



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 19 November 2019

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Tuesday 19 November 2019

CONTENTS

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	1
TOPICAL QUESTION TIME	3
Budget	3
National Health Service (Staff Shortages) (Cancer Survival Rates)	7
Student Accommodation (Fire Safety)	12
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANT HEALTH 2020	15
<i>Statement—[Mairi Gougeon].</i>	
The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon)	15
FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS	27
<i>Motion moved—[Fergus Ewing].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Peter Chapman].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Colin Smyth].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[John Finnie].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy (Fergus Ewing)	27
Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con)	32
Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)	35
John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)	38
Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD)	40
Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)	42
Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)	45
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	47
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)	49
Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)	51
Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	53
Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)	55
Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab)	57
John Finnie	59
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)	61
Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	63
Fergus Ewing	65
COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENT (EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE)	69
Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	69
BUSINESS MOTION	71
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey]—and agreed to.</i>	
DECISION TIME	72
ROAD SAFETY WEEK 2019	79
<i>Motion debated—[Stuart McMillan].</i>	
Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)	79
Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con)	82
Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	84
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)	85
The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse)	86

Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 19 November 2019

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. Our first item of business is time for reflection, and our leader is Mr George Innes from the Gideons.

Mr George Innes (GideonsUK): Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to share with you this afternoon.

In the year 1899, in the state of Wisconsin, in the United States of America, three men met to form an organisation that would facilitate the free availability of the word of God, primarily in hotels. Thus, the Gideon ministry began. Today, Gideons are represented in more than 200 countries worldwide, with the Bible translated into more than 95 languages and placed in every traffic lane of life. In 1949, our British isles national association was formed, and this year we celebrate 70 years of God's faithfulness to us.

Our sole objective is that everyone should have the opportunity freely to read the Bible, which we believe contains the maker's instructions for life. Our Bibles are on duty 24/7, whether they be in hotels, at hospital bedsides, in prison cells or on North Sea oil rigs. The "Where to find help" section at the front of them deals with every experience in life. It directs readers to words of advice, help, instruction, warning, comfort, hope, correction and direction, and to predictions and promises—above all, to a knowledge of Jesus Christ, hope for the future, peace of mind and an assurance of eternal life. We are greatly encouraged by the fact that we frequently receive personal testimonies of how a Gideons Bible has changed a life—often without human intervention. To keep apace with our digital age, we also have a Gideon Bible app, which offers mobile access to scriptures in a multitude of languages.

Scotland was once known as the land of the book, and it has a rich Christian heritage. During those former days of obedience to God's word, Scotland was richly blessed. It sent missionaries all over the world and made significant global contributions to the fields of engineering, science, medicine, banking, economics and education. Today, as we face immense moral, political, financial, social and spiritual challenges, both nationally and internationally, it is our passionate

belief that we need to turn to God's word for peace and stability, personally and collectively.

Please be assured that GideonsUK prays for all in the Scottish Parliament, committing each of you to God's care and guidance as you faithfully serve.

Every aspect of my 30 years' service as a Gideon has been a joy and a privilege, but none has been greater than placing the little red book that contains the New Testament and the Psalms into the hands of secondary 1 school pupils—so offering them sure foundation in a world that is fraught with pitfalls.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Budget

1. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the implications are for its budget of the general election and the postponement of the United Kingdom budget. (S5T-01892)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay): The general election on 12 December has forced us to cancel our plans to publish the Scottish budget on that day, and the uncertainty that is caused by the postponed UK budget continues indefinitely. I agree with the Finance and Constitution Committee's view that the Scottish budget should, optimally, be published after the UK budget. The consequence of that is that the 2020-21 Scottish budget will not be published before Christmas. I am mindful of the importance of parliamentary scrutiny time around the Scottish budget and will continue to work with the committee to agree a new budget date as soon as possible.

Bruce Crawford: Will the cabinet secretary confirm that, without the tax policy announcements of a UK budget and the tax, social security and economic forecasts that the Office for Budget Responsibility produces, the Scottish Government simply cannot know how much money is available to spend in 2020-21? Will he say what representations have been made to the Tory Government about this challenging situation? Does the Tory Government comprehend the scale of the problem? If so, what response has the cabinet secretary had?

Derek Mackay: Mr Crawford's analysis is quite right: without the tax policy announcements of a UK budget and the tax, social security and economic forecasts produced by the OBR for a UK budget, which determine the block grant adjustments, the Scottish Government simply cannot know how much money is available to spend next year. Without a new date for the UK budget, we do not know when that certainty will come.

I wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the prospective chancellor—earlier this month, to express concern and to stress that the UK budget should proceed as soon as possible after the general election. I also stressed the need for early dialogue and information sharing with the Scottish Government after the election. I have not had a reply to my letters. Therefore, I do not know about UK ministers' comprehension of the situation. I am

sorry to say that I fear that they are not too interested in the effective working of devolution or the public services of Scotland.

Bruce Crawford: Will the cabinet secretary confirm that there remains the issue of interaction between taxes that are set by the UK Government and those that are set by the Scottish Government, which can cause significant difficulties for Scottish tax policy if the UK Government does not set its tax policy first? Does he agree that, for the Scottish budget to take place in an orderly fashion, it is essential that the UK budget takes place as soon as possible after the general election? What will the consequences be for Scottish public services if the UK budget is delayed beyond the very beginning of the calendar year?

Derek Mackay: The UK budget contains a number of important pieces of information in relation to devolution and devolved and partially devolved taxes, without which it is more difficult for the Scottish Government to set its budget. We do not have the block grant adjustments, based on the most up-to-date forecasts, or the latest UK policy intentions—let us bear in mind that there might be differences between intentions that are announced by prospective UK Governments in the election period and what features in a spending review or a budget.

I agree that it is essential that the UK budget takes place as soon as possible after the general election. I have emphasised that point to the Treasury and I have alerted the Treasury to concerns about other matters. If the UK Government wants devolution to work successfully, it must engage seriously in this and understand our processes.

The consequences of a delay for public services are important, because, for local government and for public bodies, uncertainty continues about the substantive budgets, which people wish to know about. Of course, in dialogue with trade unions and others, many public sector employers need to consider pay remits that will have effect from 1 April. I will continue to engage with the unions, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and others on the budget process, but we will need the UK Government to act as quickly as it can post-election.

My officials will continue to work with committee clerks and the Scottish Fiscal Commission, which has engaged on the matter, on contingency options around the budget process and timetable, so that we can productively use the time before the UK general election to have ourselves as well placed as possible to respond to different scenarios. The failure of the UK Government to engage on the matter is very severe for Scotland's public services.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

There is a slight hint of hypocrisy in the Scottish National Party complaining about a delayed budget when the party voted to have an early general election.

According to a recent Fraser of Allander institute report, Scottish income tax revenues are on track to disappoint, relative to those in the rest of the UK. As a result, despite the block grant from Westminster increasing by more than 2 per cent, the overall budget available to the Scottish Government will increase by less than 1 per cent.

Does the cabinet secretary agree with the Fraser of Allander analysis?

Derek Mackay: The important point for the Scottish Conservative Party to understand is that it is the Tories who have continuously proposed—I am not specifically referring to the general election—tax cuts for the rich in society over the course of continuous budgets, which would lead to cuts in spending for our public services. Our progressive tax policy has raised revenues for us to invest in our public services.

On the cancellation of the UK Government's budget, the UK Government could have gone earlier if it had so desired, but the Prime Minister's track record appears to be that he could not get anything through Westminster, never mind his having the chaos of a budget failing as well. The UK Government's track record is that it has been incompetent and chaotic, and that may well have led to a chaotic budget process as well.

On the general election, the key point is that we are where we are. There is nothing to prevent the UK Government from proceeding as quickly as possible. I understand that its budget was ready and good to go, although I do not know whether that is true. Any incoming UK Government, whoever it may be, should proceed with a budget as quickly as possible so that the Scottish Government can properly consider the matters that are devolved to us and set out our tax and spending proposals, and the Scottish Parliament can properly scrutinise those proposals. The UK Government must not leave it to the last minute, with all the negative consequences that that would have for the people of Scotland. That is why I am encouraging the Treasury, in the circumstances, to take the action that I have set out.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

Councils need to set their budgets and their council tax, which is time limited, and the fact that the devolved social security powers are new means that that expenditure could not be part of a roll-on budget. The cabinet secretary talked about planning for various scenarios. When will he share those scenario plans with the Parliament?

Derek Mackay: I am engaging with the Finance and Constitution Committee to set out a timetable that can be mutually agreed with Parliament, recognising, as the committee does, that we need a bespoke process that will get us through these unprecedented circumstances.

