the needs of key sectors in the Orkney and Shetland economies.

Through freedom of information, we now know that Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd proposed the purchase or long-term charter of the Clipper Ranger to meet that need, with the vessel operating for four to five months on the northern isles routes and two months on the Ullapool to Stornoway route, and providing much-needed dry dock cover and resilience for the northern isles services. Will the minister explain to my constituents why no action appears to have been taken in response to that sensible proposal or to deliver on the assurance that Nicola Sturgeon gave me in the chamber last September?

Paul Wheelhouse: Mr McArthur should acknowledge that we provided additional freight capacity last autumn to help the agriculture sector—we worked with local stakeholders to do that. It is inaccurate to present the Scottish Government and our agencies as not providing help.

We looked closely at the Clipper Ranger. Mr McArthur might have access to the freedom of information document, but not all the commercially sensitive information is in it, for understandable reasons that I am sure that he will appreciate. We looked closely at the vessel, and it did not represent a proper value-for-money transaction for the Scottish Government. It could only really have operated on the Ullapool to Stornoway route and

in the northern isles, so, although I appreciate that that would have helped those communities, it did not represent good value for money.

We are keeping our options open and continue to look for vessels that could supplement the fleet. I am happy to meet Mr McArthur and Tavish Scott, who is also interested in the issue, to discuss what further action we could take.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Scottish Government's promise to reduce ferry fares on the northern isles routes is still tied up in legal action, leaving the islands facing yet another summer season without that long-standing issue being resolved. Has the minister spoken—or will he speak—to Government colleagues about whether the funding that was set aside to reduce fares, which cannot be used at the moment, could be deployed elsewhere to promote tourism on the islands, particularly to encourage out-of-season visitors?

Paul Wheelhouse: I have engaged with Councillor Stockan of Orkney Islands Council on a number of occasions to discuss the issue that Mr Halcro Johnston raises. Although we are sympathetic to the idea that ferries are important to the development of the tourism economy of the Orkney and Shetland islands, and we are looking closely at what we can do to augment services where possible, we have to live carefully within state aid considerations.

Mr Halcro Johnston rightly mentioned that Pentland Ferries' case against the Scottish ministers is subject to judicial review, so I cannot comment on it, but we have committed to introducing the road equivalent tariff, and we will deliver that, if we are able to do so.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Education (Subject Choice)

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): Just before the recess, I tackled the First Minister on the subject choice crisis in Scotland's schools. Her response was one of denial but, this week, Reform Scotland published a report that spelled out that whereas, previously, most pupils could study up to eight subjects at secondary 4, under curriculum for excellence, in most cases that figure is now only six. Does the First Minister still refuse to accept that that is a problem?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I have read the Reform Scotland study that was published this week. As much of the work on the topic does, it looks at S4 but, as Jackson Carlaw knows, the senior phase in school does not consist only of S4—it lasts for three years. What matters is the qualifications and awards that pupils leave school with, not just the subjects that they study at S4.

The percentage of pupils who get qualifications at level 5 and above is up and the percentage who leave with highers is up. Back in 2009, the percentage of pupils who got five highers or more was 22 per cent; last year, it was more than 30 per cent. The attainment gap between rich and poor at higher level is at an all-time low, a record number of school leavers are in higher education and the number of school leavers from the most deprived areas in higher education has gone up by eight percentage points since a decade ago. On the day that school pupils across the country start sitting their exams, we should be paying tribute to the excellent work that they are doing.

Jackson Carlaw: What matters is the breadth as well as the depth of education and the choices that are available to pupils.

Yesterday, the Education and Skills Committee was told that the problem is curriculum for excellence. Guidance was issued, but it proved so confusing that, in 2016, it was reissued. However, it is still a mess, and it now seems likely that the Scottish Government will have to redraft it yet again. Will it be third time lucky? Perhaps.

Yesterday, witnesses who appeared before the Education and Skills Committee said that a mid-term review, which was recommended back in 2015, was necessary. They also noted that Education Scotland had "other priorities" and that it was "getting round to it". First Minister, does that not just sum up this Government?

The First Minister: Education Scotland is working on reducing bureaucracy and tackling unnecessary workload for teachers, which Jackson Carlaw has asked us to do in the past. Education Scotland is getting on with the job.

Jackson Carlaw is, to some extent, right when he says that the issue is about the choices that young people have and the breadth of education. Of course, curriculum for excellence is designed to provide those. However, the issue is about choice and breadth across the entirety of the senior phase, not in one year of the senior phase alone.

The problem with Jackson Carlaw's analysis is that the outcomes from education that we are seeing, which I have just cited to the chamber, do not bear it out. More young people are leaving school with qualifications, the number of young people who leave school with five highers or more has gone up and there are record numbers in higher education, including record numbers of students from deprived areas.

I am the first to concede that we have more work to do. That is why we are getting on and doing it. However, the evidence that I have just read out says that young people in our schools and our education system are performing well, and they and their teachers should be congratulated on it.

Jackson Carlaw: The evidence suggests that the First Minister is not the first but the last to concede that more needs to be done. S4 is precisely the stage when pupils should have the opportunity to experience the broadest range of subjects. Scotland was once famed around the world for the breadth of its education; now, curriculum for excellence is narrowing horizons.

It gets worse. Yesterday, we learned that curriculum for excellence is so confusing—added to the fact that there are too few teachers—that pupils at different levels are being taught together, not just at national 4 and 5 level, but at higher level. In consequence, a 14-year-old and even an 18-year-old could be being taught in the same classroom. I do not think that that is appropriate. Does the First Minister?

The First Minister: Again, the problem with Jackson Carlaw's analysis of those issues is that the results that are coming from Scottish education do not bear out the criticisms that he makes. I know that he does not like the evidence. He talks about breadth of education. Curriculum for excellence means that young people now get a broad general education right up until S3. They then have three years of the senior phase, during which they can study a range of different subjects.

I go back to the evidence. If Jackson Carlaw was correct, we would not have a situation today in which a greater proportion of pupils than ever

before leave school with qualifications—national fives and highers. We would not have a situation in which the proportion of young people who leave school with five highers or more has actually gone up significantly over the past number of years. And we would not have a situation in which a record number of young people go on to positive destinations, including a record number who go into higher education.

Those are the results of our education system and they simply do not bear out the analysis that Jackson Carlaw is bringing to the chamber. Those are the facts.

Jackson Carlaw: Incredibly, the First Minister's position seems to be that an increase in the number of qualifications gained by pupils can be achieved only by narrowing the options that are available to them for study.

Curriculum for excellence is only a few years old, so we are only starting to see its impact. All of us want to see the improvement of schools as our number 1 priority, but we cannot just ignore the evidence this week from Professor Jim Scott, a headteacher with 18 years' experience, who said:

"We are in danger of a whole generation going past who have not had a good experience in education."

Despite the best efforts of our teachers and despite the hard work of our pupils, a whole generation is being let down on the First Minister's watch. Can the First Minister not see this for the failure of her Government that it is?

The First Minister: As we debate these things, young people across Scotland are sitting their exams, and to talk down their achievements in the way that Jackson Carlaw just has is an absolute disgrace.

We have a situation in which young people can sit more vocational awards to make sure that they have the skills that they need for the workplace. Again, I note that Jackson Carlaw has not taken on any of the facts that I have cited to him. More young people are leaving school with qualifications, but he says, "Oh yeah, but that's about a narrowing." Then I point to the fact that more young people are leaving school with five or more highers. Why can Jackson Carlaw not accept that that is an achievement of our young people, their parents and their teachers?

We will continue to work to improve Scottish education, but as we do so, we will pay tribute to the great work that teachers and pupils are already doing.

Food Bank Use (Income Supplement)

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): This morning, it was reported that the number of emergency food parcels that have been handed

out by food banks in Scotland over the past year has risen again. The shocking fact is that more and more children in Scotland are growing up in poverty. The Scottish Government has said that it plans not to introduce an income supplement to help the poorest families in Scotland until 2022, but wants another independence referendum before 2021. What does that say about the First Minister's priorities?

The First Minister: What that says about my priorities is that I want this Parliament to have the powers to tackle child poverty. I am not sure what his wanting to leave those powers in the hands of the Conservatives says about Richard Leonard's priorities.

Let me turn—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I ask everybody, please, to keep the noise down. Just a few minutes ago, we were talking about the lessons that young people might learn. Please set an example to those young people.

The First Minister: We will bring forward in June our plans on the income supplement. I am sure that Parliament will scrutinise them carefully. However, let us look at the Trussell Trust report that was published this morning. The rise in food bank use is utterly unacceptable: let us hear what the Trussell Trust's operations manager in Scotland has said about it. She said:

"Our benefits system is supposed to protect us all from being swept into poverty.

Universal credit should be part of the solution but, currently, the five-week wait is leaving many without enough money to cover the basics.

As a priority, we are urging the Government to end the wait for universal credit."

Universal credit is the responsibility of the UK Government. The question for Richard Leonard is this: will he join the Labour Party in Wales, which said this morning in response to the Trussell Trust report that the rise in food bank use is not the fault of the Labour Government in Wales, but that the problem is universal credit, and that that is what must change. Will Richard Leonard agree with that?

Richard Leonard: Of course, a lot of the blame lies at the door of the Tory Government. However, the Scottish Government has powers. Can we clarify what the First Minister has just said? She said that she will bring forward proposals in June, but the Government plans not to implement them for another three years. If the First Minister tells us today that she will fast-track the plans, she will have the support of the Scottish Labour Party. In the end, it is all about priorities—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr Leonard.

Would Derek Mackay and Colin Smyth—and other members—please stop talking to each other across the chamber?

Richard Leonard: This is a matter of priorities. For example, Labour thinks that the Government should spend the 0.1 per cent of the Scottish budget that is needed to protect families from the impact of the two-child cap. However, over the recess, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People said:

"It's not our policy to alleviate the two-child cap."

Can the First Minister explain why that is the choice that she is making?

The First Minister: Last year, the United Nations sent Philip Alston, who is an expert on poverty, here to write a report. He acknowledged the work of the Welsh Government on mitigating the worst impacts of austerity, but he said that

"It is outrageous that devolved administrations need to spend resources to shield people from Government policies."

"He's right"—and those are the words of Jeremy Corbyn.

This Government has mitigated the impact of Tory welfare cuts wherever we could. Is Richard Leonard really saying that the answer to the cuts is for a devolved Government to take money out of devolved services to plug the gaps in reserved services, while a Westminster Government holds on to the money? Surely, that is not the proposition of Scottish Labour.

I have given him this opportunity before now: if, as I do, he really wants to tackle the issues, will Richard Leonard join me this afternoon in signing a letter to the UK Government asking that full powers over welfare be devolved to this Parliament? Yes or no?

Richard Leonard: Given its track record, the Scottish Government would probably hand those powers back.

The First Minister has the powers to protect families from the two-child cap and she has the powers to fast-track an income supplement, but she chooses not to use them. She chooses instead to talk about the constitution: she chooses to play to her party base and she chooses to argue for a referendum that Scotland does not want. In fact, since she became First Minister, she has pledged twice to call another independence referendum. In that time, at least three quarters of a million food parcels have been handed out to families in Scotland.

Is not it the case that, when it comes to a choice between protecting the poor and protecting her party, the First Minister always puts her party first?

The First Minister: If Richard Leonard cannot see the relationship between the constitution—the powers that we have in this Parliament—and Tory welfare cuts that are pushing children into poverty, then he does not deserve, ever, to be in Government in Scotland.

We will continue to do everything that we can to mitigate the impact of those policies. We will bring forward policies of our own to lift children out of poverty. However, unlike Richard Leonard and the Labour Party, we will argue for those powers to lie in this Parliament, and not in the hands of the Tories. As long as Richard Leonard continues to back the Tories on the constitution, the people of Scotland will see him for exactly what he is.

The Presiding Officer: We have some constituency supplementaries, the first of which is from Annabelle Ewing.

Mossmorran Petrochemical Plant (Unplanned Flaring)

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the latest unplanned flaring incident at Mossmorran. My constituents have had to put up with hugely disturbing noise pollution since Sunday, and are rightly anxious about air quality. Surely all the data that is held by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and ExxonMobil on the composition of the emissions should be published. Is not it high time that SEPA used its enforcement powers to the fullest extent?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Annabelle Ewing for raising that issue. I am well aware of and understand the concerns that have been expressed by the local community, following the unplanned flaring at the Mossmorran complex in Fife. SEPA's air quality monitoring continues to show that there is no cause for concern. That said, I appreciate that noise pollution and light pollution are very significant issues for local residents.

I understand that SEPA announced this morning a formal investigation into the current flaring incident. A range of enforcement powers are at its disposal—which, of course, it exercises independently from the Government. I am, however, very clear that ExxonMobil must take steps to minimise the frequency and adverse impacts of flaring on the local community.

SEPA has advised us that later today it will publish air quality monitoring data on the dedicated Mossmorran online hub. In addition, the Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay independent air quality monitoring review group will publish air-quality data annually.

Wildfires (Highlands and Islands)

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The First Minister will be aware of

the huge wildfires that have been burning across parts of my region over the past few days—most notably in Moray, where large areas of grassland have been destroyed. Will she join me in thanking all those who have been involved in fighting the fires—most notably the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and other emergency services, but also the many estate workers, farmers and others who have played a crucial role? Can she advise me what support the Scottish Government can offer local people whose livelihoods have been impacted? What will be done to establish the causes of the fires and to prevent more from occurring in the future?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Jamie Halcro Johnston for raising an important issue. As members would expect, we have been in touch with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to offer additional support as it continues to tackle the fires and to consider the causes.

I understand that the incident in Moray is reducing, as are the ones in Skye and Ardnamurchan, but they continue to be serious incidents, so we will continue to liaise closely on them with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Marches (Local Authority Powers)

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I think that the First Minister is aware of the issue of marches in my constituency and, in particular, the recent proposed one by the Apprentice Boys of Derry past a couple of Roman Catholic churches on Easter Sunday. Does she think that the current legal arrangements are satisfactory, or does Glasgow City Council need more powers to reduce or restrict such marches?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are always happy to talk to councils about the range of powers that are at their disposal. We have faith in Police Scotland to ensure the safety of members of the public and people who participate in marches. Police Scotland works closely with councils to ensure that adequate safety measures are in place, and will take appropriate and proportionate action in the event that problems arise.

I was absolutely appalled—as, I am sure, was everybody in the chamber—by the incident that took place outside St Alphonsus church last year. This is an opportunity for all of us to reiterate that nobody should ever be a target for hatred simply because of their faith. The Scottish Government will always be very clear on that point.

Sri Lanka (Terror Attacks)

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I have a large Sri Lankan community in my constituency, which has

contributed greatly to the communities that I serve. One of my constituents lost two of his relatives and 13 of his friends in the horrific and evil terror attacks in Sri Lanka. The community is grieving at this hugely difficult time. I will be meeting community members shortly to discuss how we can commemorate their loved ones and show our solidarity. Glasgow's Lord Provost has indicated her support. Will the First Minister back those efforts and ensure that she or a member of the Scottish Government attends such an occasion to show their support for and solidarity with those who have lost their loved ones?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Bob Doris for raising this issue on behalf of his constituents. As I did yesterday, I express my deepest condolences to all those affected and my whole-hearted support for any efforts to commemorate those who have lost their lives and show solidarity with the Sri Lankan community here in Scotland and around the world. The Scottish Government will be very keen to take part in any events that are held.

We have all been shocked and saddened by these attacks. I have written to the Prime Minister and the President of Sri Lanka on behalf of the people of Scotland to express our sincere condolences. I welcome Bob Doris's efforts to reach out to members of the Sri Lankan community here at this desperately sad time and I hope that he will convey to them my support, solidarity and condolences.

Independence (Green New Deal)

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I am quite sure that the entire chamber will agree with the First Minister's last remarks.

It is a shame that no one else has yet welcomed yesterday's very positive announcement about putting Scotland's future back into Scotland's hands. It is clear that United Kingdom politics is broken and the UK Government has shown contempt for Scotland, so the Greens agree that change is needed and we continue to take the view that independence offers the chance for the new direction that this country badly needs. In that campaign, we will advocate for the green new deal that we proposed in Parliament yesterday, which the Government voted for, to tackle the climate crisis and inequality together. However, is it not also clear that neither devolution nor a currency union nor the business-as-usual vision that was set out by the Scottish National Party's growth commission would permit the genuine economic independence that we need to make that transformational agenda possible? Why should we close off the possibilities that independence offers now of all times?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I do not agree with that at all, although I certainly welcome Patrick Harvie's comments about my statement yesterday and his support for independence. It is healthy that a range of parties are backing independence and putting forward a range of views. The essence of independence is that we decide these issues for ourselves.

As some have noticed, my party conference is taking place at the weekend, when we will have a positive debate about how independence will allow us to emulate the success of other small, independent countries and become more prosperous and fairer as a result. The big question, particularly for the unionist parties in the chamber, is this: given, in particular, the price that Scotland is paying right now for being governed by Westminster, why should Scotland not be independent? Independence is normal—12 of the countries in the European Union that have more influence over our future right now than we do are the same size as or smaller than Scotland. Nobody is going to force them out of the EU against their will and nobody should force Scotland out of the EU against our will. The sooner Scotland is an equal, normal independent country, the better for all of us.

Patrick Harvie: We need to have a clear contrast with a failed UK Government agenda, with its brutal austerity economics. The UK Government has banned onshore wind, scrapped warm home subsidies and solar subsidies, sold off the Green Investment Bank, forced fracking on to local communities and refused to meet the climate strikers. Scotland can—and wants to—do better. Without independence, we have one hand tied behind our back; under the growth commission, we would have the other hand tied behind our back instead, gaining political independence but without the real economic control that we need. People who were open to the idea but not convinced in 2014 are far more likely to back independence if it is based on a positive, bold vision for Scotland's future. Will the First Minister accept that what the growth commission offers is closer to the failed economics of the UK and that the Scottish Greens' plans for a green new deal offer the alternative that we need—the foundation of a bold new vision for Scotland?

The First Minister: I do not agree with Patrick Harvie's comments about the growth commission. It set out the fact that so many small, independent countries are richer and fairer than Scotland. It set out how Scotland, as an independent country, could emulate those countries and create a strong economy but then, crucially, use the strength of our economy to build a fairer, more just society. That is the positive, bold vision that I look forward to campaigning on the next time—within this session of Parliament—that we give people in

Scotland the choice of independence. I am more convinced every day that, when given that choice, the people of Scotland will opt to become a normal, independent nation.

Climate Change

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): This week, I have been lobbied by people who want urgent action on climate change. Young climate change activist Greta Thunberg lobbied Westminster Scottish National Party leader Ian Blackford, too. He boasted about the SNP Government's record. Back in this Parliament, at exactly the same moment, his Government was announcing that it was intent on cutting aviation tax to increase air flights to and from Scotland. Is that something to boast about? Would Greta be impressed?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Unlike most other countries, we take account of all aviation emissions in our climate change targets. To meet those targets, we must reduce emissions across all areas.

Willie Rennie said that we boast about Scotland's performance but, in February, a former executive secretary of the United Nations framework convention on climate change said:

"Scotland has already been at the forefront of climate action and this Bill"—

the bill that is before Parliament—

"confirms that status as a world leader."

That is what the world says about Scotland and climate change. When the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was in Edinburgh recently, he said that he was

"impressed with the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan and pleased to see it was based on science".

Scotland is a world leader. Under our current plans, we would become carbon neutral by 2050, but a week today—I see that the environment secretary is confirming that—we expect to get the updated advice from the Committee on Climate Change. If the advice is that we can go further or faster, we will accept it. Everybody across the Parliament should warmly welcome that.

Willie Rennie: The fact that the First Minister measures aviation emissions does not justify the air tax reduction. I truly do not think that Greta would be impressed.

When I previously raised with the First Minister the issue of domestic waste, she said that I was exaggerating. That was before this week's catastrophic report, commissioned by the Government, which says that inaction by the Government means that £1 billion will be spent to send Scottish waste to England. That means

87,000 bin lorries being sent down the M74. When her Government banned the sending of waste to landfill in Scotland, did the First Minister know that the waste would be dumped in England? Will she end the planned £250 million tax break for the airline industry and tackle the 1 million tonnes of waste, or will Greta need to come back?

The First Minister: On a point of fact—and for reasons that Willie Rennie knows, so I will not repeat them—the ministerial announcement this week was that the cut in the air departure tax would not go ahead in the coming year. I say that so that Willie Rennie does not inadvertently give people the wrong impression.

We are working with councils to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill. Whether it is on reducing climate change emissions or any other aspect of environmental action, by the estimation not of the Government but of many around the world, the Government is leading the world and should continue to do so. It is right and proper that other parties, pressure groups and activists put greater pressure on us to do more. We will continue to do so, because we are determined to continue to be the world leader and to take the action that the next generation wants.

The Presiding Officer: We have further supplementaries.

Islamophobia (Definition)

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Today, we welcome to the Scottish Parliament Baroness Sayeeda Warsi and Wes Streeting MP, who are officers of the all-party parliamentary group on British Muslims. The group's landmark "Islamophobia Defined" report, which I as convener of the cross-party group on tackling Islamophobia and our secretary, Professor Peter Hopkins, who has done 10 years of extensive research on Islamophobia in Scotland, contributed to, sets out a definition of Islamophobia that hundreds of organisations, academics and communities across the country have adopted.

While the United Kingdom Government continues to dodge and dither on the issue, we have a chance to show leadership in Scotland. I hope that the definition will be adopted by organisations in Scotland, all the Scottish political parties and—crucially—the Scottish Government. Will the First Minister make that commitment today so that we can focus not on whether Islamophobia exists, what it means or how it manifests itself but on what we as policy makers can do to challenge and defeat it?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I agree with that. All organisations should sign up to the accepted definition of Islamophobia, as they should sign up to the accepted definition of

antisemitism. I am happy to give the update on the Scottish Government's position that I certainly want the Scottish Government to do that.

I, too, welcome members of the all-party group to the Scottish Parliament, and I commend the work that Anas Sarwar and my colleague Humza Yousaf have done to tackle Islamophobia. However, it should not be down to Muslim members of the Parliament to lead the fight on their own; every one of us should be shoulder to shoulder with every Muslim across our country in tackling Islamophobia. As First Minister, I am more than prepared to lead from the front in that battle.

Immunisation

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I am sure that the First Minister is aware of the UNICEF report that has just been published, which suggests that a large number of children are not being immunised against measles in the United Kingdom. Is the Scottish Government considering that? Is that having any impact in Scotland and, if so, what action is being taken?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The statistics that have been published today by UNICEF are taken from the World Health Organization analysis of measles and rubella data at a UK level. I am pleased to see that childhood immunisation rates across Scotland remain very high. That reflects both the hardworking commitment of our colleagues in the national health service and a recognition of the benefits of vaccination.

It is worth noting that uptake of the first dose of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine in children up to age five is 96.6 per cent. That continues to exceed the 95 per cent target. However, Gil Paterson is absolutely right to raise this important issue. We are not complacent, and I want to assure Parliament that we will continue to make every effort to promote and encourage childhood vaccinations.

Period Poverty

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): This week, I introduced my member's bill on the provision of free period products. If passed, the bill will make Scotland a world leader, giving legal underpinning to the provision in schools, colleges and universities that has already been rolled out and going further by establishing a universal opt-in system to allow anyone in Scotland to access free period products, should they need them.

I know that the First Minister agrees that access to period products should be a right and not a privilege. Building on the strong cross-party consensus that exists, will the First Minister confirm today whether she backs my bill and will

the Scottish Government enthusiastically get behind the proposals?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We will certainly look very carefully at the provisions of the bill. In terms of what the bill is trying to achieve, I am 100 per cent behind that. I pay tribute to all those who have campaigned on the issue. Scotland is already a world leader in tackling period poverty. We already have free sanitary products available in schools, colleges and universities and a growing number of private sector organisations are following suit.

While Monica Lennon is to be commended for introducing the bill, we should not wait for legislation to encourage all organisations and companies to do what we have already done in Government—lead from the front and ensure that no person has to go without sanitary products that they cannot afford. Free access should be the norm everywhere in Scotland.

Social Security

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): In the year since the Parliament unanimously passed the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, what progress has been made in establishing Scotland's newest public service?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): It is a year since the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 was passed. In that year, almost £200 million has been paid out to almost 80,000 people across the country. There are carers who have extra money in their pockets because of our carers allowance supplement, and there are low-income families who are now getting the best start grant. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People will correct me if the figure that I am about to give is wrong—in the early days of the best start grant, we paid out something like four times the amount of money that was paid out under the previous system controlled by the Westminster Government.

That is an amazing success. There is much more to do, but at this stage I pay tribute to all those who have worked so hard to create the new social security agency and have made sure that we have made such a positive start to putting fairness and dignity at the heart of social security in Scotland.

Mental Health (School Pupils)

5. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what assistance will be provided to help the mental health of school pupils. (S5F-03275)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Our 2018 programme for government set out a £250

million package of measures to support positive mental health and prevent ill health. As part of that, we are committed to the creation of school counsellors in every secondary school, with availability to local primary and special schools across the country.

To ensure that that commitment is met in full by September next year, we are providing around £27 million in the first two years of implementation. That will support the delivery and employment of counsellors to ensure that school pupils get the mental health support that they need. School counselling will enhance the work that schools already do to support children and young people to learn about mental wellbeing through the curriculum for excellence.

Stuart McMillan: As the First Minister knows, the exam season is now upon us. Does the First Minister share my welcome of the Scottish Association for Mental Health's excellent testing times campaign? She will be aware that SAMH has produced a range of tips for young people on how to prepare for exams and how to manage the anxieties that exams can bring. Does the First Minister agree that any young person who feels worried or under pressure should not suffer in silence and should not be afraid to seek support?

The First Minister: I thank Stuart McMillan for raising the issue. I welcome the SAMH testing times campaign, which has been launched to coincide with the start of the exam period. Sitting school exams is something of a distant memory for me, but I still remember—as I am sure all members in the chamber do—the sense of stress and anxiety that was associated with those exams.

It is important that we recognise the impact that stress and anxiety about school work and exams can have on young people's mental health. I agree whole-heartedly with Stuart McMillan that it is really important that young people who are facing exams are able to discuss their emotional wellbeing openly. If they are concerned or upset, they should speak to teachers, parents, carers or peers. All schools should help young people to develop resilience and personal coping skills, and they should have in place measures to support young people.

I thank SAMH for the advice that it has made available and, as I have done already this morning, I wish pupils who are completing assignments or taking exams over the next few weeks the very best of luck.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Neurodevelopmental disorders are a significant component of the mental health issues in our schools. Groups that represent children with dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism and other conditions regularly call for

training on NDDs to be a mandatory component of initial teacher education and continuing professional development. Will the First Minister outline how her Government will ensure that all teachers are trained in teaching children with neurodevelopmental disorders?

I remind the chamber of my own diagnosis.

The First Minister: The member raises an important issue. Neurodevelopmental conditions are an important part of our discussions about mental health, and teacher training is extremely important. The Deputy First Minister advises me that the providers of initial teacher education were at the recent summit on autism. Such training is very much part of initial teacher education, but I am sure that the education secretary would be very happy to discuss with the member whether further steps could be taken to embed such training even more firmly.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Mental health issues among young people in rural areas are particularly concerning. What further help can the First Minister give on that specific problem, which is blighting rural Scotland?

The First Minister: That is an important issue. Generally, access to services is often more challenging in rural areas, for obvious reasons, and that can particularly be the case with access to mental health services. It is important that services are available on an equitable basis. For example, it is important that there is proper provision of counsellors in secondary schools in every part of the country. Some of the online and digital services that NHS 24 makes available are helpful specifically to people in rural areas who might find it more difficult to access physical services. I give an assurance that access to services for people in rural areas is a core part of the planning that the national health service and other agencies do to ensure equity of access.

Subject Choice in Secondary Schools

6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the First Minister what measures the Scottish Government will put in place to reverse the reported decline in subject choice in secondary schools. (S5F-03268)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The purpose of the curriculum is to provide young people with the skills, knowledge and experiences that will prepare them for their lives beyond school and provide them with the best possible opportunities to fulfil their potential. As I have said in the chamber today, our focus must be on the whole school experience, the range of qualifications that are achieved and the destinations of young people when they leave

school. We will continue to ensure that that is the case.

Liz Smith: Does the First Minister recognise that the biggest concern for pupils and parents is the growing inequity in subject choice? What is her answer to parents who are very concerned that their children receive a choice of only six subjects in S4, whereas children in other schools receive a choice of seven or eight? Many parents feel that their youngsters are being disadvantaged when it comes to college and university applications.

The First Minister: I take those issues seriously. As I said earlier, we will pay close attention to Reform Scotland's report and to the Education and Skills Committee's review.

However, I repeat some of the points that I made earlier. I hope that everyone in the chamber accepts that it is not simply the qualifications that young people get in S4 that count, but the qualifications that they get across the three years.

In response to Liz Smith's question, this is what I say to parents: the evidence shows that more young people are going to university, including more young people from our deprived communities. The evidence suggests, contrary to the assertion that young people, particularly those in deprived communities, are somehow being disadvantaged, that the attainment gap is closing. That is the reverse of the concern that Liz Smith raises.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): The truth is that pupils now study a broader curriculum for longer, and when they go on to choose their subjects—*[Interruption.]* I used to teach it. When they choose their subjects, they study them in far greater detail than they did under standard grades.

Progression and depth are the principles of curriculum for excellence, which is a system that the Tories used to support. Does the First Minister think that Liz Smith is wilfully ignoring those facts, or has she just not done her homework?

The First Minister: I think that all these issues should be taken seriously and we should listen to all views on them. Contrary to what some on the Tory and Labour benches seem to think, I think that we should particularly listen to the views of a teacher, which Jenny Gilruth was before she entered Parliament.

The evidence says that more young people are leaving school with qualifications, more young people are leaving school with five highers or more and more young people are going into positive destinations, including university. Those are the outcome facts and I have not heard any member of the Opposition manage to explain how

that aligns with the analysis that they are putting forward.

We will continue to do the hard work necessary to ensure that we continue to see improvements in education.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Unlike Liz Smith and Jenny Gilruth, I was not a teacher, but I was a pupil not that long ago. *[Laughter.]* Is the First Minister concerned that the Government's own education agency refuses to acknowledge what a number of studies have now shown, which is that the number of subjects on offer to young people, particularly at higher level, has a direct correspondence with the level of deprivation in their community?

The First Minister: Of course, we will pay attention to all the views that are expressed. Again, I point out the fact that, if all those things were creating the disadvantage that Ross Greer and others are suggesting, we would not be in a situation in which the attainment gap in access to university is at an all-time low. The numbers from deprived communities going into university are at a high.

The evidence suggests that, far from pupils from deprived communities being held back, they are doing better than they have ever done before. We need to concentrate on making sure that that progress continues.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): Can I suggest—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please. Let us listen to the question. *[Interruption.]* Pay attention, please. *[Laughter.]*

Johann Lamont: Thank you. That would not have happened back in the day, I can tell you.

I may not be a teacher now and I am no longer a parent of young children, but I suggest that the First Minister listens to teachers, parents and the evidence from the experts. They are telling us that the system is more unequal than it was before, and they are disturbed that the evidence suggests that the poorest, most disadvantaged young people in our communities are more disadvantaged than they were before. I urge her to look to the evidence and address that question. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order, please. That is enough.

The First Minister: We will listen to views and evidence from wherever it comes. *[Interruption.]* I say in all seriousness to Johann Lamont that what I will not ignore—what nobody should ignore—are the results of our education system. The fact of the matter is that we have a record number of school leavers in higher education. The number of school

leavers from the most deprived areas in higher education is up 8 percentage points since a decade ago and, overall, the numbers of people from deprived areas at university are at a record high. The evidence does not bear out the suggestion that the attainment gap—the inequality gap—is growing; on the contrary, all the evidence shows that that gap is narrowing. Everything that we do in Government and in our education system will be designed to ensure that that gap continues to narrow, because that is what all of us should be focused on.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time. We will move on shortly to a members' business debate in the name of Bill Kidd, on international workers memorial day 2019. Before that, we will have a short suspension to allow members, ministers and those in the public gallery to leave or change seats.

12:45

Meeting suspended.

12:47

On resuming—

International Workers Memorial Day

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-16795, in the name of Bill Kidd, on international workers memorial day 2019. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises International Workers' Memorial Day 2019, which will be marked on 28 April to remember the estimated 50,000 people who are killed each year through work-related incidents or illnesses; notes that the day also aims to encourage steps towards ensuring that such tragedies do not happen again, and recognises that this year's theme is "Dangerous substances, get them out of the workplace", which focuses on workers' exposure to carcinogens.

12:48

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): I am very pleased to bring forward the topic of international workers memorial day 2019. I am grateful to those members of the Scottish Parliament who are in the chamber and those members who will participate in the debate for showing an interest. The debate follows on from the event that I held last night on behalf of Scottish Hazards for international workers memorial day. It was an extremely interesting and well-attended event, and I am grateful to those members from across the chamber who came along and contributed.

International workers memorial day has been held on 28 April every year since 1989. This year, it falls on Sunday, and I am therefore grateful to be able to have the debate today. Every year, the day brings us together to

"Remember the dead, fight for the living".

It is my hope that the debate will go some way towards grasping both aspects of that powerful statement, which has been shared since the first workers memorial day, 30 years ago. We have the opportunity not only to remember those who lost their lives far too early but to affirm the actions that have been taken to ensure that there is no repeat of the mistakes or negligence that led to those premature deaths.

We are lucky to live in a country in which health and safety is taken seriously, but the continuing examples of people who have been made ill or who have died through work show that more needs to be done. For example, it is estimated that, in the UK, 50,000 workers a year die from

work-related illnesses such as cancers, lung disease, heart disease and neurological diseases. Added to that tragic figure are the 1,500 workers who die in work-related incidents and accidents. This year, unions and workers' rights organisations will use international workers memorial day to focus on the impact of dangerous chemicals in the workplace—particularly carcinogens, or materials that cause cancer. By doing so, those organisations will highlight the fact that changes still need to be made and that workers' rights must be taken seriously.

In the 21st century, we are equipped with knowledge and understanding that we did not have in the past, which enables us to be more responsive in tackling or pre-empting issues that affect the health of workers here, in Scotland. That greater understanding means that we have greater responsibility for ensuring the safety of workers.

As I have said, last night, I was delighted to host, at the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Hazards event to mark workers memorial day on 28 April. Scottish Hazards is committed to improving the occupational health and safety of workers, and it does a huge amount as a member of the Health and Safety Executive's partnership on health and safety in Scotland—or PHASS. As a complement to the stall that it had in Parliament a few weeks ago, Scottish Hazards used yesterday's event to communicate important information to MSPs about workers' rights. The organisation has welcomed the establishment of the Scottish fair work convention and the publication of the Scottish Government's fair work action plan, particularly the plan's emphasis on the Government's commitment to partnership. The contribution of Scottish Hazards to the Parliament has always been very useful, particularly in highlighting, as it did last night, the issue of dangerous chemicals in the workplace and evidencing the threats that such chemicals pose to the health of many workers across Scotland and throughout the rest of the world.

I am also thankful for the work of the Trades Union Congress, the Scottish Trades Union Congress's partner organisation, which has been working hard to spread information about the dangers of workplace carcinogens. The TUC has compiled empirical evidence of the prevalence and harmful impacts of two of the most dangerous carcinogens that workers in this country face: asbestos—a fibre that, when inhaled, can cause cancer and that constitutes the biggest cause of workplace deaths in the United Kingdom—and diesel exhaust, which is the second biggest workplace killer.

Although the importing of asbestos into the UK was banned in 1999, its dangers are still with us. This year alone, around 5,000 people are likely to

die prematurely because of asbestos exposure. For many years, Clydeside Action on Asbestos has worked to ensure representation of those who are affected by asbestos-related diseases as well as raise awareness of those terrible illnesses. Asbestos-containing materials, such as the lagging around pipes and boilers, can be found in half a million non-domestic premises and are likely to be found in workplaces that were built before the turn of the millennium. As a result, people who work in maintenance, refurbishment or demolition can be exposed if fibres become dislodged during the course of their work. Indeed, the HSE estimates that 1.3 million tradespeople are at risk of exposure and could come into contact with asbestos, on average, more than 100 times a year. That risk of exposure reinforces the importance of health and safety regulation and the need to prioritise workers' safety.

Estimates show that diesel exhaust—the second-biggest workplace killer—can contain up to 14 known carcinogens and 12 chemical compounds that have been found to be probably carcinogenic to humans. Such chemicals can be inhaled in the form of gases or tiny dust particles. Diesel exhaust is produced not only by motor vehicles but anywhere where there is a diesel engine, such as from a generator or pump. The people who are most at risk from diesel exhaust include professional drivers and those who work in warehouses, garages, construction, seafaring and maintenance or underground. Workers who are regularly exposed to diesel exhaust fumes can be 40 per cent more likely to develop lung cancer. Conservative estimates show that prolonged exposure is responsible for 800 cases of bladder and lung cancer a year in the UK, leading to up to 650 deaths a year. Inhalation of fumes can also worsen respiratory diseases such as bronchitis or aggravate existing heart disease.

The issues that I have focused on are the ones that we know to be highly relevant to Scotland and the rest of the UK. However, the United Nations estimates that, across the world, more people are killed in work-related incidents and illnesses than are killed by war. Imagine the headlines that we would see if the same number of people were to die from catastrophe or war. The sobering reality is that those premature deaths could have been—and can be—avoided with the enforcement of better safety standards.

We owe it to the families and friends of workers who have lost their lives to recognise international workers memorial day. We must continue to remember the dead, learn lessons and take part in the fight for the living.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I say to those in the public gallery that it is preferable that they do

not show their appreciation, or otherwise, of speeches.

We move to the open debate. We are really pushed for time, so speeches should be of no more than four minutes, please.

12:57

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank Bill Kidd for bringing the debate to the chamber and for hosting last night's event.

To be able to go to work every day and spend the working day in a safe environment before coming home seems to me to be a pretty reasonable request. To require an employer to ensure the safety of its workforce and the working environment also seems to be a reasonable ask. Apart from anything else, looking after its staff benefits a company's performance.

I attended last night's event to celebrate international workers memorial day, and I listened to the discussions that took place around the table. I have to say that the event was a real eye-opener. Of course, we all know that there are employers out there who cut corners—and so put their employees at risk—for profit. That is a false economy, in my view. Hearing about the scale of workplace injury and death was quite disconcerting.

Health and safety at work in general has undoubtedly improved, but the on-screen presentations mentioned an incident in 2002, in which a worker died on the Ardeer site where I worked in the mid-1980s. Back then, my job was to test explosives—I have had an interesting life. As members might imagine, the protocols for handling dangerous chemicals are strict, and the required training is extremely arduous. However, I found it interesting that that was not the case throughout, as I told Bill Kidd last night. The chemicals that we used in that environment were disposed of in what was called the solvent room. We would come down with the stuff that we used and just pour it into huge bottles. The floor used to be swimming in solvents such as dichloromethane and acetone. I remember that, once, my shoes disintegrated. I reported that to my manager at the time, whose response was, "You need to buy better shoes."

I would hope that, since then, safety protocols and health and safety have moved on—I am sure they have. However, it was rather disconcerting to discover that the incident at the Ardeer factory took place in 2002.

My other interest in the debate lies in healthcare and looking after the safety of workers in that sector. Everyone knows about my interest in health—particularly mental health—and creating

an environment in which our healthcare workers can have an active and healthy lifestyle. I am really interested in that area, and not just because my daughter happens to work in that environment.

Although we acknowledge that health and safety at work is improving and that, as Bill Kidd says, we live in a country in which we take the matter seriously, we must also acknowledge that there is a lot more work to be done. The fact that, as Bill Kidd says, 50,000 people are killed each year as a result of work-related incidents or illnesses means that we need to do more work on the issue.

I thank Bill Kidd again for bringing the debate to Parliament. I welcome and support the work that organisations continue to do to ensure workers' safety and to highlight where poor safety is an issue.

13:01

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I, too, thank Bill Kidd for bringing the debate to Parliament. It is a great honour to speak in such an important debate. I apologise in advance for the fact that I might, because I speak in the debate every year, repeat some things.

I know that my colleague, Elaine Smith, will agree that it is important that the member who represents Coatbridge and Chryston speaks in the debate, because my constituency has a proud industrial heritage, with strong traditions in the coal, iron and steel industries. As people will know, working in heavy industries was frequently dangerous, with little safeguarding in place to protect workers. Many people in my constituency have direct experience of workplace loss, the effects of which can be felt by future generations.

Like most people from the area, I come from a family with a strong and proud industrial working past. I know that I have mentioned that in Parliament before. I am very proud of that past. My maternal grandfather, for example, worked from the age of 14 in places including Gartcosh, Gartsherrie and the Calder. I know that he was injured at times and would have known others who had the same experience, although it was not highlighted back then.

I have a wee personal story to tell. At the weekend, I took the kids to Drumpellier lochs. There is a wee park there that has one of the last bits of steel work from Gartcosh, in memory of the steel mill. I was able to explain a wee bit about it to my five-year-old. I do not know how much he took in, but it is good that such things are there and that the traditions can be passed down.