I share the concern that we must have a timely local government settlement. I have engaged with Opposition spokespeople and I appreciate the consensual approach to that, but there are matters that people need to understand. We do not have a simple mechanism that would allow a roll-over from one financial year to the next. The circumstances were not foreseen by the creators of or signatories to the Scotland Act 2016. If we do not pass a rate resolution, we will raise no income tax, which would be catastrophic to the public services of Scotland. We also need to pass a non-domestic rates resolution and the necessary orders, and to agree a financial settlement for local government. There are many significant matters that cannot be wished away by those who think that there is an easy alternative process.

Working within the circumstances, I will present a budget to Parliament as soon as I possibly can, hopefully in agreement with the parliamentary authorities and the Finance and Constitution Committee. I set out in the medium-term financial strategy a range of determinants that could impact on our fiscal plans, and they have come true, given the risks, the volatility and the variables that we are wrestling with.

I will continue to engage with the Opposition spokespeople to try to ensure that we have a process that will get us through this in an effective, consensual and cohesive manner, but whatever we do, I call on all parties in this Parliament, in these unprecedented circumstances, to work together to ensure that there is no risk to the revenues and expenditure for our public services. Whatever we do, we must work together to address the volatility, uncertainty and chaos that have been foisted upon us by the UK Government, and ensure that devolution can deliver even in these exceptional circumstances.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): If we are still waiting, part way through January, for a UK budget to be published, what is the last date on which the Scottish Government can make a decision about whether it will need to attempt to introduce a Scottish budget in the absence of a UK one? If we have to debate a Scottish budget without a UK budget being in place, potentially with emergency bill procedures, surely that is one more example not only of the UK Government's political contempt but of a fundamentally dysfunctional fiscal framework that needs to be fundamentally redesigned.

Derek Mackay: I agree with Patrick Harvie's fundamental point, and I have already alerted the Treasury and the Finance and Constitution Committee to it. Even before the cancellation of the UK budget, I was of the view that, given the experience that we now have, the fiscal framework requires to be reviewed urgently, and the situation that we are now in proves why the framework needs to be revisited as a matter of urgency.

As the Finance and Constitution Committee—of which Patrick Harvie is a member—knows, if the UK Government sets the UK budget so late that it presents the difficulties that I outlined in an earlier answer, it is not impossible that the Scottish Government would proceed before the UK Government's budget is set. However, that would bring considerable and almost unacceptable risks to the process. There would be risks in trying to arrive at the numbers that we would be working with and in trying to second guess the UK Government in relation to the tax proposition and other matters. It would be a risky process.

We will impress upon the UK Government the need for it to set a UK budget and outline its policies as quickly as is responsible. We, of course, will respond to that. That will give us an orderly approach to budget setting in Scotland. I am concerned about the risks of our setting a budget before the UK Government has set its budget, and I know that the Finance and Constitution Committee agrees that there are risks. We will continue to work with Opposition spokespeople on a range of contingencies, should it transpire that the UK Government will continue with this uncertainty not only by not setting a budget but by not even setting a budget date. That is the position about which we are wrestling with the UK Government.

National Health Service (Staff Shortages) (Cancer Survival Rates)

2. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that NHS staff shortages are putting cancer survival rates at risk. (S5T-01888)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I thank the cross-party group on cancer for its helpful report and recommendations, which fairly set out the key challenges that we face and the work that we need to do.

We have invested £1.6 million in radiotherapy training and staffing to date, which has meant that, in the past two years, there have been significant increases in the number of patients accessing modern radiotherapy. The number of consultants with a speciality of clinical radiology working in the health service in Scotland has increased by more than 45 per cent since September 2006. With 290

more training posts in place since 2014, earlier this month I announced that there will be recruitment in 2020 for 70 additional training posts in key specialisms including radiology and oncology. All those staff and many others are working hard to deliver the high quality of care that our patients need, which results in 95 per cent of patients rating their overall experience of cancer care positively.

Jamie Greene: I thank the cabinet secretary for that update. I add my thanks to the cross-party group, which did an excellent job in producing the report, and I thank the organisations that were involved in the drafting of it. The report was considered, measured and informative for MSPs.

However, the report found that, by June this year, one in five cancer patients were not seen within the six-week target—a threefold increase in just three years. The report was clear in its conclusion that, in relation to diagnostics, workforce issues seem to be the greatest concern impacting outcomes, and that ministers must take urgent and sustained action to address shortfalls in long-term workforce planning.

In addition to the cabinet secretary's comments in her first answer, what action will she take to ensure that radiology and oncology departments in Scotland are adequately staffed now, not just in the future? Will she commit to a date by which we can expect the Government's six-week target to be met across all health boards?