The most prominent example of devastating loss in my area was the loss of 47 lives in a fire in

a coal mine. On 18 September 1959—nearly 60 years ago—47 men lost their lives, 41 women became widows and 76 children lost their fathers. On the morning of that day, the early shift at the Auchengeich mine in Moodiesburn—48 men in total—clocked in to work as normal and boarded a series of trains and bogies that were to convey them to the coalface hundreds of feet underground, unaware of the deadly sequence of events that was about to take place.

I have taken most of that paragraph from last year's speech, but I make no apology for doing so—and for doing so every year in the debate on international workers' memorial day in which I can speak. It is important that we remember those people. This year is the 60th anniversary of the event. There is a memorial service every year, but this year it will be extra special. I know that Elaine Smith and Richard Leonard will attend, and we will all stand in unity for the people who lost their lives that day.

In the tradition of the constituency, this Sunday there will be a workers' memorial event at Summerlee museum of Scottish industrial life, arranged by the North Lanarkshire trade union council. It is an annual event at which parties that represent the area come together. We will do that again on Sunday—I will go to the event and then straight on to my party conference.

The signs outside Summerlee museum read:

"The past we inherit, the future we build"

and

"In memory of all those who lost their lives at work".

The day is an international day for remembrance of and action for workers who were killed at work, and is an opportunity for reflection and commitment to change. Bill Kidd articulated the purpose of the day well. We should never forget workers and people who lose their lives at work. There is so much more that I could say, Deputy Presiding Officer—as you can probably tell—but I know that you said that we had a strict four minutes. I will end by saying that it has been a privilege to speak again on the subject on behalf of my constituency.

13:05

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I declare an interest as a member of Unite the union and the Educational Institute of Scotland.

I look forward to the day when we do not have to mark international workers memorial day. I look forward to the day when workers do not die at work and to the day when we have not an economic system that is driven by profit maximisation and which sees workers as a dispensable cog in the machine, but an economy

that is based on social need and sustainability. However, as long as we have a system that is based on profit maximisation and fuelled by deregulation, we will see workers being killed, injured and made ill through work, and international workers memorial day will remain a necessary date in the calendar.

Every 15 seconds, a worker dies from a work-related accident or disease, which means that 16 workers will have died during the course of my speech. In February, a 21-year-old roofer, Nathan Craig, died in Edinburgh when he fell through a skylight while working on a roof. He was another son needlessly taken, leaving another grieving family and community. Lives such as Nathan's should not be merely statistics in a speech; they should be a call for action to prevent future fatalities.

I am proud that the Labour Party, over the course of our existence, has worked closely with our brothers and sisters in the trade unions to deliver huge improvements in health and safety. However, we have a long way to go. That work will continue in the Scottish Parliament, with Claire Baker's proposed culpable homicide bill and Daniel Johnson's proposed protection of workers bill. I hope that all members will support them.

It is right that we record today our thanks to a number of people and organisations who have driven or are driving change. I thank, first, my friend and one of my great mentors, Jim Swan, who was a trade union convener at British Leyland in Bathgate, and was instrumental in bringing international workers memorial day to Scotland. Last night, we were speaking with Kathy Jenkins, Ian Tasker and Scott Donohoe from the campaign charity Scottish Hazards. I pay tribute to them, and to Louise Taggart, who previously worked in the campaign.

I also thank Unite campaigners including Steve Dillon and Bryan Simpson; the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, the Transport Salaried Staffs Association and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen for their work on rail safety; the Public and Commercial Services Union for its recent work on the campaign on seating at National Museums Scotland; Unison for its work in the national health service and local government; the Fire Brigades Union for defending the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union for campaigning against low pay and exploitation; and all the trade unions that are campaigning to keep their members and the public safe.

This week, a great champion and advocate of Scottish workers, Syd Smyth, retires from Thompsons Solicitors Scotland, which is the law firm that represents many trade unions in

Scotland. He represented the trade union group at the Cullen inquiry into the Piper Alpha disaster, he fought for justice for miners who were charged during the miners' strike, he has given evidence to many parliamentary committees, and he represented the victims of the Lockerbie bombing and the Dunblane tragedy. It is right and fitting that he is being mentioned today, and that we pay tribute to his life's work. I hope that we all wish him well in his retirement. I have lodged a motion to recognise his contribution, which I hope members will support.

This Sunday, in Bathgate, I will stand—as many will—with women and men from my region to remember those who have died or been injured unnecessarily because of their work. I know that many of us will stand collectively to mourn the dead and fight for the living.

13:09

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):

As other members have done, I thank Bill Kidd for bringing the debate to the chamber and for hosting last night's event. I also thank Scottish Hazards and the entire trade union movement for the tremendous work that they do in relation to workplace health and safety.

The figure of 50,000 has already been cited as being the number of people who are killed each year in the UK alone through work-related incidents or illness. That is the equivalent of the entire population of Cumbernauld, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy or Ayr.

There are lots of important words in the phrase "international workers' memorial day": "memorial", because it is important that we remember, and "international", because there is an international bond of workers, which should be recognised.

What can we do in practical terms? The 28april.org website says,

"Remember the dead, fight like hell for the living".

From that website, I also recommend a press release from 23 April because, as parliamentarians, we should all listen to what the European Trade Union Confederation says. The press release cites the figure of 200,000 work-related deaths across the European Union each year. It calls on the European Union and, in particular, the new European Parliament that is to be elected in May and the new European Commission that is to be appointed following the election, to

"Set a target of zero workplace cancer"

and to

"Introduce a Directive on stress at work".

People readily understand physical injury that is caused by work, and we are aware of the mental stress and pressure that people feel under at work, including from workplace bullying incidents and—which my colleague, Neil Findlay, referred to—the pressure for profit and the willingness of some unscrupulous employers to set aside the wellbeing of the people who earn them that profit just to generate further profits.

Other things that the European Trade Union Confederation wants to do include:

"Introduce a Directive to tackle back, knee and finger-joint (and other musculoskeletal) pain"

and

"Launch a debate on preventing work-related road deaths and work-related suicide with a view to taking new measures in the lifetime of the new Parliament".

I picked up that press release just this morning: my intention is to ensure that Scottish Green candidates for the European Parliament elections support the measures. I hope that other members will do likewise.

Mention has been made of Thompsons Solicitors. In preparation for the debate, I came across a blog that was written last year by Patrick McGuire. As many people will know, Patrick is a doughty fighter on behalf of workers and in the cause of justice. The one criticism that I have of his blog is that he wrongly chides himself by saying that it is a cause of regret that he has been unable to get proper legislation on the statute book. He talks about the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, which is the UK legislation that is applicable in Scotland. The act came into force in 2008. He says:

"In the subsequent 10 years absolutely nothing has changed. There has not been a single prosecution in Scotland under the Act. Workplaces are not safer. Workplace accidents, injuries and deaths have not decreased. The 2007 Act was and is a waste of time, effort and emotion."

I think that use of the word "emotion" is interesting.

As other members have done, I commend Claire Baker's initiative on her proposed member's bill. It is important that we find common ground on the issue.

However, it is also important to note that we fairly recently had a Prime Minister who commended the slaying of the "health and safety monster". There is residual cynicism about workplace health and safety that needs to be addressed. If we value individuals, we value the labour that they deliver. As has been said, even if we were to take a more cynical and purely pounds, shillings and pence approach to things, we would see that a safe and healthy workplace is a more productive workplace. It has also been evidenced that a more unionised workplace is a

safer workplace. There are lessons for us all, in that.

13:13

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Like other members, I pay tribute to Bill Kidd for securing this important debate, which commemorates international workers memorial day ahead of the day itself on Sunday. I also pay tribute to the Scottish Hazards campaign, which members have mentioned.

I want to look back to an incident that happened in Blantyre, which has a strong mining tradition, and is in the area that I represent. On 22 October 1877, there was an explosion at the Dixon's pit in Blantyre that killed more than 200 people, which had a devastating effect on the area.

A local project in Blantyre that is researching the incident with a view to producing a book later this year has listed all those who lost their lives. Two things strike me about that list. The first is the number of men who are denoted as married, who went to work that day and did not return to their wives and families. The second is the number of boys who died. The ages of the victims are listed, and they include young men of 13, 15 and 16. It was dreadful not only that so many people died but that so many of them were young people.

Sadly, that was not the only fatal incident in Blantyre. In 1878 and 1879, there were subsequent disasters in which people lost their lives. The area has a strong mining tradition, and those incidents drew the community closely together. That is still evident in Blantyre today. There are two distinctive memorials to the incident in 1877, at the cross in High Blantyre and at the Blantyre miners welfare society and social club.

In the century and a half since the 1877 incident in Blantyre, trade union representation has increased and there is improved protection in the workplace, which is to be welcomed. However, John Finnie rightly asked what we, as parliamentarians, can do to tackle the issue of workplace deaths. As Neil Findlay pointed out, there are two proposed members' bills in this area, one of which is Claire Baker's proposed culpable homicide (Scotland) bill. Many members have mentioned the fact that, every year, 50,000 people lose their lives as a result of workplace incidents or illnesses. As John Finnie said, there is a lack of protection for people. The progression and implementation of Claire Baker's bill would strengthen the law and the protection of workers, as would Daniel Johnson's proposed bill to protect shop workers. Unfortunately, the number of incidents involving attacks on shop workers is increasing, with several being reported recently in west and central Scotland.

We have an opportunity not only to reflect on the issue but to make a difference by supporting the two proposed members' bills that are before the Parliament. I hope that members across the chamber will take those points on board.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As three members still wish to speak in the debate in addition to the minister, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Bill Kidd*]

Motion agreed to.

13:18

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I, too, congratulate my friend and colleague Bill Kidd on securing this important debate.

"Remember the dead, fight for the living".

That is what international workers memorial day stands for. All over the world, workers are showing solidarity by conducting events, demonstrations and vigils in an effort to campaign for stricter enforcement and higher penalties for breaches of health and safety laws.

As Bill Kidd mentioned, according to the United Nations, more people are killed at work than in wars. That is an astounding fact. Such deaths do not occur in sudden unexpected accidents; they result from long-term negligence towards worker safety, which leads to fatal illnesses such as mesothelioma, as well as conditions such as asthma and dermatitis. That is disgraceful and it cannot continue.

Tomorrow, I will attend an event to mark international workers memorial day in my Greenock and Inverclyde constituency, at which those in Inverclyde and beyond who have suffered as a result of the negligence of their employers will be remembered.

As others have said, the theme of this year's memorial day is "Dangerous substances—get them out of the workplace". Carcinogens are substances that are capable of causing cancer in living tissue. Examples of those are asbestos and diesel exhaust. Asbestos is the biggest cause of workplace deaths and, this year, 5,000 people are likely to die prematurely as a result of asbestos exposure. Although its use has been banned for 20 years, asbestos-containing materials can still be found in around 0.5 million workplaces in the UK.

There is no safe threshold of exposure to asbestos fibres. Even the smallest of quantities

over a short period can lead to mesothelioma, several decades after exposure. It is estimated that over 6 million tonnes of asbestos fibres were imported into Britain in the previous century. Most of it is still here in workplaces, homes and buildings, which means that workers will continue to be exposed. That is one reason why I am working to introduce my proposed recovery of medical costs for industrial disease (Scotland) bill.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is to ensure that the NHS does not foot the bill for employers' negligence, as it seeks to allow the recovery of costs associated with NHS treatment for industrial diseases that are caused by negligence. The bill will not only claw back crucial moneys for the NHS but help to protect workers in the years to come. The proposal was initiated by Clydeside Action on Asbestos. I pay tribute to the group for that and for the dedication that it has shown over many years to help people and their families who have suffered through asbestos exposure.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the death of James Watt, the Greenock-born inventor who improved the steam engine, which was fundamental in leading the UK into the industrial revolution. Back in 1776, he would not have been able to imagine what industry would be like in 2019. Like him, we have no idea of what will come in 20, 50 or 100 years. Completely different industries will arise, with different occupational hazards and workplace diseases that we do not yet know of. The bill that I propose will ensure that we are ready for the future, with good measures to protect workers as well as the taxpayer and the NHS.

It is important that we mark international workers memorial day to remember all those whose lives were shortened due to their work, but it is also vital that we work to protect workers' health as best we can. We all deserve to work in a safe environment.

13:22

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I congratulate Bill Kidd on bringing this debate to the chamber to mark workers memorial day ahead of Sunday's event.

Neil Findlay mentioned the Cullen inquiry. I remember seeing, as a young boy in Orphir in Orkney, the Piper Alpha accommodation section sitting at Flotta oil terminal. That was a stark reminder of the dangers that people face. The oil and gas sector has seen a number of tragedies, including with helicopters and the like. I hope that improvements have been made, but there is still more to be done.

The debate is important given that, around the world, thousands of people die and suffer from serious injuries while at work. That is a disturbing fact that should give us all pause for thought. We know the history well. Here, in Scotland, we need only look at some of our great buildings and great feats of engineering to find them tinged with the memory of the people who died building them—people who were at work and whose safety often seemed far from the minds of others.

We remember, for example, the Forth Bridge, which lies just a few miles from the Parliament, and the names of the 73 men who are recorded as having died in its construction. The youngest was a rivet catcher, David Clark, who was apparently only 13 years old when he lost his footing and fell to his death. It seems outrageous today, but it took until 2012 before those workers were properly commemorated and, for some, before they were even recognised.

It is always important to understand the working practices that have contributed to deaths and serious accidents. There will always be genuinely unforeseeable risks and genuine accidents, and some jobs will inevitably carry greater risks than others, but those realities must never serve as an excuse for situations in which foreseeable risks have not been managed, accidents are waiting to happen and the safety of employees is put on the back burner.

It is now 45 years since the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 became law. It was not a revolutionary change; there had been a variety of pre-existing regulations and bodies. However, it created an overarching principle that applies across employers. Since then, the approach has developed further across the UK. We have come a long way, but there is more to do.

Bill Kidd's motion touches on the people who have died from illness caused by their working conditions, which is the theme of this year's workers memorial day. Thousands still live with work-related illnesses as a result of exposure to asbestos and from work-related chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cancers, and thousands more have died.

Many of those diseases lay dormant for decades but, as this year's theme points to, there are still cases in which employees are exposed to dangerous substances in the workplace that can have a considerable impact on their health. Quite properly, the TUC has raised a number of concerns about incidents of exposure and the action that can be taken by Government, employers and employees to reduce that risk. We should look forward to a time when substances such as asbestos are not just managed but can be safely removed and cease to present a threat to individuals.

Another issue that has been raised is diesel fumes. They are notably more harmful than other types of exhaust fumes, and employers have plans in place to avoid exposure. Fortunately, we are looking forward to a future of low emissions and an end to diesel vehicles. Of course, that does not lessen the duty of employers in the interim.

I will touch briefly on mental health. Where support is lacking, mental health issues can cause significant problems in the workplace, including long absences. In many cases, we know that those issues can lead to death. It is in everyone's interests that support and a preventative approach are in place. Unfortunately, our mental health services are often overstretched, and individuals in Scotland can be left waiting for months before even relatively basic support is provided. For too long, warm words about a focus on mental health have failed to lead to genuine action.

Our history of protecting people in the workplace has been one of gradual progressive improvement. Although we mark and remember those who have died at work, we should learn the lessons of the past and the importance of adapting them to a changing and modernising workplace.

13:26

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I have a declared interest regarding the fact that I have received trade union assistance in the past and I am a member of Unite.

Like other members, I thank Bill Kidd for bringing this motion for debate ahead of international workers memorial day on Sunday 28 April, thus giving us all the opportunity to remember the people in this country and around the world who have been killed in the workplace or by work. It also reminds us of the need to do whatever is in our power to constantly seek improvement in the working conditions of people in Scotland and around the world, and to remember that this is a class issue—Neil Findlay touched on that point in his speech.

As in previous years, events will be held in local communities around Scotland to mark the occasion. I am pleased that, following my request to it in 2008, the Scottish Government officially recognises international workers memorial day.

In a country with a rich industrial heritage, the day has added poignancy, because many communities will have been affected by some sort of industrial tragedy in the past. Given its extensive industrial history, the Central Scotland region, which I represent, is particularly affected by such tragedies. As was mentioned by Fulton MacGregor, 18 September this year is the 60th anniversary of the Auchengeich colliery disaster, in which 47 men lost their lives. That tragedy

affected a great many families in the area, including my family.

In the past, I have spoken at the memorial event that is held annually on international workers memorial day in Coatbridge at Summerlee heritage park, which Fulton MacGregor also mentioned. As I have said many times in this chamber, Summerlee is well worth a visit. It has preserved and interpreted the history of the local iron, steel, coal and engineering industries and the lives of the people and communities that depended on them for a living. I urge people to pay a visit to Summerlee if they can. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend this year's commemoration event at the weekend, but I commend North Lanarkshire trade union council for organising it and I wish it all the best for the event.

It is important to remember that most workers who were killed at work did not die in major disasters. As Bill Kidd noted in his motion, the theme of this year's international workers memorial day is "Dangerous substances—get them out of the workplace". The main focus of that topic is workers' exposure to carcinogens, which are a key cause of cancer. There is a wide range of known carcinogens; Bill Kidd mentioned some of them, and they include tobacco smoke, asbestos fibres—which other members have discussed—diesel fumes and a wide range of chemicals that are used in the workplace.

The nature of the disease means that it is impossible to get an accurate figure for the number of people who have been diagnosed with cancer that was caused by their working conditions. However, the Health and Safety Executive estimates that there are around 13,500 new cases of cancer caused by work every year, with more than 8,000 deaths. I think that that is likely to be an underestimation, as there are many causes suspected but not yet proven, and, as we heard, there are other health problems that are exacerbated, such as asthma and bronchitis.

Although trade unions and organisations such as Scottish Hazards lead the way in campaigning for safer conditions, including the minimisation of exposure to dangerous substances in the workplace, we should all take an interest in safe working conditions and in holding employers to account. This Parliament, as an employer and a visitor attraction, should be setting a clear example in ensuring that no hazardous substances, including lacquer, are used improperly on the premises.

I recently submitted a consultation response to my colleague Claire Baker's proposed culpable homicide (Scotland) bill, which other members have mentioned, and I encourage others to do so, too, and to support the bill.

I congratulate Bill Kidd once again, as we remember the dead and fight for the living.

13:30

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): I join others in congratulating Bill Kidd on bringing this debate to the Scottish Parliament, and I congratulate all members on their considered contributions.

The Scottish Government continues to provide its support for international workers memorial day, as we collectively reflect on the impact of lives lost due to work.

Scotland continues to have one of the best occupational health and safety records in Europe, but we would all recognise and agree that one workplace fatality is one too many. Work-related deaths and injuries take an incredible toll on the families of those affected, work colleagues, emergency service personnel called to respond to incidents and, indeed, the wider community.

The community impact was brought starkly into focus by James Kelly when he reminded us clearly about the impact on the Blantyre community of various incidents such as the Dixon's pit disaster. Fulton MacGregor and Elaine Smith reminded us that this year is the 60th anniversary of the terrible Auchengeich disaster, which directly impacted the area that I represent. In the centre of Condorrat, there is a memorial to the men from there who were killed at Auchengeich—it is a memorial to the six families who were left bereft by the loss of their loved ones in that terrible accident.

Important as it is to remember such incidents, Neil Findlay made the significant point that this is not just a matter of history; it is an on-going struggle. In that context, it is right that we continue to have debates of this nature and continue our efforts.

We, as a Government, believe that the best outcomes are achieved by collaboration and partnership working. The partnership on health and safety in Scotland is a good example of that, as it brings together a wide range of partners, such as representatives of the Scottish health and safety system, trade unions, employer bodies and regulatory bodies, among others.

"A Scottish Plan for Action on Safety and Health" is a long-term commitment to partnership working across organisations and industries to tackle the areas of greatest concern, such as health and safety in the agriculture, waste management and social care industries. We are committed to continuing to provide employers with access to advice on workplace health and safety through our healthy working lives initiative.

There are, of course, particular types of employment and industries that show poorer health and safety outcomes, and those tend to be associated with lower-paid and often poorer-quality work. The large number of people in what we are increasingly calling the gig economy are particularly at risk, especially when we consider that they are often treated as self-employed and do not have access to health and safety expertise and protection. We remain committed to improving unacceptable working conditions, regardless of the status, sector or location, as part of the fair work agenda that we are taking forward, which Bill Kidd mentioned at the outset of the debate.

Collaborative working is central to the promotion of fair work and to ensuring that all employers understand the benefits of an effective employee voice. Engagement with the workforce on workplace health and safety is an essential part of the process; drawing on the workforce's knowledge and expertise can pay significant dividends in safety as well as in efficiency and productivity. Brian Whittle pointed out the inherent benefits for employers, as well as for employees, of engaging in the fair work agenda.

In the past year, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work ran a campaign that focused on managing dangerous substances, with a strong emphasis on exposure to carcinogenic material—an issue that Bill Kidd, Jamie Halcro Johnston and Stuart McMillan raised. The campaign involved collaboration across European nations to identify the nature of hazards, consider how hazards can be mitigated and share good practice. It illustrates the importance of international co-operation on such matters.

Neil Findlay: Will the minister say whether the Government will support Claire Baker's proposed culpable homicide bill, Daniel Johnson's proposed protection of workers bill and Jamie Halcro Johnston's proposals?

Jamie Hepburn: We will of course give full consideration to any proposed legislation. Any proposal must be considered on its specifics and it is incumbent on the Administration to consider it carefully. I give that commitment to Mr Findlay and to all members of the Scottish Parliament.

In a debate on international workers memorial day, we must place the issue in its international context. Most of our domestic workplace health and safety regulation has arisen as a result of co-operation among member states of the European Union over the past decades. The UK Government has apparently said that it is committed to maintaining existing standards. Those of us who might be cynical about that must put aside our cynicism, but the reality is that Governments change, and there is concern that a UK outside the EU runs the risk of being left behind on

improving health and safety standards and will not have the ability to share the range and depth of expertise that membership enables us to share.

John Finnie made a useful point in that regard when he talked about Europe-wide trade union activity. If that activity is successful, a UK outwith the EU might not be part of the process.

Elaine Smith: Does the minister recognise that it was trade unions who, from their inception, championed health and safety issues?

Jamie Hepburn: Yes. I have no hesitation in doing so. It is about not just activity at the inception but the on-going role of trade unions. The Government recognises that role. That is why we strongly support the trade union movement and want to work in partnership with it to implement the fair work agenda, of which health and safety is a critical element.

Stuart McMillan made a useful point when he said that we live in a changing world, with a changing economy. That brings opportunities for us; it also brings many challenges. He referred to the changing nature of work and, in particular, technological change, which will continue to impact on the types of job that need to be done and the workforce that does them.

Our workforce continues to age. Employers need to understand what that means for them and how they can support an older workforce to remain safe, healthy and productive. How we continue to consider the agenda in changed circumstances will be important.

We have a good record on workplace health and safety but, sadly, it is not an unblemished record. As people gather at memorials around the country to mark international workers memorial day, we should reflect on the journey to get to this point and the sacrifices that have had to be made on the way for lessons to be learned.

Despite our best efforts, there is still no guarantee that any individual can go to work and return home safely at the end of the day. International workers memorial day reminds us that the work must go on.

13:39

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

1. **Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it will provide to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra to assist it with its upcoming summer concerts in South Scotland. (S5O-03136)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the other national performing companies are committed to performing their work across the whole of Scotland. For its summer tour, the orchestra will travel to the south of Scotland in June. More specifically, it will go to Stranraer's Ryan centre, Annan academy and Galashiels volunteer hall.

Scotland's five national performing companies, including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, are in their 12th year of a direct funding relationship with the Scottish Government, which started in April 2007. For the financial year from April 2019 to March 2020, the Chamber Orchestra was given funding of just over £2 million.

Michelle Ballantyne: As the cabinet secretary will know, music has always played an important part in Scottish culture, particularly in the south of Scotland, where people will hear it everywhere they go. Does she agree that a future of music participation, particularly at a high level, should be open to all young people? Is she aware of the Education and Skills Committee's recent report on instrumental music tuition, which shows the growing concern about the inequality of opportunity for young people? Will she join me in ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to participate in music at that high level that the Government is supporting?

Fiona Hyslop: I agree with the member. I feel passionately that music tuition should be accessible to all young people. It is unfortunate that some local authorities, including the one that covers my constituency, have chosen to impose extremely high fees where there were none previously. Some councils, however, continue to provide free tuition.

I have responsibility not for education or instrumental music tuition but for the cultural aspects. In successive years, I have managed to protect the youth music initiative, which allows all primary school children to have access to participation. Our challenge is in meeting the

growing demand when children go to secondary school. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and I have met John Wallace and the music education progress group, which has been working with a number of partners to see how the vision that Michelle Ballantyne and I share can be realised.

Listed Buildings (South Ayrshire Council)

2. **John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with South Ayrshire Council regarding the preservation of listed buildings and other built heritage. (S50-03137)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government recognises the economic, social and cultural importance of our built heritage and is keen to ensure that that hugely important asset is protected appropriately and proportionately.

The protection of our heritage assets has been statutorily delegated to local government, given its role in the planning and development process, and Historic Environment Scotland. The Scottish Government becomes involved only in strategic or specific issues. I am aware that officials have spoken with representatives of South Ayrshire Council regarding, among other subjects, the potential preservation and renovation of listed buildings, but those conversations are part of a wider discussion.

John Scott: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the expected reports on the Station hotel in Ayr, which is a grade B listed building. If the structural report is optimistic about the practicability of saving the building, will the Government, through its various agencies, offer the practical and financial support to return the building to worthwhile public and private sector use?

Fiona Hyslop: Obviously, the development of the Station hotel would be led by South Ayrshire Council as part of its wider regeneration work. With other agencies, Historic Environment Scotland is already involved in the Ayr station task force. It also spoke about the issue at a recent Ayr town centre conference that was organised by the Ayr Station hotel community action group. In December 2018, Historic Environment Scotland provided a summary of considerations to Transport Scotland relating to what needs to be discussed or justified in any listed building consent application, which will depend on what proposal is presented for the hotel's future. It will continue to provide advice, to help secure the hotel's long-term future based on the local community and council's decisions about what they need. HES also provides help through funding.

Obviously, some of the issues that the member raises are operational matters for Historic Environment Scotland. I keep a watching brief, and HES reports to me. I will continue to take an interest in the issue.

Film Industry

3. **Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to help the film industry. (S50-03138)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): We are strongly supporting our vibrant screen sector through significantly increased Scottish Government funding while the recently launched screen Scotland is helping to grow the industry with streamlined public sector support.

Since its launch last year, screen Scotland has expanded the production growth fund for film and introduced new funds for television, skills and talent development, including the broadcast content fund. That fund has already awarded funds totalling nearly £1.3 million to 10 Scotland-based companies, including Firecrest Films, Once Were Farmers and Blazing Griffin, to support production and new programme development.

Figures from Creative Scotland show that screen sector production spend has risen to a record high of £95 million, while we are seeing more high-profile films and network TV drama being made in Scotland, such as "Outlaw King", "The Cry" and "The Victim".

Infrastructure is important to continue that growth, and we welcome screen Scotland's tender last December to seek a private company to convert and operate the Pelamis building as a high-end studio. We look forward to the outcome of that project.

Richard Lyle: That is quite impressive. What action is the Government taking to encourage outside production firms and producers to come to Scotland? Does any department in the cabinet secretary's portfolio have regular discussions with the film industry?

Fiona Hyslop: Creative industry officials in my department have regular discussions with film companies. Only last week, I was at Blazing Griffin, which is a Scotland-based company, where I discussed some of the opportunities that it has on film, television and gaming.

However, the responsibility to support inward investment and production lies with screen Scotland and, indeed, with cities and other organisations in Scotland. We are a very attractive place to locate to, but the big difference in what we are doing now is to ensure that indigenous

Scottish companies can generate recurring drama and films that are attractive to broadcasters to screen all over the world.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Last November, Iain Munro, who is from Creative Scotland, updated the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee on screen Scotland's plans for a film studio and talked about the process for testing state aid rules. The cabinet secretary has briefly referred to that, but can she provide any further information on progress in that area and on the tender process?

Fiona Hyslop: The tender process is proceeding. Screen Scotland, which sits in Creative Scotland, is finalising the process. I am not in a position to share information about it, but the tender process is reaching its final stages.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that, given the ever-increasing, high demand for quality productions, additional studio capacity should always be under consideration? A studio in Inverclyde would offer such additional capacity.

Fiona Hyslop: Screen Scotland leads on the expansion and delivery of infrastructure for the screen sector. Currently, it markets 136,000 square feet of full-time converted stage space and 335,000 square feet of build space across Scotland.

I have just answered a question about the ongoing tender process. I have repeatedly said that there is room in Scotland for more than one studio. Indeed, we already have a studio in Wardpark. If a private sector company is willing to develop studio space in Inverclyde, that would be very welcome indeed. I am not aware of any current plans or proposals to do so.

BBC Scotland Channel

4. **Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what research is taking place into citizen engagement and satisfaction with the new BBC Scotland channel. (S5O-03139)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government welcomes the launch of the new channel in Scotland and continues to urge the BBC to take a strategic lead in developing the creative industries in Scotland. The United Kingdom regulator Ofcom carries out research into public attitudes to the BBC, including in Scotland, to inform its assessment of how the BBC is performing against its public purposes. Television viewer figures are collated by the Broadcasters Audience Research Board.

Gail Ross: There is a perception that the majority of the filming and production for the new channel is concentrated in the central belt. Does the cabinet secretary agree that this is the perfect opportunity to enable all parts of Scotland, including my constituency, to produce quality and meaningful content for the new channel? Will she encourage the BBC to make use of the talent that we have throughout the country?

Fiona Hyslop: Clearly, the BBC is independent and makes its own creative decisions, but in our arguments to ensure that there was more spend in Scotland, I and other members of the Scottish Parliament argued that all of Scotland should be represented by the BBC. I therefore encourage the BBC to locate productions in different parts of Scotland. The vast majority of BBC Alba's output is from commissioned independent producers and that process is very effective. We encourage BBC Scotland to do that, too.

The member might be aware that a number of the production companies that are performing very well in terms of new productions are located in the central belt. To grow the sector, we must ensure that we have more successful production companies that have recurring series, particularly drama, and that there are opportunities for creative work to happen all over Scotland.

However, I reiterate that BBC Scotland is independent of the Government, so I cannot tell it what to do.

Tourism Businesses (North-east Scotland)

5. **Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it offers to tourism businesses in the north-east. (S5O-03140)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government supports VisitScotland to maximise the economic benefits of tourism across all of Scotland, including the north-east. VisitScotland works closely with public sector partners and local tourism businesses to ensure that Scotland's destinations offer an enjoyable and desirable visitor experience.

On 20 March 2019, I had the pleasure of addressing the VisitAberdeenshire conference during Scottish tourism month, discussing the tourism and business needs of the industry in the north-east. VisitScotland's public accreditation projects are very successful in the north-east, with 487 business in the quality assurance scheme and 184 members of the visitor information programme.

Liam Kerr: Hotels and restaurants in the north-east, which are crucial for our tourism offering, still feel singled out for high business rates. Given the

importance of tourism, which is a key sector of growth in the region's economy, will the cabinet secretary back the call by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce to bring forward the next revaluation to 2021, as both the United Kingdom and Welsh Governments have already done?

Fiona Hyslop: The member will know that we have the most competitive rates system for businesses, not least because of the hospitality discount, which the Government announced would continue until the next revaluation. The member will be familiar with the Barclay review, which involved extensive research and consultation. I know that there are challenges for businesses and I have been up front about the cost challenges that many hospitality and tourism businesses face. We have more visitors, but the increase in their spend is not commensurate with their increase in number. I am therefore very sympathetic towards giving any support that we can to the hospitality sector, but I emphasise that we have already reduced rates substantially and kept the cap in place for hospitality businesses, including those in the hotel sector.

Liam Kerr: I understand and am grateful for the cabinet secretary's comprehensive answer, but will she back Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce's call to bring forward the revaluation?

Fiona Hyslop: Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce has not written to me and I have not seen its proposals. I am not responsible for the Government's finance and business policy, which is the finance secretary's responsibility. I am sure that the member will understand that the timing of any revaluation would have to be considered in the round for not just one area and sector but all Scotland. In addition, as the Presiding Officer will understand, it is not my role or responsibility to answer questions for the finance secretary. I encourage the member to ask that same question of the finance secretary.

Tourism on Arran (Ferry Services)

6. **Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs has had with the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands regarding the importance of ferry services to Arran's tourism industry. (S5O-03141)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The importance of physical and digital connectivity to support the visitor economy on all our islands, including Arran, together with on-going Scottish Government investment in new vessels and ferry infrastructure, is a frequent topic in my discussions with colleagues. Island connectivity and the crucial

role that sustainable tourism plays in island economies were among the topics relating to the year of coasts and waters 2020 that I discussed with the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands at our recent meeting on Tuesday 23 April 2019.

Neil Bibby: Is the cabinet secretary aware of reports from the Arran ferry committee that the number of cancelled crossings has doubled over the past year? In a damning report, the committee states that the current service

"promotes frustration, confusion, low confidence and reputational damage, threatening the current and future sustainability of our island."

That disruption affects many aspects of island life, including Arran's tourism industry. Given that the only way that tourists can get to Arran is by ferry, will the cabinet secretary ensure that the concerns are acted on and that confidence is restored in a ferry service that is of such central importance to the island's tourism industry?

Fiona Hyslop: As the member will know, I am not responsible for ferries either, as responsibility for ferries lies in the transport portfolio. That said, I recognise the absolute importance of ferry connections to tourism and the economy of the islands. In August 2018, the Scottish Government announced a £3.5 million resilience fund, to which an additional £4 million has been allocated in the 2019-20 budget period that we are now entering to ensure future reliability and availability of vessels and continuity of service. Moreover, the Scottish Government has introduced other measures such as, for example, the road equivalent tariff, which has considerably benefited the islands and increased visitor numbers.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): What is the impact on Arran's tourism industry of the Government's decision to increase the number of summer sailings and to implement the road equivalent tariff in 2014, which has more than halved ferry fares from what they were under Labour, as well as the provision of the £12.6 million MV *Catriona* on the Lochranza to Claonaig route?

Fiona Hyslop: Despite the fact that I am not responsible for either finance or ferries, I would say that tourism is everyone's business, which is why connectivity matters so much. I appreciate the concerns that have been expressed, but I can tell the member that, on the main Ardrossan to Brodick route, single car fares were reduced by 64 per cent and passenger fares by 46 per cent as a result of the Government's introduction of RET on the Arran links.

We know that more people are travelling to and from Arran, with an average increase on both Arran routes of around 40 per cent for passengers

and around 60 per cent for cars since the introduction of RET. That demonstrates Scotland's commitment to North Ayrshire, Arran and the tourism sector in that area.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be relieved to learn that I am not going to mention the late delivery of the new Arran ferry—although I just have.

Outside my regional office, I often see cars queuing up for another ferry route in the same area. It is mainly tourists in peak season but there are often locals, too, and they can queue for up to two hours to make the short 10-minute journey from Largs to the island of Cumbrae. Is there a role for the Government in assisting local authorities to ensure that there are more parking facilities on the mainland as well as good public transport on the islands to encourage tourists to travel as foot passengers instead of feeling the need, as they often do, to take their car?

Fiona Hyslop: As the member will be aware, there are very regular and frequent ferry services in that area. Obviously, peak times and flows should be managed, and that is something that the council can do.

However, these things are the results of success. I am very pleased that the Ayrshire growth deal, in which the Scottish Government has been instrumental, has a key focus on the marine economy and tourism in general, and I am going to keep a keen interest in that. I was in North Ayrshire to announce the £300,000 from the Scottish Government for the Coig project—which covers five different routes, including Cumbrae—and that, again, demonstrates our commitment to Ayrshire and to tourism businesses in the area.

Everyone has a role to play; it is that partnership approach that will lead to success, and I encourage the council to ensure that any waiting times are, where possible, limited and to look at what can be done in surrounding areas. However, I again point out that, as the member's party is always reminding us, councils are independent of Government, and we have to respect their independence in making such decisions.

Tourism (Cowdenbeath)

7. Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it promotes tourism in the Cowdenbeath constituency. (S5O-03142)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government fully recognises the importance of tourism to the economy and continues to see its benefits across the whole of Scotland. Only yesterday, I launched the new Forth bridges strategy, highlighting Fife's role as a

gateway to the north across the iconic Queensferry crossing.

The constituency of Cowdenbeath possesses its own unique attractions for visitors and locals alike. With VisitScotland, we will continue to work with local authorities, destination management organisations and businesses to ensure that each of Scotland's destinations can offer exciting, enjoyable and high-quality experiences.

Annabelle Ewing: I very much welcome the launch of the new Forth bridges strategy. The cabinet secretary might be aware of another recently launched initiative—the new Fife pilgrim way, one of the starting points for which is in North Queensferry in my constituency and which passes through historic Inverkeithing and the scenic Lochore meadows country park. What plans does the Scottish Government have to promote this important tourist route, which winds through the heart of Fife, to ensure maximum benefit for local communities?

Fiona Hyslop: I am very keen that the Government should support the Fife pilgrim way, which has been planned for some time. VisitScotland is working closely with Fife Council and Fife Coast and Countryside Trust on the launch of the new route, from which all communities should benefit. Yesterday, I visited North Queensferry, which, as the member has pointed out, is one of the route's starting points.

The Forth bridges tourism strategy offers a great opportunity. It is a 10-year plan to ensure that we can grow tourism by using the opportunity that is provided by the iconic three bridges. North Queensferry holds other attractions, including the Stevenson-built lighthouse, which I had the pleasure of lighting yesterday. I was delighted when the local volunteers who run it presented me with a certificate to demonstrate that I had passed a short introductory course in lighthouse keeping.

The Presiding Officer: On that cheery note, we will end our consideration of portfolio questions. I apologise to Jenny Gilruth for failing to reach her question.

Advance Redress Payments

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on advance redress payments. The Deputy First Minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:51

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Last October, I made a statement in Parliament in which I committed to providing financial redress for victims and survivors of historical child abuse in care. On behalf of the Scottish Government, I made it clear that we whole-heartedly accept the need to provide acknowledgement and tangible recognition of the harm done to children who were abused in care in Scotland. In doing so, we openly acknowledge that such recognition cannot in any way take away the pain that individuals have suffered.

Since October, we have continued to hear harrowing evidence of the abuse of children in care settings across Scotland. We have listened to the testimonies that have been given to the Scottish child abuse inquiry. Victims and survivors continue to tell us of their experiences of being failed by the establishments and people who had been entrusted with looking after them. We must continue to listen to that testimony, and the Scottish Government will consider with great care the findings and recommendations that will be made in due course by Lady Smith.

Since my statement in October, work has been progressing on designing the statutory redress scheme. The Scottish Government remains committed to introducing a bill that could pass its final stages before the end of this parliamentary session in March 2021. I welcome the views and the encouragement of members in helping us to do all that we can to accelerate that timetable.

My officials are working at pace to establish a statutory scheme as quickly as we can. I am conscious, however, that a significant amount of detailed design is required to ensure that we get the scheme right. We will have a full pre-legislative consultation later this year, in order to hear a wide range of views in that process. We must be confident that we get all the details of such a scheme correct.

We are all too aware that, because of age or health, some survivors might not live long enough to apply to the statutory scheme. Today, I am pleased to confirm the launch of an advance payment scheme for those who were abused as a child in care in Scotland and who have a terminal

illness or are aged 70 or over. The scheme is now open for applications, and full details will be published online this afternoon. On Monday morning, a telephone support line will open, which will be dedicated to helping survivors who wish to request an application pack or find out more about the scheme. We realise that the application process itself may be distressing for some survivors, and we will signpost applicants to sources of support should it be required.

The advance payment scheme will be administered within the Scottish Government by specially trained caseworkers, who will support applicants through the process in order that they access the acknowledgment that they rightly deserve.

The advance payment will be an equal payment to all applicants who meet the eligibility criteria. It will be made using the Scottish Government's common-law powers. The payments will be discretionary and made on an ex gratia basis. The payment level has been set at £10,000. That sum is broadly in line with interim payments made by redress schemes in other parts of the world. The costs of the advance payment scheme are being met in whole by the Scottish Government, and we intend it to remain open for applications until the statutory redress scheme is established.

Given the time-sensitive nature of advance payments, we have kept the application process as straightforward as possible. To be eligible, applicants must either have a terminal illness or be aged 70 or over, and must have been abused while in care in Scotland before December 2004.

We are guided by the terms of reference that the Government has set for the Scottish child abuse inquiry, but that is not the sole influence in relation to eligibility. Given the differing purposes of redress and the inquiry, we have also looked to other sources if those provide a better fit, or have added interpretation to the inquiry's terms of reference where that is needed.

The systems that we now have in place to regulate different aspects of childcare and to safeguard children from systemic abuse are radically different from the regimes of yesteryear. The Scottish Parliament introduced fundamental regulatory change in that respect by establishing Disclosure Scotland, setting up the Care Inspectorate, requiring the registration of care staff across children's services and more.