Jeane Freeman: On the last question, if Mr Greene cares to refresh his memory, he will see that the date is set out in great detail in the waiting times improvement plan that I published a year ago.

The report has three key recommendations; I will give the member a brief update on those. With regard to developing a national model of workforce planning, I have made the commitment that our integrated national workforce plan will be published before the Christmas recess, in addition to the other workforce plans that we have already published. Unlocking the potential benefits of linked patient data is a critical part of the report with which I could not agree more—it is easier to write than it is to do; those matters are complex—and members will be pleased to know that we have almost reached an agreement on joint data controllers and data sharing. On delivering a step change in the provision of holistic cancer patient services, our joint work with Macmillan Cancer Support services, totalling £18 million, does precisely that through the provision of a holistic wraparound service.

I will make two final points, if I may, Presiding Officer. It is worth noting that our 31-day diagnosis-to-treatment target has been met at 96.5

per cent, which is 1.5 per cent over target, in quarter 2, which was September 2019. Progress continues to be made, as it does on the 62-day target.

I am sure that the member will be delighted to know that the final statistics for medical trainee recruitment in 2019 tell me that, in clinical radiology, ST1 recruitment has a 100 per cent fill rate.

Progress is being made. There is more to do, but as the member will see, we are utterly committed to delivery.

Jamie Greene: The cabinet secretary is right: there is much more to do, as the statistics show. Behind every statistic is a cancer patient waiting to be diagnosed and treated. That is the reality of the situation.

The problem is that consecutive health secretaries have been warned repeatedly about these challenges over the years. As far back as 2015, the Royal College of Radiologists issued warnings about low uptake in radiology. In 2017, an Audit Scotland reported flagged up similar workforce planning issues, and in 2018, a leading radiologist, Dr Grant Baxter, warned that our services were on “red alert”. He went so far as to say:

“If we do not address this issue now, there simply won’t be a service in the next three, four, five years.”

Why, after years of repeated warnings from health professionals across the sector, has so little progress been made? Will the cabinet secretary respond formally and in writing to the recommendations in the cross-party group’s report?

Jeane Freeman: All I can say is that it is a good job that the Scottish Government listens a lot better than Mr Greene does. I answered all those questions. Why does he think I gave him all that factual information about what we have done since 2014, what we have done recently, and the considerable progress that has been made?

Mr Greene is absolutely right to say that behind every one of those statistics

“is a cancer patient waiting to be diagnosed and treated.”

I am more conscious of that than he is. However, I also know that behind all those statistics are staff who are working hard every single day. We have a 100 per cent fill rate in medical trainees in radiology. These things are important; they count, and progress is being made. *[Interruption.]* Mr Greene’s muttering at me from a sedentary position does not take us much further.

On Mr Greene’s final point, I know that the cross-party group knows that I will be delighted to respond in full to its report, which I found very

helpful, and to return to the group, as I did in June, for another constructive and helpful conversation. I look forward to doing that.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): As co-convener of the cross-party group on cancer, I thank all 67 respondents to the inquiry, whether they be charities, researchers, patients, clinicians or academics. I am sure that the cabinet secretary will agree that the report is constructive, and it aims to inform the Government rather than purely to challenge it.

Will the cabinet secretary endorse all 10 of the report’s recommendations, specifically the one on vacancy rates and how they impact on diagnosis? This year, 16,000 patients waited for longer than the six-week waiting time guarantee for their diagnosis, compared to just 4,000 patients three years ago. That is an exponential increase. What urgent action will the Government take to look at recruitment, retention and training, and how we use our technology and upskill existing clinicians?

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Anas Sarwar for his question and for his work in the cross-party group. I completely agree that the report is very constructive and fair, and I am happy to put on record that I endorse all its recommendations. I look forward to the discussion that we will have on the report.

We have made capital investment in radiotherapy and other equipment: £33 million from our £100 million cancer strategy is going into radiotherapy and more money is going into scope capacity and surgical robots for prostate and other cancers.

There is the capital issue and the recruitment, training and retention matters, but, as Anas Sarwar rightly says, there is also the question of redesigning the service and the pathway so that we can upskill existing clinicians and others to take on new roles.

We can look at how we streamline some of that work. We are currently looking at how we use the waiting times plan, and the additional significant investment from it, in order to group together our diagnostic capacity in certain areas, so that we can speed up the time between necessary diagnostic tests in order to detect particular cancers. I would be happy to update the CPG on that matter in due course.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): One of the issues that was raised in the report is the ageing population and the very real need to expand our national health service workforce to meet the anticipated increase in demand. Given that the only population increase in Scotland comes from inward migration, and given Tory members’ complete lack of acknowledgement—far less concern—of the

impact of their support for Brexit, what assurances has the United Kingdom Government given that, in the event of Brexit, Scotland will have the powers to deliver a tailored immigration system to ensure that our NHS can recruit the specialists that it will need long into the future?