It is the prior, historical failings that have led the Government to establish a scheme of redress. December 2004 marked the public apology that was made by the then First Minister, Jack McConnell and endorsed by the Scottish Parliament as a whole. It also marked the broad mid-point of a period of rapid and significant

change in child protection legislation and policy and practice in relation to children in care. We have defined that date of December 2004 as the date prior to which abuse would have to have taken place to demonstrate eligibility.

For the purposes of advance payments, residential pupils at boarding schools will not be eligible if their parents chose that place for their child's education. We know from criminal cases that abuse took place at some boarding schools and the impacts of that will have been as horrendous as those of abuse elsewhere. However, the advance payment scheme seeks to respond where institutions and bodies had responsibility for the long-term care of children in the place of the parent.

Long-term healthcare eligibility will exclude establishments whose primary purpose was medical or surgical treatment. Patient stays in those hospitals—primarily general or local hospitals—will normally have been short to medium term and, importantly, it will have been possible for parental contact to be maintained, albeit constrained by visiting arrangements. Children who stayed in all other establishments where the function was primarily care and not treatment, and the stays were often long term—indeed sometimes lifelong—will be included.

Survivors asked us to develop an application process that was as straightforward as possible for survivors, while making the scheme robust and credible. That is what we have designed and are delivering today. Applicants will not be required to submit evidence of having been abused, but will require documentary evidence that shows that they were in care. Terminal illness will need to be certified by a registered healthcare professional, through a process that we believe is as sensitive as possible to the circumstances of the applicant.

We know that some eligible applicants will not yet have the written documentation that they need to support their application. Our caseworkers will be on hand to help and advise applicants and to refer them to organisations that can help them to obtain a supporting document. Recognising the impact that applying for and receiving an advance payment may have on survivors, we will also make applicants aware of organisations that offer emotional and other types of support.

There are no reliable estimates of how many survivors may be eligible for advance payments. We will prioritise applications from those who are terminally ill. We will keep our arrangements under review so that our processes and procedures adjust in the face of experience, reflecting feedback from applicants.

I take this opportunity to thank the interaction review group for continuing to work closely with us

towards today's launch. Its input into the design of the advance payment scheme and the application materials has been invaluable. We will work in a sensitive way, taking into account the trauma that applicants will have experienced. I express my gratitude to all those survivors and organisations who have given us their advice and suggestions. I also thank colleagues who have designed and delivered redress schemes in other parts of the United Kingdom and across the world, and who are giving so generously of their time to help us to understand what lessons can be learned.

Our next key step is to develop proposals for the statutory redress scheme. No decisions have yet been taken. In developing our proposals, we will take into consideration the views that were expressed in the survivor consultation last year, the responses that will come from the more detailed pre-legislative consultation later this year and our experience of delivering advance payments.

The advance payment scheme is a significant milestone in our endeavours to do what we can to address the wrongs of the past. I hope that it will provide some degree of recognition and acknowledgement for survivors who have waited the longest for acknowledgment and redress, and for those who have a terminal illness.

I reassure other survivors of historical abuse in care that our commitment to design the statutory scheme with a strong survivor voice is unrelenting, and I commit to updating Parliament on a regular basis on the progress that we make.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Thank you very much, Deputy Presiding Officer. Deputy Presiding Officer? I mean Deputy First Minister. I am demoting you.

We will now take questions on the issues that were raised in the statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for prior sight of his statement and strongly commend the Scottish Government for the manner in which it has undertaken what must be very challenging and sensitive work. I also put on record the Conservative Party's thanks to not only the Scottish Government but all the people who have been involved. I strongly welcome the advance payment scheme, which will be helpful in allaying some of the concerns of those whom we heard from during the early stages.

I will ask just one question. The cabinet secretary mentioned the measures that are being undertaken to ensure that specialist caseworkers are on hand to deal with the concerns. Has the Scottish Government made provision for

expanding their role and perhaps increasing their numbers, should that prove necessary?

John Swinney: I thank Liz Smith for her generous remarks in relation to the announcements that I have made today. These are very difficult issues and they require the engagement of individuals who have suffered horrendously. I am very grateful to them for their input; they have helped us enormously in reaching the point that we have reached today.

I am acutely aware of the fact that even the process of applying for the assistance will be traumatic for the individuals involved. That is why we have taken care to train the individuals who will provide the advice and support—which will be available from Monday—to ensure that individuals are supported in making an application. Although the arrangements around the process are being kept to the minimum level that they can be, there will nonetheless be some challenges for individuals around the availability of documentation and other points of information. Therefore, the support will be there, and I will monitor regularly whether it is adequate in relation to the demands that are placed upon it.

I also reiterate the point that other sources of support are available, principally through the future pathways activity and other interventions. We will signpost individuals to those organisations if they are not already in touch with them.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement.

The cabinet secretary knows that we have encouraged him to act quickly to create an advance payment scheme for survivors who are elderly or terminally ill. We welcome the opening of such a scheme and the fact that it is open as the announcement is being made.

We also welcome assurances that the procedures are designed to be straightforward, sensitive and quick. However, as the cabinet secretary acknowledged, there are contradictions between the remits of the scheme and of the child abuse inquiry, so I would like further clarity on a couple of points.

First, the inquiry works to a cut-off date of 2014. Will Mr Swinney explain why he did not simply make the more consistent choice of 2014 for the scheme's cut-off date, instead of choosing a date 10 years earlier?

Secondly, with regard to the exclusion of those who were abused in boarding schools, is that the same as or different from the reach of the inquiry, and, if it is different, why is that the case?

John Swinney: I appreciate Mr Gray's willingness to support the approach that we are

taking. It is important that we try to make progress on this issue across the political spectrum.

We selected 2004 for the cut-off date because of its significance in respect of the statement that was made at that time by the then First Minister, Mr McConnell, and because the scheme is specifically targeted at older individuals and those with a terminal illness. We believe that the cut-off date is appropriate to ensure that all individuals who fall into that category can apply if the circumstances are relevant to them.

I have indicated that, in relation to the statutory redress scheme, no decisions have been taken on eligibility. The issues that Mr Gray raises are of a different character and are more relevant to that scheme, which we will consult on later this year.

On boarding schools, I am making a distinction based on whether the decision to place a young person in a boarding school was taken with parental engagement or involvement, or with no parental engagement or involvement. If, for example, a parental decision was not involved and a child was placed in a boarding school by an organisation, which expected the boarding school to operate in loco parentis, the nature of the relationship between the child and the institution will have been different from the relationship that will have existed if a parental decision was involved. That is the distinction that I am making to try to ensure that we properly focus the scheme on the cases that require and merit the intervention that is suggested in the details of the scheme that I am putting forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are 10 members who wish to ask questions, so I want short questions, please.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Like colleagues, I put on record the Greens' thanks to the Government and to the survivors' organisations that have delivered this progress.

Many of those who will be eligible for the advance payment scheme will not be online or involved in survivors' organisations and many will never previously have disclosed their abuse. How will the Scottish Government ensure that awareness of the scheme is as wide as possible to ensure that people know that they can apply?

John Swinney: Mr Greer raises a serious point. We are using a variety of means to communicate details of the scheme. In fact, I have come to Parliament to make a statement on the matter to try to ensure that as much awareness of the scheme as possible is raised through the significance of a parliamentary statement and parliamentary scrutiny.

Into the bargain, we have been working closely with survivors' groups to ensure that the widest

possible awareness is activated through those networks.

Separately, through a wide variety of Government communication channels, we will promote awareness of the scheme, and we will look to ensure that as many individuals as we can possibly identify can apply for it.

Considering a general marketing campaign for an issue of this type is a challenging question, because of the sensitive nature of the issues involved, but I want to ensure that we maximise the reach of the scheme and the number of individuals involved.

I appreciate that this might well be the first time that individuals consider taking steps in this area, which is why we have put in place the briefing and support arrangements. We want to make sure that, if individuals take that courageous decision, they will be well supported by us in the process.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The Government is doing the right thing, and I thank the Deputy First Minister for his statement to Parliament and for the steps that he has outlined, which we hope will directly benefit the people concerned.

How long a period does the Deputy First Minister expect there to be between the making of an application and receipt of the first payment? Will the Government seek to claw back moneys that are paid to victims from those who might be found to have been responsible, or will the Government pick up the entire tab?

John Swinney: I am grateful to Mr Scott for his welcoming of today's announcements.

On the first question, I hope that we will be able to make a payment within a month of an individual making an application. That is the timeline that we expect to operate to, and we will monitor whether we fulfil that very carefully.

On the second question, the Government will meet in full the costs of the scheme. I took that decision to ensure that we could act with urgency. In my statement in October, I made it clear that I thought that it was necessary to discuss with the organisations that ran the institutions that were involved in the abuse the strong case that existed for them to make contributions to the statutory scheme, and I intend to pursue those discussions as part of our preparations.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): As the deputy convener of the cross-party group on adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and a previous director of the Moira Anderson Foundation, I would like to put on record my thanks to the Deputy First Minister. I welcome his statement and his on-going commitment in this area.

How has the Scottish Government engaged with the responsible care providers and religious organisations following the publication of the review group's recommendations?

John Swinney: Much of that dialogue will await the formulation of the statutory redress scheme. As part of that process, we will consider the point that Mr MacGregor asked about, along with the points that I made to Mr Scott.

I have been focused, and I asked my officials to be focused, on ensuring that we made the swiftest progress in making our announcement. We had to await the passage of the Budget (Scotland) Act 2019 to create the financial authority for us to be able to make such payments. The Government secured that shortly before the Easter recess, and I have sought to make the announcement at the earliest opportunity after the recess. We will pursue the issue that Mr MacGregor raised as we develop the statutory scheme.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement. In his statement, he said:

"we will ... make applicants aware of organisations that offer emotional and other types of support."

Given the traumatic experiences of survivors, will the cabinet secretary commit to ensuring not only that support will be offered at the initial point of contact, but that caseworkers will check in with survivors at a later date to ensure that they have received the support that they need?

John Swinney: A number of the organisations that operate under the umbrella of what I would call the future pathways approach have on-going relationships with survivors of childhood abuse. From listening to the experiences of the people who provide that support, I am conscious of the need for sustained engagement and dialogue when support is provided. Mr Corry makes an important point. That relationship must be sustained so that individuals can have access to advice and support when they need it. In this area of activity, it is difficult to predict the moments at which individuals will require support. I assure Mr Corry that the support that is provided will be sustained.

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): How will survivors who come forward who are elderly or who are suffering from ill health be supported through the application process?

John Swinney: We have recruited specific caseworkers to support individuals. One of the examples that I cited to Liz Smith is that there will be a modest need for some documentary information, and it might not be easy for individuals to obtain that. It is therefore important that individuals are properly supported. There are

organisations that can help to provide that information, but they might not ordinarily be within the knowledge of the individuals who require it. We will ensure that there is active and focused support for individuals, particularly where there is greater vulnerability—the scheme is aimed at those who are more vulnerable—so that they can be properly supported through the process.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I note and welcome the acknowledgement in the cabinet secretary's statement that the application process might be distressing for survivors and that it will ensure that people are directed towards sources of support. Will the cabinet secretary agree that the very fact of today's discussion and the broader conversation about the process might encourage others to disclose abuse? How does the cabinet secretary propose to ensure that groups that lie outside the future pathways process but have a long and important record of supporting and campaigning for survivors of abuse are given sufficient resources to meet the evident increase in need for their services?

John Swinney: I made a point about the nature of the relationships between the forms of support that are put in place for individuals, and it is important that we work with those organisations to sustain their activities. I am therefore conscious of Johann Lamont's point.

It is impossible for us to predict the reaction to my announcement in terms of the applications that will be made and what it will trigger in individuals. It might mean that more individuals go to the inquiry that has been established, and I encourage anybody who has had this experience and wishes to raise their concerns with the inquiry to do exactly that. The strength of the inquiry is based on the testimony of the individuals who have the courage to offer it, and I encourage them to do that.

I also encourage individuals to come forward and make applications to the scheme if they are eligible. We certainly want to make sure that we support organisations to provide the advice upon which survivors depend for their sustenance and support at a critical time.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): How will the payments of advance financial redress be issued to survivors? Will the payments have any effect on pension credit or means-tested benefits?

John Swinney: My objective is to ensure that a payment that is received under the scheme has no effect on any other financial provision that an individual receives. We have had that assurance from the Department for Work and Pensions, although it applies for one year only. That is set

out in the information that is available to members of the public who apply.

We are in advanced discussions with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to ensure that the payments are discounted for tax purposes. I have no reason to believe that there will be an issue there, but I did not want to delay my announcement while I waited on the completion of the discussions. My objective is to ensure that the payments in no way affect or undermine any other financial support that is available to individuals. The payment arrangements for the sums of money involved will be discussed directly between the civil servants who are administering the scheme and the individual applicants.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could the final three members be particularly brief? It is a sensitive subject, but I want to get you all in.

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary has made it clear that the Scottish Government considered advice from various parties before announcing the advance payment scheme, including from other countries. Is the cabinet secretary prepared to say which counties provided that helpful advice and how the total figure of £10,000 per head was arrived at?

John Swinney: We received advice from the Republic of Ireland, and some of the provinces of Australia and Canada.

The figure of £10,000 was fairly consistent but at the higher end of the comparative schemes that were available in other jurisdictions. The figure of £10,000 is higher than the interim payments that have been made in the Republic of Ireland, Western Australia, Queensland and Nova Scotia. We looked at a number of other jurisdictions that have taken forward such an approach and tried to set the figure at a level that we believe to be consistent and reasonable in that context. I accept that we can never arrive at a precise conclusion, but we looked across jurisdictions to make the best judgment that we could.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary confirm that additional resources are in place to provide advance financial redress to all applicants, should there be a greater number of applications than is expected?

John Swinney: The Government made provision in the budget for a total of £10 million to be available for the advance payment scheme in this financial year. Obviously, the total required will depend on the number of applications that come forward. We will continue to monitor that, and, if there is a requirement for us to put additional resources into the advance payment scheme during this financial year, I am committed to doing that.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): In his statement, the cabinet secretary said that there would be full pre-legislative consultation on the statutory scheme. Can he say anything about how he will encourage survivors to take part in that?

John Swinney: We have benefited enormously, over the past few years, from the participation of survivors in the interaction review process. I cannot adequately express my admiration for the individuals who have made that contribution; they have had to deal with the horror of their experience and they deployed that for the benefit of others in our society. We will continue in that spirit. The dialogue with that group has enhanced our policy making and I intend to make sure that the interaction action plan review group is central to how we engage with survivors in the design of the statutory scheme.

Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill: Final Stage

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-16708, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on the final stage of the Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill.

Before the debate begins, the Presiding Officer is required under the standing orders to decide whether, in his view, any provision of the bill relates to a protected subject matter—whether any provision will modify the electoral system and franchise for Scottish parliamentary elections. In this case, the Presiding Officer's view is that no provision of the Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill relates to a protected subject matter. Therefore, the bill does not require a supermajority for it to be passed at the final stage.

15:23

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I am pleased to open the final stage debate on the Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill.

I again thank my committee colleagues: the redoubtable Stewart Stevenson, as deputy convener, Ruth Maguire and Maurice Corry for their contributions to the work of the committee. I also thank the clerks for their tremendous work in guiding us through the process.

The bill was introduced on 25 June 2018 and is being promoted by the patrons of the Royal Incorporation of Hutchesons' Hospital in the City of Glasgow.

If the Parliament passes the bill today, it will enable the promoter to transfer the property, rights, interests and liabilities of the royal incorporation to a successor Scottish charitable incorporated organisation—SCIO. It will also dissolve the incorporation and repeal the Hutchesons' Hospital Act 1872.

As members will recall from the preliminary stage debate, in February, the Royal Incorporation of Hutchesons' Hospital in the City of Glasgow is a charity and is the legacy of George and Thomas Hutcheson. It started with a bequest that was made in the will of George Hutcheson in 1639, and the establishment of the Hutchesons' hospital charity. The charity became the Royal Incorporation of Hutchesons' Hospital in the City of Glasgow under a royal charter in 1821. In 1872, it was incorporated in its current form by the Hutchesons' Hospital Act 1872, and it continues to be regulated under that act. With this bill, the promoter aims to allow more modern governance

of the incorporation's assets and enable the charity to function more efficiently and effectively.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I understand that, in her role as convener of the committee, Kezia Dugdale cannot comment directly on this, but I am keen to have it noted for the record that, although this is a private bill that focuses on technical issues and will, no doubt, be supported at decision time, it is nonetheless important to recognise that private schools ingrain privilege and should not themselves be classed as charitable institutions.

Kezia Dugdale: I am grateful to the member for that intervention. In this debate, I speak as the committee convener on the specifics of the bill, but she will know that I share her concerns regarding the tax liabilities of private schools. That is an issue on which I have personally campaigned for a long time. The bill regulates the bursaries that the charity has—or certainly had in the past—that allow certain young people to attend private schools, so there is a relevance in that regard.

The committee undertook a thorough examination of the bill at the preliminary stage, including taking evidence from the promoter on 7 November last year. In addition to evidence from the promoter, we received written submissions from two experts in the field—an academic and a Queen's counsel—and our thanks go to them for their contribution to the committee's work.

We considered the purpose of the bill and the arguments that were presented in favour of enabling an updated governance structure and more modern financial management of the charity. We also considered the potential impact of the changes on the nature of the charity, its work and its beneficiaries and whether a private bill was necessary to achieve the charity's aims.

Our preliminary stage report, which was published on 20 December, covers our work in some detail. In our discussions and deliberations, perhaps the most considered point was whether a private bill was necessary at all and whether the promoter had alternative options to achieve the charity's aims.

In the bill's accompanying documents and in evidence to the committee, the promoter explained the alternatives to promoting a private bill that it had considered. Its process uncovered an apparent lack of clarity in the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 related to chapter 5 of part 1, which sets out provisions on charity reorganisation. The issue was whether the Royal Incorporation of Hutchesons' Hospital in the City of Glasgow meets the criteria that would enable it to make use of those provisions. It has been suggested that the reorganisation provisions present difficulties of interpretation. Indeed, the

promoter concluded that it did not wish to risk the potentially serious consequences of any legal challenge and chose the private bill route instead. As a result, the committee suggested that it could be a valuable exercise for the Scottish Government to review the provisions, to provide greater clarity on them.

In fact, the Scottish Government consulted on Scottish charity law in January this year—a process that would have been under way before publication of our report. However, we hope that our work on the bill provided some timely reflections for the Government.

I imagine that a considerable number of charities that are still operating on the basis of royal charters or enactments might find themselves in a similar situation. In cases in which it could prove possible to avoid the time and expense of promoting a private bill, I suspect that an alternative route must be preferable.

The committee was satisfied that the promoter had considered alternatives and was content with its conclusion that a private bill was the most appropriate and best available method of achieving its aims.

My committee colleagues will touch on other aspects of our work on the bill. I will conclude by stating that the committee recommends that the Scottish Parliament agrees that the bill be passed.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:28

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Being a member of this private bill committee has given me an insight into an important but lesser-known aspect of parliamentary work.

The bill was previously debated at preliminary stage in the chamber on 20 February, and the Parliament agreed with the committee's recommendation that the general principles be agreed to and that the bill should proceed as a private bill. In the private bill process, the preliminary stage is followed by the consideration stage, when committee members are able to lodge amendments. It is also possible for the promoter of the bill to suggest amendments to committee members.

When there have been objections, the committee takes evidence from the objectors and the promoter at the consideration stage. In our case, there were no objections to the bill and nothing arose during the preliminary stage scrutiny of it that led us to conclude that any amendments were necessary.

The consideration stage was completed at our meeting on 6 March, when we agreed to each section of the bill and the long title. When the consideration stage of a private bill is completed, it is then open to any member of the Scottish Parliament to lodge amendments. The deadline for amendments in this case was 29 March. None were received, so today we are proceeding with the final stage debate, with the committee recommendation that the Parliament agree to the bill as it stands.

Membership of the committee also gave me an opportunity to learn about the history of the Hutchesons' Hospital charity, how it has developed over the years and the work that it does today. George Hutcheson of Lambhill established the charity when he left land and funding in his will to build a hospital. The charity focused initially on men who had been merchants, craftsmen or tradesmen and who had fallen on hard times. George Hutcheson also provided funds for clothes and food for those lodging in the hospital.

Further bequests were made over the years, and the categories of people who were eligible to receive assistance were expanded. For example, from 1781, poor women who were wives or daughters of burgesses of Glasgow became eligible to receive support from the charity's funds, regardless of whether they were widowed. Burgesses were inhabitants of the city who owned land, paid taxes and were able to trade or practise a craft.

Thomas Hutcheson, George's brother, also made bequests to the charity. He provided funding to educate boys who were orphans of burgesses of Glasgow. He also established the school that became Hutchesons' grammar school.

The original hospital building, which was completed in 1650 at the Trongate in Glasgow, was demolished in 1795 and the land was sold to make way for Hutchesons' Street. The new hospital building was constructed on Ingram Street and was finished in 1805. Although it now serves a different purpose, it can still be found on Ingram Street. George and Thomas can also be found there. The sculptures of the brothers from the original 17th century hospital were preserved and incorporated into the façade of the new building. I understand that they are believed to be the oldest portrait sculptures in the city. The legacy of the Hutcheson brothers clearly lives on in the city and in the work of the charity today.

The bill, which is promoted by the patrons of the charity, aims to make the charity fit to function effectively into the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Maurice Corry to speak. You were quick to get to your feet, Mr Corry—that shows enthusiasm.

15:32

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank the clerks for all their work during the bill process, which has been most interesting. They have put in a tremendous amount of effort.

As we have heard, it is the 1872 act, which the bill will repeal, that still governs the functioning of the charity today. The 1872 act is a fascinating document the preamble to which requires a fair grasp of old Scots to fully comprehend. Preambles used to be commonplace in acts of Parliament. They typically provide a preliminary piece of narrative explaining the background to an act and usually take the form of one single extended sentence, with each clause beginning with "Whereas". They remain normal practice for Westminster private acts but are no longer used in public and general acts. Preambles are not permitted in Scottish Parliament bills or acts, private or public. The preamble to the 1872 act is remarkable for its length: running to 15 pages, it is nearly double the length of the act itself.

The bill that we are considering today, which is promoted by the patrons of the charity, will transfer the property, rights, interests and liabilities of the royal incorporation to a new Scottish charitable incorporated organisation. It will also repeal the 1872 act and dissolve the incorporation.

One example of the modernisation that the patrons hope to achieve with the new structure relates to the governance of the charity. The 1872 act sets out in full who the patrons of the hospital are—including the Lord Provost, all the magistrates of the City of Glasgow and all the councillors of the City of Glasgow. Currently, there are 95 patrons in total, many of whom hold ex officio positions, meaning that they are patrons due to the post or office that they hold. Some of those posts are held for only one year at a time. As a result, many of the patrons are not there through choice, and some remain in the role for only one year.

In evidence, we heard that the charity has a group of committed patrons. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the 95 that I have mentioned are not actively involved. Nevertheless, each must be properly contacted and consulted. Mr Donald Reid of Mitchells Robertson—the solicitors firm that is supporting the charity as "chamberlains" to Hutchesons' Hospital—explained:

"The time and effort required simply to manage the extensive paperwork generated by the sheer number of people mean that the cost—which is a management cost rather than a direct cost that you can put your finger on—has in recent years become something that we need to look at."—[*Official Report, Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill Committee, 7 November 2018; c 7.*]

The work that is involved was further illustrated when the committee heard evidence about how the promoter had consulted before introducing the bill. The 1872 act stipulates a list of ministers of parishes in Glasgow as patrons. Mr Reid explained that he had been in contact with the Glasgow presbytery

“in order to ensure that I was up to date with all the various amalgamations of churches that have taken place over the past 150 years within the Glasgow presbytery area, and that I was addressing as a patron the correct minister—who, in most cases, is now the minister of several amalgamated parishes, as distinct from the way that it was before.”—[*Official Report, Hutchesons’ Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill Committee*, 7 November 2018; c 14.]

Mr Reid valiantly admitted that the planned changes would also mean lower fees to him in his role, as a result of the more streamlined structure and governance.

The committee’s view was that the charity will benefit from a more direct and transparent link to a group of committed trustees who are in the role through choice. That will help to streamline activities and, ultimately, improve management and oversight. The bill that is being promoted by the patrons of the Royal Incorporation of Hutchesons’ Hospital in the City of Glasgow, which the Parliament is being asked to pass today, should facilitate that change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Stewart Stevenson to close for the committee.

15:36

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): As we have heard, George Hutcheson’s deed of mortification of 1639 is the genesis of what we are engaging with today. The charity’s history is long and interesting. In her intervention, Elaine Smith was right to point out the educational aspect, but it is worth saying that nothing that we will do today appears to change the status of anything in that regard.

The charity provides grants, which it describes as pensions, to 20 to 30 people, so its size is comparatively modest. That means that having a complex and long parliamentary act for its oversight is no longer consistent with how we wish to do things. The promoter explained to the committee that the charity employs a part-time social worker, who visits the grantees.

The committee looked carefully at what was proposed. In particular, we looked at any impacts on those who receive support, and we accepted the promoter’s assurance that no one who currently receives benefits will lose out as a result of the proposed changes.

The promoter’s memorandum says:

“The charitable purposes of the SCIO”—
the new form that the charity will take—

“seek to respect the spirit and underlying intention of the Incorporation’s purposes, but in a manner that more satisfactorily and effectively allows the charitable funds held by the Incorporation to be applied in the 21st century.”

The SCIO that will take over has been established and is waiting to take responsibility. That is a modern form of organisation for charities that was provided for by the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and is regulated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. The structure will be more effective and will remove the need for parliamentary scrutiny of the charity’s activities.

In our evidence session, the committee heard that the charity will have greater flexibility in how it carries out its purposes—for example, in how it invests. As a SCIO, the charity will be able to invest in anything that furthers its purposes, provided that the trustees believe that that is right for the charity.

The committee thought that the proposed approach would make the whole operation much more future proof. Other members have referred to the complexity of multiple deeds of mortification and similar deeds, almost all of which are in old Scots—perhaps we should relearn the old Scots. The documents include a deed of ratification by Janet, Bessie and Helen Hutcheson; deeds of mortification by James Blair in 1713 and Daniel Baxter in 1776; and settlements by William Scott in 1818 and Mary Hood in 1817. There is a complex picture and history behind the charity.

Mr Donald Reid, whose firm has acted as chamberlains to the charity for some 200 years, explained that he had gone through all the tin boxes that they have and found nothing further that is relevant. It is worth saying that this opportunity that a lawyer has presented to the Parliament is unusual—at his request, we are going to reduce that lawyer’s income. I therefore commend the bill as something that the Parliament should absolutely support. In the event that something arises that is not in the tin boxes, the SCIO will be the body that will deal with it.

Like others, I thank my colleagues on the committee and, in particular, the non-Government bills unit, which has, as promised, smoothed the path and made it straightforward for the committee to deal with the bill. I hope that the vote at 5 o’clock reflects the Parliament’s belief that that is the case.

Changing Lives Through Sport and Physical Activity

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-17034, in the name of Joe Fitzpatrick, on changing lives through sport and physical activity.

15:41

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): I am delighted to bring the debate to Parliament.

Sport has the power to change lives, and we know that being physically active is one of the best things that we can do for our physical and mental health. Recent global research shows that levels of physical activity are declining in most developed countries, with large-scale changes in patterns of work and leisure leading to less active lifestyles. In Scotland, evidence shows that we are, in contrast to that global trend, succeeding in maintaining rates of participation. We are also seeing a number of positive signs, including a significant rise in recreational walking.

In my time in post, I have seen how people of all ages and backgrounds can change their lives and feel a sense of empowerment, supported by sporting organisations across Scotland that provide them with the tools that they need to achieve their personal goals. Changing lives is about using sport and physical activity intentionally as tools to achieve increased participation and wider social outcomes. Doing that can help to support wellbeing and resilience in communities, which is an important aim in the active Scotland outcomes framework.

Evidence has shown that being active can bring about positive changes beyond participation. It can impact positively on the health, wellbeing, skills and learning of individuals and on the health of communities by ensuring a more inclusive and healthier nation. Following the “Sport for Change Research” report, which was published in 2017, the Robertson Trust, the Scottish Government, sportscotland and the former sport for change network—all the changing lives through sport and physical activity programme partners—are committed to embedding a changing lives approach in Scotland’s sporting system. The approach aims to use sport and physical activity to create wider benefits in health, education, communities and the economy.

Being physically active has the potential also to bring about positive and often interrelated changes. However, while participation in sport and physical activity can bring about positive change,

that does not happen automatically for everyone. We need a clear intention to bring about change. That is most likely to happen when we have a clear focus on what change we are seeking to deliver, who will experience the change and how we will know whether it has happened. I am keen to get buy-in and support for the changing lives approach across sporting and non-sporting organisations, and that we continue to build on the great work that is happening already across Scotland, through partners and programmes including the cashback for communities scheme and projects that are supported in community sports hubs.

For example, last year I visited Fairfield community sports hub, in Dundee. With funding—targeted at hubs in areas of deprivation—from sportscotland, it has launched a sports employability programme. It is run in partnership with Dundee City Council adult learning service and targets unemployed men and women in the local community. It mixes desk-based learning and practical sport coaching qualifications, thereby supporting participants back into work. The programme has also partnered with the local prison to engage with inmates who are on day release.

Football and football clubs can also be a powerful force for good in communities, and a range of programmes that are led by the Scottish Football Association and partners are delivering a wide range of outcomes. Football acts as a hook to attract people to participate in a range of activities. The pioneering and hugely successful football fans in training—FFIT—programme, which is directly funded by the Scottish Government, is a notable example. Football engages people who are not attracted by traditional interventions. They are often people who most need help and whom we must therefore reach. Countless other programmes are delivering outcomes across a range of portfolios, including health, education and justice.

We need to work together to gain a better understanding of the needs of the wider communities and individuals with whom we are working, in order to identify target groups and to develop appropriate services and activities for people. I want the barriers to participation—real or perceived—to be removed. It sounds obvious, but benefits can be achieved only if people participate. We need to understand who is and who is not participating in sport and physical activity, and what barriers people face that stop them from participating.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): It is fair to say that one barrier to getting more people cycling and walking is the lack of safe infrastructure. Currently, the Government spends

a measly 3 per cent of the £2.4 billion transport budget on that specific infrastructure. Does the minister intend that we will do better in the future? We are about to miss the target of 10 per cent of journeys being made by bike by 2020.

Joe FitzPatrick: We need to work together across the system to remove barriers. Alison Johnstone mentioned one barrier, and she will be aware of the significant increase in funding in that respect. There are some fantastic projects that are in their early stages. For example, I am really excited about a project that would make more of Dundee's streets suitable for cycling. Clearly, there is work to be done to take the majority of the population, who currently do not cycle, with us on that journey. If we want more of our road space to be safer for cycling, we need to accept that there will be less space for motor cars, especially on established streets. There is a sacrifice to be made, but, if we work together, we can take the whole community with us on the issue. That is one barrier, and we need to work with local government and other partners across society to address it.

Barriers to participation in sport and physical activity can be complex and varied. They include lack of confidence and negative experiences of sport and physical activity in a person's past. Considering those barriers, and how they might be stopping some of our community from participating, will help us to deliver services and activities that attract the widest range of people, including those who, traditionally, are least likely to participate. I want inclusive, accessible and stronger communities that seek to support those who are inactive to get active. The aim should be to provide everyone with the chance to get involved, no matter their age or ability. I also want more family sessions that involve the whole family supporting each other to take part in sport and physical activity.

Person-centred approaches such as youth work and community development approaches focus on the needs, skills and aspirations of individuals and communities. By building on sports development and person-centred approaches, we can create services and activities that meet the needs of communities and our target groups.

Our staff and volunteers across the country are one of our most valuable resources. If we engage people from the communities in which those staff and volunteers are working, we will provide reliable and knowledgeable role models. We need to ensure that everyone is well supported and committed to what we are trying to change, by developing a range of appropriate skills through person-centred and sports-development approaches.

For example, practitioners can use the thrive toolkit, which brings together learning about what works in helping inactive people to become active. It promotes a small-steps approach to supporting people on their active journey and recognises that small things can make a big difference. That toolkit has led to the development of the actify project, of which members will be aware.

However, the fact is that no one organisation has the ability to make changes within its communities on its own. Finding like-minded organisations or groups with which to collaborate in communities can make a bigger impact for everyone. We must do that across society, and work with organisations and sport groups.

The changing lives through sport and physical activity programme is very important in supporting organisations to use sport and physical activity to achieve positive individual and community change. SportsScotland, the Scottish Government, the Robertson Trust and Spirit of 2012, together with partners, are delivering a wide programme of support and funding that supports organisations to use sport and physical activity intentionally to achieve positive individual and community change as a core element of the existing world-class sporting system.

To support community-based sport and physical activity, projects across Scotland have benefited from a £1 million fund as part of the changing lives through sport and physical activity programme. Launched in April 2018, the fund has, over the past while, been benefiting 17 projects nationally. There are a number of examples that I wish I had time to cover, but I really do not. The programme and fund are aimed at projects that demonstrate a clear commitment to the key themes of sport for inclusion, sport for health and wellbeing, sport for skills and sport for communities. I see that capacity-building work as being very much about ensuring that the changing lives approach is sustainable and becomes embedded.

I would like to see everyone recognising the power of using sport and physical activity intentionally to bring about positive change for individuals and communities across Scotland. I am looking forward to hearing about the progress of the funded projects and wish everyone involved well in their endeavours.

We should have had much more time for the debate.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that sport and physical activity can bring about positive change beyond participation that benefits the health and wellbeing of individuals and improve their skills and learning; acknowledges that it makes communities better connected and more socially cohesive, ensuring a more inclusive and healthier nation, and recognises that this can be achieved

by sporting and non-sporting organisations working together to use sport and physical activity to intentionally bring about both increased participation and wider social outcomes.

15:51

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank the Scottish Government for the opportunity to speak on this topic. Like the minister, I wish only that we had more time in which to do so. We will support the Government motion and the Labour amendment.

I could quite easily make this speech in Westminster, as it would be just as relevant.

On Tuesday, I spoke to a representative of Children 1st, who wanted to tell me how he got into the parkrun habit; how he had been joined by his sons; how one of his sons had received the prize for the most personal bests in the parkrun last year; how his neighbour had then joined them, along with one of his son's friends, who went on to get his t-shirt for completing 10 parkruns, which was the first thing that he had ever won; and how they understood that, in order to beat their time, they would have to go out running during the week.

That one story has everything that we need to know about the impact of sport and physical activity: it speaks to attainment, ambition, resilience, confidence, inclusion and discipline—all within an active families framework. Those are life lessons learned far away from a class room, but they are important tools for achieving in the classroom that, along the way, have a hugely positive impact on physical and mental health.

If we want to tackle lack of attainment, many of the tools that a student needs are better learned outside the classroom than in it. Eye tracking, co-ordination and balance are crucial to attainment in the classroom—I remember saying that last year in a debate, led by Liz Smith, on the STEP programme. I do not know how many decision makers in this place—or in any other place for that matter—fully grasped that concept.

On Tuesday night, I watched a TV programme in which Sebastian Coe said that sport is

“not funded properly. We've strangled the life out of the youth services in this country ... Politicians ... still really don't get that ... They don't understand what sport is doing at community level.”

I would go further than that. The poor health issues that are preventable and in which sport and physical activity can play such a key role include obesity; chest, heart and stroke conditions; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; type 2 diabetes; musculoskeletal conditions and arthritis; poor mental health; and preventable cancers—the list goes on and on. Those conditions cost the

Scottish economy about £30 billion a year and, according to the Health and Sport committee investigation, that figure is rising. Physical activity is also a key element in rehabilitation.

That suggests to me that the Scottish Government is prepared to pay for the consequences of physical inactivity, rather than invest in enabling activity. Between the health and education budgets, the Scottish Government spends the best part of £18 billion a year, yet it allocates only about £40 million to sport.

For me, a good sports policy is a good health policy and a good education policy. It is also the best policy for social cohesion that I can think of. On the same TV programme on Tuesday, Daley Thompson said that sport is

“not the complete answer or the only answer but sport can change lives for the better. Sport is the most potent social worker in any community!”

Sebastian Coe and Daley Thompson are from such disparate backgrounds, but they are close friends who were brought together by sport. Sport has the ability to see past colour, creed, religion or social background and join people with a common passion and respect. In today's world, is that not what we are striving for?

When it comes to funding, what are we doing with the proceeds of the sugar tax, for example? How about keeping schools open during school holidays for activities? We know that health inequalities are exacerbated in school holidays and that food bank usage spikes. Surely school activities during school holidays would be a positive use of those funds. Extracurricular sport is essential if we are to give access to opportunity. I think that that speaks very much to the Labour amendment.

Here we are, sitting in this place and, like many other forums, talking shops and conventions, having the same conversations over and over again while so many outcomes remain unchanged. I am sure that members from all parties who are taking part in this debate agree on the potential for sport to have a hugely positive influence on both health and education. However, it is doubtful whether many politicians or civil servants have the background or knowledge to appreciate fully the power of sport. I would love to bring somebody like Kelly Holmes in here so that there would be an opportunity to hear from someone who has lived sport, because it has shaped who she is. Through her organisation, she is now helping thousands of disenfranchised children to find their way back into society using sport as a medium.

Sport has the potential to offer children an alternative path in life—not necessarily into a life of sport—by enabling them to re-engage. We have

to make sport accessible to all and make it easy to participate. I have a few suggestions in that regard. It is obvious to me that there should be a physical education specialist in every primary school. We should fully utilise the school estate, especially at the end of the school day before pupils go home, and recognise the importance of extracurricular activity. We should not wait for pupils to come to sport but bring sport to them. We should use schools as community hubs outside school time, including in school holidays, when activity and a healthy meal can continue to be part of the day for all pupils.

We should also connect PE lessons with what is on offer in the community and ensure that what is learned in PE can be applied on an on-going basis. If there is a desire for a certain activity, we should bring in the relevant national governing body to help deliver on that passion. We need to look to the third sector and the clubs and organisations that deliver on that agenda and look at how we recruit into the third sector. Dr Frank Dick wrote a really interesting paper on that that is definitely worth a read. We must ensure that there is a pathway for young sportsmen and women to travel and a destination on that path that matches their ambition.

Presiding Officer, there is so much more that I would like to say on this topic if I had a bit more time, as you know. The Government motion suggests its intent, and I genuinely believe that that is the direction of travel that the Government wants to go in. However, the current system is a very long way from delivering what it can on this agenda and there is much more to be done if we are to truly recognise the importance of sport and realise its potential for the people of Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-17034.2, to insert at end:

“; recognises that sport should be available to all, irrespective of background or personal circumstances; considers that sport in school and in extracurricular activities is the best way to ensure access for all; believes that physical education should reflect the sporting opportunities in local communities and local clubs, and considers that investment in sport should reflect the positive impact that it can have in the health of the nation and attainment in Scotland’s schools.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call David Stewart to speak to and move amendment S5M-17034.1. You have five minutes.

15:58

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer. Sport and physical activity are the ideal social prescribing tools and the key preventative spend for the health service, but it is also crucial for the economic productivity of our nation. I will give members an example.

Scientists at the University of Alberta observed 2,400 families and found that spending two hours or more a day on devices such as smartphones was linked to high rates of behavioural problems in younger children but that that was offset by participation in organised sport. The leader of the study, Dr Mandhane, said:

“It wasn’t physical activity on its own that was protective; the activity needed to have structure. The more time children spent doing organised sports, the less likely they were to exhibit behavioural problems.”

The key is to normalise activity, by which I mean making it regular and measurable. It might include, for example, a 10,000-step target; a daily mile; and taking the stairs, not the lift. When I was on the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, we had a discussion about member room allocation, and one wit, who will remain nameless, suggested that the rooms on the highest floor and furthest from the lift should be allocated to members most in need of physical activity.

My football club, Inverness Caledonian Thistle—and I should, at this point, refer to my entry in the register of members’ interests—offers exercise classes to fans who are over 50, including walking football, which has been very successful. Indeed, during the Presiding Officer’s tour last year, I watched a game of walking football at Charleston academy in Inverness, and one of the star players had early-onset dementia.

However, I am concerned that poor levels of participation in sport are exacerbated by deprivation. Figures from the 2017 Scottish health survey revealed that

“adult physical activity”

rates

“were significantly associated with area deprivation”,

with such activity

“highest ... in the least deprived areas”

and lowest in the most deprived areas. I am sure that we all know from personal experience that taking part in sport comes with a price tag for, say, clothing, equipment, club membership and class fees, and low-income households are far too often priced out of sports clubs, gyms and activities, even if they exist in the local community.

Lower physical activity levels were also associated with age and sex. For example, only two thirds of adults met the guidelines for physical activity, while lower levels of activity were associated with increased age, as one would expect, and with being female.

The other main strand of my amendment is recovery and rehabilitation, which we have heard about already from Brian Whittle. Physical activity is, of course, crucial to recovery from illness and

injury, but it is also a key factor in maintaining the wellbeing of people who are living with long-term conditions. According to the 2017 Scottish household survey, individuals living with long-term conditions are, as one would expect, far less likely to be physically active; in fact, the figure is 40 per cent, compared with 89 per cent for people with no condition. There are clear gaps in the provision of appropriate physical activity programmes and rehab support in Scotland's communities.

Of course, members should not take just my word for it. Arthritis Research UK has called on the Scottish Government to support local healthcare providers in boosting programmes for people with musculoskeletal conditions. Moreover, Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland estimates that 70,000 people in Scotland could benefit from pulmonary rehab, but currently there is only capacity for 6,000. I should point out to the minister that in my own health board in Highland, an estimated 3,400 patients with COPD would benefit from such rehab, but there is capacity only for 307, a shocking 9 per cent of the total.

School activities are vital to closing the participation gap. As members will know, Scottish Labour established the active schools network in 2004, and we want an increase in the levels of free and affordable sport. Brian Whittle has already referred to the soft drinks industry levy, and I hope that, when he winds up, the minister will address that point. Finally, the United Kingdom promised £1 billion-worth of funding for school sports between 2017 and 2020, so can the minister—if he is paying attention—confirm in his closing remarks that the Scottish Government will commit to ring fencing the Barnett consequentials to fund free sport in schools?

I welcome this important debate. As John F Kennedy said,

“physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body; it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity.”

I move amendment S5M-17034.1, to insert at end:

“; notes with concern the deprivation gap in levels of physical activity and considers that, regardless of background or ability to pay, physical activities should be accessible for all; appreciates the importance of appropriate physical activity for recovery following illness or injury, and believes that the Scottish Government should work to address the gap in provision of community-based exercise initiatives such as pulmonary rehabilitation.”

16:03

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I welcome this debate on the positive effects of sports and physical activity on Scotland's population, and I thank the many organisations that have provided briefings for it. I will say at the outset that the Scottish Greens will support the Government motion and the Labour and Conservative amendments.

The health, social and economic benefits of physical activity are well publicised and there is compelling scientific evidence that regular physical activity is beneficial to both body and mind. I am pleased that the Conservative and Labour amendments address the issue of access, because I, too, want to focus on that.

I welcome the Government's motion and its recognition of the many benefits that sport can bring to communities. I am sure that we all recognise that there is still great variation in the ability to take part in sport and physical activity across the country. As David Stewart mentioned in his contribution, there is an explicit link between deprivation and physical inactivity. Although I agree that it would be wonderful—and it must be our aim—for everyone in Scotland to be able to ride their bike to school or work, join a local football team if that is their thing, or simply go for a walk in their local park regularly, it is still an oversimplification to say that that is always a matter of choice.

Sports facilities can be prohibitively expensive for families—that is, if they are available at all. In my region, Meadowbank stadium is closed for long-overdue refurbishment. However, to fund that work, part of the site has had to be sold off. Such a model is unsustainable: we cannot fund future refurbishments by selling off land for housing. Much needed though more housing may be, we must sustain and maintain leisure and sports facilities in Scotland and invest in them; otherwise people will find it much more difficult to lead the healthy, active lifestyles that we want them to have.

We also need to ensure that appropriate infrastructure to allow walking and cycling is in place. A recent study on inequalities in active travel found that people who lived in the most deprived areas were more likely to undertake journeys on foot or by bike than those who lived in the least deprived. As the minister will appreciate, walking does very well as far as gender equality is concerned: 69 per cent of men and 71 per cent of women take part in recreational walking, which bucks the usual trend. Greater investment in walking and cycling infrastructure will benefit people who live in areas of deprivation and will help to reduce health inequalities.

Greens have had a long-standing policy—for as long as I can remember being a member of the party—that active travel should receive at least 10

per cent of the transport budget. That is backed by the Scottish Directors of Public Health and many more. It would bring our spending levels up to £25 per head, which would put us on a par with the Netherlands. If any member is interested in having a look at the data for that country, they will see that it is not suffering from the obesity epidemic that we have here. As Brian Whittle said, we need to build activity into daily life. We might not always have the time to do something specific, but if we can get some exercise on our way to and from work, that is helpful.

We know that access to local good-quality green space improves people's physical and mental health. It is estimated that parks and green spaces save the national health service £111 million per year, based solely on the estimated reduction in visits to general practitioners. Greenspace Scotland tells us that 90 per cent of urban Scots say that green space is important to them. However, one in four Scots says that the quality of such space has declined in the past five years. Public parks and sports areas account for just 4 per cent and 9 per cent of green space, respectively. As austerity continues to impact on public sector spending, council expenditure on parks and green spaces has continued to decline. We must ensure that we see leadership on that coming from the Parliament and that people have access to facilities and spaces in which they can run, walk and play.

In closing, I mention that the Government, or one of its agencies, previously produced a report on the amount of green space and playing fields that had been lost. I would be grateful if the minister could look into whether that information is available, because I am finding it hard to get hold of.

16:08

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Presiding Officer, sport inspires us. Tomorrow night, my nine-year-old son will have the great dilemma of whether to wear his Sadio Mané shirt or his Mo Salah shirt when I take him and his older brother down to Anfield to watch the title run-in.

Brian Whittle is right, and I am going to take up his challenge. From time to time, we have debates on this subject, and we talk around these issues. I have heard Brian Whittle make many positive contributions such as the one that he made earlier. I have certainly heard one sports minister after another making the kind of contribution that Joe FitzPatrick rightly did today and saying many things that we can all agree with. However, what matters in this area is making things happen.

On that principle, I got some people together to try to build what the golf foundations of Paul

Lawrie in the north-east and Stephen Gallacher in West Lothian are doing. We hope to take our proposed programme around Scotland to ensure that it is available to all. We had a very useful meeting with the Deputy First Minister, which we requested because of the very point that the sports minister made in his speech, which is that it is not just about sport; in fact, sport is neither here nor there. What is important is participation by people from every background. For example, children with disabilities can try golf, too. The programme is all about the broadest possible advantages that sport can bring, which the speeches that have been made so far have rightly mentioned. That kind of initiative is particularly important for the future of golf—Scotland is the home of golf, so we must continually stress the need for work on such projects.

The initiative is about so much more than sport. It brings advantages, such as improving young people's self-esteem through their ability to take up a new game that they have not tried before. If they like it, they can stay with it and take that experience through life. After all, golf is one of the sports that are easy to play one's whole life—although I know Brian Whittle's golf game, so perhaps a better way to put it would be to say that it is a sport that it is possible to play one's whole life.

Alison Johnstone made the point about infrastructure and facilities. In Shetland, we built an indoor facility with a 60m by 40m fourth-generation pitch some years back, which is linked to the new Anderson high school in Lerwick. It provides state-of-the-art facilities. The best thing about it is that mums and dads can take their wee ones to football or rugby training, for example, and it is inside. It is not heated or anything and it does not need to be. Shetland's climate is not always what people see when they watch Shetland drama programmes on the telly—occasionally it rains and blows a blinkin hoolie. The advantage of that facility for junior coaching in particular is phenomenal and is already paying off.

I take Alison Johnstone's point that such facilities need to be much more widely available around Scotland and certainly in the far-flung parts of the country.

Shortly, the Shetland women's netball team will play in the final of the Evelyn Beattie quaich. Last weekend, they beat the Glasgow South Saltires—I apologise for being in Johann Lamont's patch—and they are now into the finals. That is a great achievement for the Shetland women's netball team. The Shetland women's hockey team play Orkney this weekend in the semi-final of the Scottish district cup and I hope we win—I am glad that Liam McArthur is not here. As I am on the topic of women's participation in sport, I will say

that the Shetland women's rugby team has had a phenomenally successful year. That sport is growing and developing in my part of the world, as it is across the country.

Sport can inspire—on that point I absolutely agree with Brian Whittle.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will move to the open debate. The opening speakers have used up most of the extra time, so I ask members to stick to four minutes for their speeches.

16:12

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): We have heard some very interesting speeches and I agree with everything that has been said. I will not speak about the various clubs in my constituency as I would normally do, but I will speak about a very interesting project that I came across that was launched by the Scottish Government. I am the convener of the cross-party group on older people, age and ageing and I thought that I would speak with that hat on.

The focus of my speech will be a significant programme carried out by the Care Inspectorate. In 2016, the Care Inspectorate was commissioned by the Scottish Government to deliver care about physical activity—or CAPA, for short. The programme aims to improve the health and wellbeing, independence and quality of life of older people experiencing care at home or in care homes across Scotland. The independent research results have hailed the programme as a complete success.

The programme empowers care staff by giving them the confidence, knowledge and skills to promote and enable opportunities for movement for older people experiencing care. It was delivered across Scotland and involved 140 care services, including care homes, respite services, day care, sheltered housing and care-at-home services.

The independent research commissioned by the Care Inspectorate, which I have already mentioned, found that older people involved in the programme had significantly improved their hand grip strength and their lower leg strength and had gradually increased their flexibility, which improved mobility and levels of independence and significantly reduced their likelihood of falls as a result of moving more. The research also found that people had been supported to feel

“significantly happier, more satisfied with their lives, more worthwhile and ... less anxious”,

after being involved in the CAPA programme.

People experiencing care also reported improvements in their quality of life, including a sense of purpose, being more socially

connected—as is mentioned in the Government motion—having a greater sense of wellbeing, and being more confident as a result of moving more each day.

I want to highlight one particular strand of the CAPA programme that I found really interesting—it is an award-winning intergenerational project. It won the award for being the most inspiring and innovative project at the 2018 Scottish Government and Healthcare Improvement Scotland quality improvement awards.

The project is about bringing nursery school kids along to care homes. Members may have seen it on the TV, but it is not just on the television; it is actually happening throughout Scotland. Basically, local residents and kids from nursery schools are brought together, meaning that people are more active. The pilot project was set up with a group of residents, parents and staff from care homes and nurseries, who discussed what they wanted to get out of the project and ideas about what changes they could make to sessions to benefit both generations.

What were the benefits? Well, there was the obvious benefit of social interaction between the older and younger participants. In addition, as well as doing their 1 mile walk to the care home, the children actually started to walk more, and more quickly, improving their health and fitness. Those are nursery school kids.

The residents' activity levels were measured at each session and the results showed much improved physical ability and wellbeing, and—as I said before—increased levels of happiness and confidence, and reduced anxiety. All of those went hand in hand with those projects.

As I said, such projects are present across Scotland; they happen across Glasgow on a weekly basis. However, they are sporadic—there are some in my area but not in others. The project model benefits everyone who is involved. I advocate such intergenerational work and would like to see it happen across more of Scotland. When the minister sums up, will she say whether there are any plans to push the programme out across the country?

16:16

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I am pleased to take part in today's debate on changing lives through sport and physical activity. Sport and physical activity can undoubtedly go a long way in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, as well as having wider benefits for society.

The challenge—as Brian Whittle outlined—is encouraging more people to participate in sport and physical activity, and nowhere is that a bigger

challenge than in deprived communities. Although sport and physical activity can provide significant benefits for everyone, our young people can benefit the most from sport and physical exercise through health benefits in later life.

I welcome some of the good work that the Scottish Government has taken forward, including the work around community sports hubs, which those of us who sit on the Health and Sport Committee have had the chance to visit. I visited the hub in Aviemore and was hugely impressed by its work. I also recognise the work of fellow St Johnstone fan, Aileen Campbell, when she was involved as Minister for Public Health and Sport.

Alison Johnstone and Tavish Scott both highlighted an important point in this debate—namely, that we need to actually make things happen. I am therefore very concerned about the cuts to sport and leisure budgets that we are seeing in councils across our country. For example, the City of Edinburgh Council has decided to make an 8.6 per cent cut to its sport and leisure budget, which is one of the largest of the council's budget cuts. The council is strongly opposed to reducing funding and is aiming to take forward the healthier lifestyle programme, which the capital has said is one of its priorities. Those cuts mean that the cost of accessing services will increase, which goes against the strategy that the council has put forward.

Last summer, the City of Edinburgh Council proposed that sport clubs in the city would pay £35 an hour to use school sports halls, which would have directly hit junior sports clubs across the capital; I raised that with the cabinet secretary during the last debate. I am pleased that, following public outcry, those proposals were put on hold. However, since then, the City of Edinburgh Council has stated that it still plans to raise fees for clubs that use sports facilities, putting up barriers for local sports clubs at the very time that we should be taking them down.

That is at the heart of the point that Tavish Scott was raising. We can have this debate and talk about progress, but councils are where that progress is being unpicked and where barriers to the potential solutions that we all want to see are being put up.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): Will Miles Briggs take an intervention?

Miles Briggs: I do not have time—I have only four minutes.

Many charities around Lothian are doing exceptional work and trying to change people's lives through sport. One of the charities that I have been working with is the School of Hard Knocks, which uses sport to build people's confidence and

develop their skills in order to get into employment. I recently attended its awards event, which was hosted at Spartans community football club here in the capital city.

In the past year, the charity has worked with more than 100 adults, with 40 per cent of them finding employment, 8 per cent volunteering and 18 per cent moving into further education or training. Of the adults who have completed the School of Hard Knocks programme, 95 per cent have improved their self-confidence, motivation, hopefulness and ability to face the challenges of getting back into the workplace. Talking at the event with participants in the School of Hard Knocks programme and hearing their first-hand experience, I found that it was clear that graduates felt that sport had had a transformational effect on their lives.

Every member in this chamber is united in wanting to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland and in believing that we can help to achieve that. Sport and physical activity can bring a lot of positive stories and benefits to people's lives, so we need to focus our efforts on improving participation rates around Scotland and on how our councils deliver that. I am engaged with that and I know that we all want it to happen, but I want to make sure that the Government is wise to the barriers that some councils put up.

I support the amendment in Brian Whittle's name.

16:21

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): We always say in the chamber that we welcome a debate, and that has become a bit of a cliché at the start of members' speeches. However, I whole-heartedly believe in what we are trying to achieve with this debate. It is not just about the medals or trophies that we win, how high or far we jump, how fast we run or how hard we kick or hit any size or shape of ball; it is about using sport as a key element in changing people's lives for the better.

The timing of the debate could not be better for me, as it comes in the middle of multiple sclerosis awareness week. I am not one to take advantage of an opportunity, but I want to talk about a project that was jointly funded by the Multiple Sclerosis Society Scotland and the Scottish Government. The active together project was a multilayered programme in Scotland that aimed to support those with and affected by MS to continue to stay active. The project needed to be extremely focused, because one of the few symptoms that is shared by most people with MS is chronic fatigue. The project was co-designed and developed by people with MS, and it ran between August 2017 and November 2018.

The findings from the project were interesting. The MS Society found that as people's attitudes to physical activity or exercise improved, there was a movement to the approach that they had interacted with and found most useful among the programmes that were on offer. It empowered those with MS who were involved with the programme.

Also interesting among the findings was that people with MS wanted to take part in activities that were MS friendly and suitable for their condition, but they felt less comfortable being in an MS-only environment that isolated them from people of other abilities and conditions. People with MS want to be seen as an equal part of our community, and sport and fitness activities provide a way for them to achieve that.

I will read a couple of quotes from the 200-plus people who participated in the programme.

"It was very emotional getting on a horse again, and my daughters are so proud that I did it."

That was from a woman who took part in horse-riding in the programme.

"I have found my forever sport, because, regardless of what happens to me through my MS, I can continue to curl."

That was obviously from someone who was involved with the sport of curling, whose origins are in Paisley, as everybody knows.

When we look at the active together programme, through which the Scottish Government and the MS Society worked together to make a difference to those people's lives, we can see that people are now moving on and continuing with their sporting activities.

I, too, have a vision for sport and activity in the community. I might have mentioned before that I am a supporter of St Mirren FC. We went so far with pushing forward its community programme that, as a community, we bought the club. My vision is similar to what Miles Briggs said about Spartans: we want to build a football club that has a fantastic community programme and will make the community better.

St Mirren FC is in Ferguslie Park, which is right in the heart of Paisley and is always mentioned in this chamber when we discuss deprivation. My idea is that we should consider how we can create a multisports development to help people with education and access to work and to make sure that they get the opportunity to use sport as a way of gaining the confidence to move forward in the world. For me, that is the most important thing.

In debates such as this one, we talk about people winning medals. If a young person from Paisley wins a medal, I will take that, but it is not all about that. Sport is not all about winning; it is

about changing people's lives and making sure that we enable them to be all that they can be in the future.

16:25

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I usually start off by saying that I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. I do not want to come across as a curmudgeon, but I have to say that I have enjoyed the debate far more than I expected to. Some interesting and substantial speeches have been made.

However, I make the point that the Scottish Government needs to think about how it allocates its time. There is an issue about choosing "safe" debates. It has been shown that such debates might not, in fact, be so safe. We need to be careful that we do not rehearse the same arguments over and over again. I make a plea to the minister to think about how Government time is used so that we can really challenge existing practice and make a difference. I am not casting any aspersions on the minister's commitment to changing lives through sport and physical activity, and I have no objection to or disagreement with the self-evident truth of the substance of the motion. I have no disagreement, either, with members who have made serious contributions to the debate.

For the avoidance of doubt, I absolutely agree that physical activity is good for people's health and for our communities. Indeed, when I was a young woman who was not particularly involved in sport, the development in the 1980s of the fun run movement got me out in a pair of trainers, to the point that on one occasion I managed to finish—if, not quite, to run—a marathon, so I know that that kind of unusual sport, rather than just formal sport, is extremely important in people's lives.

I come from a city in which a Labour council actively decided that in order to address the city's economic and health challenges, it would engage in massive cultural and sporting activities, to the extent that Glasgow hosted the Commonwealth games and is now one of the most popular venues in the world for sport. That is testimony to what sport can do.

Despite there being some evidence to the contrary, I am all in favour of building consensus, but the real challenge that we face in building consensus relates not to what we should build consensus on or why we should do so, but to how we take forward our aspirations. Too often, that is left behind. We have debates in which we settle on which lines to take, and we have the usual party divisions instead of trying to connect our discussions to real changes in our policy thinking. I

have, innumerable times, made the plea on education—

Joe FitzPatrick: Johann Lamont asked about the “How?” An example of how we can proceed is the changing lives fund that I mentioned earlier. It has funded the charities Active Stirling and Signpost Recovery, which I visited last week. It was really inspiring to hear directly from service users about their lived experience of substance misuse and the vital part that sport and physical activity are playing in their recovery. That is just one example of how we are using sport and physical activity to change lives. We are doing that now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you four and a half minutes, Ms Lamont.

Johann Lamont: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I appreciate that, because I always overindulge myself.

We have asked for education debates on substantial issues: the Government should consider that.

The minister is right that there are lots of good things happening. We hear many brilliant ideas in the chamber, but we are not being transmogrative enough—we are not challenging some of the fundamental decisions that the Government takes that shape our capacity to do what we want to do. It is not just aspiration and policy that are important; the budget decisions that the Government takes are having direct consequences for the capacity of local authorities and communities to deliver the changes that we aspire to make. Local government cuts are having consequences for our capacity to deliver at local level. We know that community football does far more than just teach young people about football, but it does that without one coin of support from anybody in the system. We ought to look at that.

I was a swim mum, and have spent too many mornings in my life going to a swimming pool at 5 in the morning. It would have been impossible if my husband had not been able to share in doing that and if we had not had a car. We know that inequality is burned in to some of the problems around sport, so we need to hear from the Government how it connects its aspirations, which are absolutely right, to the budget choices that it makes that make those aspirations far more difficult to achieve. Will the minister, in his summing up, address the question about how budget choices match the policy aspirations to which we can all sign up?

16:30

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Sport and physical activity have the power

to change lives. We know that, if people eat well and exercise, they are more likely to live longer, less likely to get ill, and more likely to be happy. Sport has the propensity to do that, and even mild physical activity, such as walking, has the power to make everyone, including cynical MSPs, feel better about themselves.

Too often, however, access to sport is predicated on the ability to pay for things such as gym membership, swimming lessons, or even buying a bike. In the dim and now, seemingly, distant past, I taught about health inequalities in modern studies classes. That was around the time of the infamous “fat man of Europe” headline. I recall being told confidently by a senior class, in a classroom not too far from here, that if poor people could not afford gym membership, they could simply go for a run. We then got into a good debate about why that might not be possible, and about environments and their impact on life expectancy, for example.

Later that year, I arranged for the then chief medical officer, Sir Harry Burns, to speak to the class about health inequalities. I will always remember his presentation about the importance of relationships in our formative years, access to green space, and regular exercise—things that many of my pupils, who were growing up in leafy Barnton, often took for granted.

In the kingdom of Fife, Fife Sports and Leisure Trust is required by Fife Council to widen the level of participation in sport and active recreation, to develop opportunities and pathways for people to take up and fulfil their potential in sport, and to provide good quality and adequately resourced facilities and services that meet the needs and aspirations of Fifers and visitors to the area. Since its launch, in 2008, the trust has seen a two-thirds increase in male membership of gyms, a 90 per cent increase in children aged 5 to 17 and an 84 per cent increase in adults aged 18 to 64. As a result, Fife Sports and Leisure Trust is contributing to an estimated £2.7 million of savings to health services in Fife. Indeed, “Scottish Health Survey 2016: volume 1: main report” showed that 63 per cent of adults and 73 per cent of children in Scotland met the guidelines for moderate or vigorous physical activity in the previous year.

Scottish Government research shows that a lack of physical activity contributes to nearly 2,500 deaths in Scotland and costs the NHS around £91 million per year. Preventative spend and investment in sport and activity for all are therefore vital.

Last week, I visited Rainbow Nursery in Glenrothes as part of its Easter wellie walk. It was a real privilege to walk with the toddlers along Boblingen Way and to roll eggs at Warout stadium. Although they were small, the children

were certainly determined about their egg rolling, so I was very careful to dart out of the road to avoid being torpedoed by a stray boiled egg. Rainbow is a great example of an early learning and childcare setting that embeds outdoor learning in all that it does. Walking was just another part of Wednesday's learning.

We know that if children are taught about the importance of sport and exercise at a young age, they are much more likely to continue to take part throughout their adult lives. In 2017, the Health and Sport Committee, of which I am a former member, published the results of our "Sport for Everyone" inquiry. I remember being taken by evidence that we heard from the Robertson Trust about access to the school estate, especially access after school hours. The Robertson Trust advised the committee that

"costs of accessing the school estate are too high. Indeed, we have had conversations with organisations seeking to take on or build their own facility due to the fact that they are not able to access facilities in their local community at a time or price that is suitable for them."

I appreciate that that is outwith the minister's portfolio, but I would be grateful if he could consider reflecting on use of the school estate, within the parameters of closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and the obvious opportunities that should present as a result of opening up our schools for community use. This afternoon's motion is focused on sport and physical activity to change lives and to promote social cohesion. Our schools are well placed to advance that agenda: many already do so.

Our early learning settings embed outdoor learning using physical activity every day, but we should all resolve to think critically about ways in which we can make sport more accessible to our constituents. It is an area that often excludes the poorest people in our society.

16:34

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): Just before the Easter recess, I took part in a debate that was led by my colleague Brian Whittle about the importance of a healthy diet to tackle Scotland's growing problems with obesity. In our debate, we discussed how important it is to teach our kids the value of good nutrient-rich food. It is clear that, in addition, we must also teach our kids about the necessity of living an active lifestyle. A healthy diet and an active lifestyle go hand in hand.

Only two thirds of Scottish adults met guideline amounts of physical activity in 2017. Two thirds of adults in Scotland are overweight, including 29 per cent who are obese, which leaves Scotland with the worst obesity records among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

countries. Cancer Research UK statistics show that the obesity crisis in Scotland has led to an estimated 4,800 cases of bowel cancer in the past decade. That is a national crisis.

There is no easy fix, but it would be a good start for our children if we could put in place measures to reduce health inequality, such as giving more opportunities for our schools to provide the best physical activity and healthy meals.

Last year, the Scottish Conservatives set out our strategy to improve nutrition and activity and to reduce health inequalities in Scotland. The strategy focuses on the link between nutrition, activity and education. Only 33 per cent of children aged five to 15 are active at the recommended level of at least 60 minutes on every day of the week. Those figures decline massively as children get older: from 45 per cent of children aged five to seven to only 18 per cent of those aged 13 to 15. Something is going seriously wrong.

School is where many children get their first experience of sport. We must use that opportunity and take sport and physical activity to the children in our schools, rather than hope that they seek them outside school.

Joe FitzPatrick: I thank Peter Chapman for allowing me to make a point about the active schools programme, which has support across the chamber. It has been in place for a number of years and is to be commended. More than 309,000 young people engaged in the programme in 2018. It bucks the trend with regard to economic deprivation; access to and participation in that scheme goes right across Scotland and across communities.

Peter Chapman: I agree with the minister.

However, I believe that many more hubs for out-of-school activities should be established in order to ensure that social inclusion is available for all—coupled with the opportunity to participate in an activity of choice. We need to do more. If schools would open their facilities to more out-of-hours clubs, there would be more opportunities for local teams and clubs to grow, and more youngsters would get the chance to enjoy sport.

The long-term strategic nature of those recommendations would not only have a positive effect on reducing physical health inequalities and improving sport participation, but would help in prevention of mental health problems. The Scottish Association for Mental Health states that the three main principles for good mental health are inclusivity—namely, opportunities to participate in social activity—consistent mental activity and consistent physical activity. James Jopling, who is the executive director of Samaritans Scotland, has said:

“Physical activity can provide mental health and wellbeing benefits of itself, but can also provide an environment for individuals to connect with other people and provide an antidote for some to feelings of social isolation and loneliness.”

Attainment studies show that pupils who have an active lifestyle outside school show significant improvements in attention, behaviour and academic achievement. As closing the attainment gap is a priority for every political party, and given that consistent evidence shows that having an active lifestyle can be a solution, it is vital that a sport and active lifestyle strategy be front and centre of any plan to tackle the attainment gap and health inequality.

16:38

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I will talk about cycling, which will come as no surprise to people who know me. The health benefits of cycling are clear. It is a form of exercise for recreational use as well as for endurance and a way to go about our daily lives. It is also an everyday way of protecting the environment; bikes were zero emissions before the phrase was invented.

Cycling can help to reduce the risk of chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke, while boosting people’s mood and keeping their weight under control. It is low impact, it is very good for core muscles and, when people can do it safely, it is also great fun. However, I associate myself with Alison Johnstone’s comments about cycling safety and the need for better, safer infrastructure.

General practitioners around Scotland are beginning to prescribe activities such as walking and cycling to help treat illnesses including diabetes and heart disease. It has long been the case that exercise has been prescribed to patients suffering from depression. I recommend cycling as an ideal activity in that regard.

Cycling hubs, which give people access to bikes, are springing up throughout the country. For people who cannot afford to buy a bike, such hubs are all over the country. I believe that everyone should have the right to a bike. Costs can be a barrier to this sustainable and cheap-to-run form of transport, which is also a great source of exercise. However, people should have not just the right to a bike but the right to cycle that bike without fear of getting killed. Although 2018 figures show that road deaths in Scotland are down, they also show that deaths of road cyclists are up by 16 per cent, which is a sobering statistic.

I turn to some positives. In the north-east of Scotland, the University of Aberdeen has benefited from investment in electric bikes. The e-bike grant fund from the Scottish Government has

awarded the institution £15,000 for 12 e-bikes in the past year. The fund is focused on providing support to community organisations, local authorities, public sector agencies, colleges and universities through direct grants and it helps to ensure that people across Scotland can access the benefits of this new, exciting way of cycling. It is a great example of the investment in cycling and active travel that the Scottish Government is making. As Dave Stewart said in his contribution, there is an economic benefit from preventative spend on cycling.

In my Aberdeenshire East constituency, there are many brilliant routes, such as the Formartine and Buchan way, for people to get out and about, walking and cycling for leisure. However, cycling infrastructure for those wishing to commute between towns in Aberdeenshire or into Aberdeen city itself is not fit for purpose—I say that from personal experience. Real investment needs to be made to encourage people to swap cars for bikes to do their daily commute or shopping or simply to go about their daily lives.

All the same, recreational cycling can be a good way to socialise and meet new people; as has been said, it can combat social isolation and loneliness. There are a number of cycling groups in my constituency, such as the Buchan Dirlers Cycling Club, which is based in Mintlaw. The Belles on Bikes network is a Scotland-wide organisation, with a group in Aberdeenshire, that provides a friendly, inclusive and relaxed environment for women to take up cycling.

In January, I celebrated a milestone birthday and received a brand new Dutch road bike from my family. Yesterday, Jenny Gilruth suggested that I just talk for four minutes about that. I think that she was criticising the fact that I am always banging on about it. I want to use my passion for cycling as a vehicle to urge the Government to look once again at real transformational infrastructure investment in cycling to put Scotland on a par with our European neighbours such as Denmark and the Netherlands. Cycling should not be something that people just talk about as a hobby, as I have just done; with good, comprehensive cycling infrastructure, we could be a cycling nation, with our citizens cycling every day and all the health and environmental benefits that that brings.

16:03

David Stewart: This has been an excellent debate. I can safely say that, in my 12 years in this place, it is the first time that I have agreed with every word of every speech. Perhaps I am getting a bit mellow in my old age.

Brian Whittle, with his background in sport, spoke extremely well. He said that sport gives life lessons far from the classroom and that sport is not funded adequately but has a preventative role. I agree that good sport policy is good education policy. The quotation that

“Sport is the most potent social worker in any community”

is relevant and I support it.

I also agree with Alison Johnstone, who said that sport is good for body and mind but access is key. She gave the very good local example of Meadowbank. I did not realise that there was an issue with the land and the refurbishment. That was a good example of the importance of access. Infrastructure for walking and cycling is crucial. If I remember it correctly, I think that the Green policy is that active travel should get 10 per cent of the transport budget. That would be a huge investment and the chamber will look with great interest at future budget negotiations.

Tavish Scott made a relevant point about sport being inspiring. He says that we should make it happen. I was not aware of the initiative involving the golf tour around Scotland. I wish him well in that and I look forward to reading a lot about how the initiative develops in the future.

Sandra White talked about best practice examples from her constituency and how they aid wellbeing. She made an important point about the intergenerational programme and the possibility of the Scottish Government developing it more widely. Johann Lamont made a wider point about how the Government spends its time in this place and whether it should be looking at other topics to debate. We, of course, should focus on physical activity but she made a good point about the important role that Glasgow City carried out in attracting to Glasgow not just the Commonwealth games but—equally important—their legacy. We have had the Commonwealth games, but it is not just about the one-off; it is about the long-term infrastructure that we build.

In summary—I will shock you, Presiding Officer, by being under time for once in my entire life—this has been an excellent debate. My apologies to those members I have not mentioned. As I said in my introductory remarks, sport is the best tool for social prescribing and prevention.

In the spirit of consensus that has broken out today, Labour will support the Scottish Government motion—I am hoping that that support will be reciprocated when it comes to our amendment—and we will support the Tory amendment.

16:46

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It gives me great pleasure to sum up on behalf of the Conservatives after what has been a short but nonetheless important and enjoyable debate. Sport has a considerable role to play—as I think we all agree—in this country’s future health, wellbeing and prosperity; that was self-evident in the speeches. It was Tavish Scott who said that it is not sport itself but participation that is particularly relevant in that context. However, something tells me that when he goes to Anfield on Saturday, he will have a different perspective on that.

Sport transcends politics—and thank goodness for that. It gives hope to millions of people. It does not respect political divisions and nor should it. It enables people to develop many shared experiences, values and purpose, and builds personal pride, skills and responsibility.

Many members have pointed out that there is a great deal of educational evidence that encouraging more physical activity improves levels of attainment; the benefits are proven. In the context of the current attainment debate, that could hardly be more important. My colleague Brian Whittle mentioned initiatives such as the STEP programme, which is a bespoke, schools-based literacy programme that is aimed at pupils in primary 4 and 5. The programme has a proven track record of encouraging children to develop the fundamental skills that are needed to learn successfully.

Certainly, nobody pretends that the task is easy. Brian Whittle made an important point when he mentioned the STEP programme. The issue is not just about funds and facilities, although they are undoubtedly scarce; it is about some of the barriers that are in the way when it comes to ensuring that there are enough people—professionals and volunteers—to support all the sports activities that we need. Brian Whittle also talked about the better understanding that is required—we all need to take lessons on what that understanding must be composed of.

Just as we have had to deal with very difficult and complex situations when we have debated alcohol, drugs and smoking, we need to be bold in our approach to sport too, because the future of our young people is far too important, as indeed is the social fabric of our nation and the economic rewards of developing sporting infrastructure, for exactly the reasons that Johann Lamont cited in her excellent speech—she may not see herself as a sports lady, but I commend her for making some extremely important points in her speech. The research by sportscotland on the economic impact of sport and, in particular, the social aspect shows how much it contributes to our local communities,

to the jobs that are available in our communities and, of course, to consumer expenditure and the income that comes back from that, which is hardly an insignificant sum.

The essential starting place is building upon the projects that we know have worked—the minister cited a couple of those. However, it is not just about the quantitative evidence that we have; it is about the qualitative evidence, which proves that progress is being made.

In our constituencies, we all have examples of good projects but, for me, the most successful projects have defining characteristics, some of which Brian Whittle mentioned in talking about taking an approach that goes across portfolios.

Expanding the numbers that are involved in sport is important, but I am much more concerned about the quality of the experience that people have and the feeling that they can participate without any of the impediments or barriers that they sometimes face.

Access is needed to professionally trained physical education teachers, particularly for the earliest years, when interest is first sparked.

We also need to make it much easier for people to volunteer. I note what the Scottish Sports Association said about developing employer schemes that support and encourage volunteering. Alison Johnstone and I have been privileged to serve as co-conveners of the cross-party group on sport, and a main message that we have heard recently has been about the quality of the volunteering programme and about how much we need to encourage that, because it is a crucial part of building for the future.

In the time that I have, it is impossible to do justice to what everybody has said.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you an extra minute if you would like it.

Liz Smith: I shall take it. Unlike David Stewart, I will use the time.

David Stewart: Liz Smith can have my unused time.

Liz Smith: That is generous—thank you.

Important points have come out of the cross-party group on sport, which has been privileged to witness at first hand the outstanding work of the many third sector groups that promote extra-curricular activities in schools and particularly for children who might be denied the opportunity elsewhere. There are a lot of unsung heroes who work day and night to give youngsters an opportunity that we do not always know about. We should reward such work, but we are not always good at doing that.

If our society's mental wellbeing is to improve, building confidence and self-esteem is important, just as our health ambitions are. Such a theme is not always popular these days and is sometimes seen as slightly elitist, but I do not believe that it is—it is an intrinsic part of every person as they start on the journey of finding their inner being. Sport is crucial in that respect.

I thank the Presiding Officer for allowing me an extra minute, which I hope was worth while.

16:52

The Minister for Mental Health (Clare Haughey): I am delighted to close the debate on changing lives. I have been struck by the many contributions from across the chamber that have highlighted how sport and physical activity can be used intentionally to bring about positive change for communities and people. I was encouraged by the ways in which organisations are working together to use the collective power of sport and physical activity to create positive lasting change for individuals and communities that addresses specific needs.

I turn to the interesting contributions that have been made. The debate has been consensual and has shown the Parliament at its best, when members come together. Not for the first time, Brian Whittle spoke passionately about the power of sport and its holistic impact on lives. David Stewart spoke about the importance and the impact of individuals with long-term conditions remaining physically active. Alison Johnstone spoke about building activity into daily lives and about the importance of green spaces to us all.

It was unsurprising that Tavish Scott spoke proudly about Shetland's sporting success. He talked about Paul Lawrie, the proposed golf tour and the meeting with the Deputy First Minister. I assure Tavish Scott that sportscotland, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland have picked up a number of actions following that meeting.

Sandra White spoke about the award-winning CAPA project, for which my colleague the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing announced extra funding of £130,000 last September.

Unsurprisingly, George Adam spoke to us about Paisley and St Mirren, but he also spoke about the active together project, which encourages people with MS to be active with others and to join in with the community.

Johann Lamont's contribution on the infrastructure left in Glasgow after the Commonwealth games struck a personal note with me today. In my constituency of Rutherglen, we were blessed with Cuningar Loop, which is a

development from the Commonwealth games that is the largest urban park in South Lanarkshire. Only yesterday, it won the Royal Town Planning Institute award for planning excellence for health and wellbeing. It has had a big impact on the health and wellbeing of my constituents and many more across Glasgow.

Jenny Gilruth spoke about the success of Fife Sports and Leisure Trust and the increase in participation, and we heard about Gillian Martin's passion for cycling, the need for safer infrastructure and her ambition for Scotland to be a cycling nation. Those are varied contributions.

From the work that organisations do in communities, which we have heard much about, it is clear that sport and physical activity can have very positive and life-changing effects on mental wellbeing. Mental health is an absolute priority for the Scottish Government, and strong research is now emerging to support the strong positive links between physical activity and positive mental wellbeing. Almost everyone knows the benefits of being physically active, and we want people to be more active, more often in part because being active is good for mental wellbeing. Being physically active can reduce stress, improve self-esteem and help to manage depression and anxiety.

David Stewart: Will the minister give way?

Clare Haughey: I am pressed for time—I am sorry.

I want to see an increase in the number of people who engage in sport or physical activity, not for its own sake but for the wider benefits that it can bring, particularly for mental wellbeing. However, doing sport is not just about playing in teams or joining a club. Any kind of physical activity can boost mental wellbeing—from swimming to walking, dance or golf. The changing room is a great example of partners working together through football to promote men's mental health and wellbeing through the power of football. The ALBA—active living becomes achievable—project also builds on the well-established links between physical activity and improved mental health.

I am pleased that SAMH is an important partner in delivery of the changing lives through sport and physical activity programme through its partnerships, not only in the changing room and ALBA projects but with Scottish Sports Futures, to deliver a joint programme that will promote positive mental health for young people and address the stigma and discrimination felt by those with mental health problems.

Last week, I met staff delivering the community strides project, which is a collaboration between SAMH and jogscotland, funded through the

changing lives fund, that provides opportunities for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to get active with local jogging groups. I was struck by the passion of the staff to use jogging as a tool to have an impact on individuals' physical and mental health. The staff are getting to know the women attending the sessions and are working with them to understand and overcome potential individual and community barriers to participation.

That work with BAME communities builds on an existing successful partnership in which jog leaders undertake mental health awareness training and then wear a simple "I'm here" badge, which they can use as a tool to start a conversation with their members and show that they are open to chatting about mental health. The intention is not to turn jog leaders into trained counsellors but to make them feel more confident about providing a listening ear, and to let them know how to help members find more help if they want it.

In August 2016, SAMH also announced the development of Scotland's mental health charter for physical activity and sport. The charter was developed through the SAMH people active for change and equality project and was funded by Comic Relief. Scotland's mental health charter for physical activity and sport aims to empower physical activity and sports communities to improve equality and reduce discrimination, ensuring that mental health and wellbeing problems are not barriers to engaging, participating and achieving in physical activity and sport. Organisations are encouraged to show their support by signing up to the charter to create a positive change. It is encouraging to hear about the diversity among the signatories to the charter—from sportscotland to governing bodies such as Basketball Scotland, leisure trusts, physical education departments in local schools and local clubs.

I encourage those who are involved in sport and physical activity across our communities to sign up to the charter. That will signal to anyone with a mental health problem that there is support out there to help them to overcome the barriers to getting active and achieving their personal goals.

I thank members for their speeches. We will continue our efforts to deliver wider outcomes for individuals and communities across Scotland through sport and physical activity. The Government will support the Conservative and Labour amendments.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that motion SM5-16708, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on the Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. The motion is to pass the bill, so we will hold a division. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 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)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (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)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 100, Against 0, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Hutchesons' Hospital Transfer and Dissolution (Scotland) Bill be passed.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17034.2, in the name of Brian Whittle, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17034, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on changing lives through sport and physical activity, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-17034.1, in the name of David Stewart, which seeks to amend motion S5M-17034, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Meeting closed at 17:02.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-17034, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on changing lives through sport and physical activity, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament recognises that sport and physical activity can bring about positive change beyond participation that benefits the health and wellbeing of individuals and improve their skills and learning; acknowledges that it makes communities better connected and more socially cohesive, ensuring a more inclusive and healthier nation; recognises that this can be achieved by sporting and non-sporting organisations working together to use sport and physical activity to intentionally bring about both increased participation and wider social outcomes; recognises that sport should be available to all, irrespective of background or personal circumstances; considers that sport in school and in extracurricular activities is the best way to ensure access for all; believes that physical education should reflect the sporting opportunities in local communities and local clubs; considers that investment in sport should reflect the positive impact that it can have in the health of the nation and attainment in Scotland's schools; notes with concern the deprivation gap in levels of physical activity and considers that, regardless of background or ability to pay, physical activities should be accessible for all; appreciates the importance of appropriate physical activity for recovery following illness or injury, and believes that the Scottish Government should work to address the gap in provision of community-based exercise initiatives such as pulmonary rehabilitation.

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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