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): That was slightly tangential, but the cabinet secretary can respond briefly.

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Keith Brown for that question, and he is right to talk about immigration policy in the context of the recruitment and retention of staff.

Everyone in the chamber has been happy to laud the value of the work that our colleagues from the European Union mainland, as well as from beyond those shores, do for us across the health service. However, if we do not control our immigration policy and if we are dragged out of the European Union against our clearly stated democratic will, that will increase our workforce challenges. There will also be additional challenges for clinical research and advancement in medicines and technology.

The straightforward answer to Keith Brown's question is that the previous UK Government, which is currently seeking re-election, has made absolutely no recognition of the special situation in Scotland, and its proposition on immigration in particular—aside from being quite shameful and inhumane—would cause significant damage to the Scottish economy and Scottish society as a whole.

I absolutely endorse the calls, which are increasingly being made by people across the parties and across Scotland, that Scotland should have the right to choose its own immigration policy, just as we should have the right to decide much more about our future.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Staff shortages across the NHS are putting at risk the health and lives of patients, especially cancer patients. As I discovered last week through a freedom of information request, staff shortages in NHS Lothian are resulting in it having to pay up to £1,715 a shift to private agencies to cover vacancies.

NHS Lothian predicts a £90 million budget deficit, it is paying £1.4 million a month for a hospital with no patients—and now this. What does the cabinet secretary say to my constituents—cancer patients and others—who are suffering because of the workforce crisis that has been overseen by successive Scottish National Party ministers?

Jeane Freeman: I think that I have already answered much of what Neil Findlay has asked. The additional information that I can give him,

credit for which goes to his colleague Anas Sarwar, relates to the work that Anas Sarwar and I were able to do on the safe staffing legislation, which looked at how we handled agency spend inside boards.

The legislation has now received royal assent. When it commences, we will see a significant shift over time in how boards are able to use agency spend, as opposed to investing in the recruitment of full-time employees. That will make a significant difference to the work that is under way and to the overall sustainability of our health service.

Student Accommodation (Fire Safety)

3. Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what fire safety checks it has undertaken on the building cladding used in private student accommodation, including whether it has been checked for high-pressure laminate cladding. (S5T-01895)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): I am relieved that there was no loss of life in the events in Bolton at the weekend, and I acknowledge the work of all those who brought that fire under control.

In Scotland, student accommodation is classed as a “relevant premises” under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. That means that landlords, as duty holders, have responsibility for fire safety risk assessments.

In June this year, my officials wrote to a range of bodies, including the Scottish Funding Council, that represent colleges and universities, to raise awareness of the cladding tests that were being commissioned by the United Kingdom Government, and which might prove to be useful as part of such risk assessments.

Any significant fire in a residential building is, of course, a concern for us all. Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service has stated that its investigation into the Bolton fire will consider the role that external cladding played in development and spread of the fire. Once that information is available, we will review any findings as part of our on-going work on building and fire safety, and we will take any appropriate action that is necessary.

Andy Wightman: As the minister said, the fire brigade operated in an exemplary fashion in bringing that fire under control, but it was an incredibly scary fire. Although the fire brigade made it clear that there was no aluminium composite material on the building in question, eyewitnesses who observed the fire said that it was

“crawling up the cladding like it was nothing”.

That exacerbates the fears of everyone who lives in such buildings.

The minister mentioned fire risk safety assessments. Are those assessments available to the residents of buildings that have been assessed?

Kevin Stewart: I cannot give an answer on that specific question at this moment, but I will write to Mr Wightman with a comprehensive response on what happens with assessments.

Andy Wightman: That would be extremely helpful, because I have spoken to students and student bodies that are extremely concerned as a consequence of the events in Bolton.

The ministerial working group indicated that a database would be created to maintain safety-critical information for existing high-rise residential buildings. In the evidence that he gave to the Local Government and Communities Committee on 5 September 2018, the minister mentioned an “inventory”. Where are we with that inventory? What additional measures can the Scottish Government and its agencies put in place to reassure residents—students, in particular—that although fire is, of course, always a risk, building materials will never exacerbate that risk?

Kevin Stewart: Student bodies have written to the Government recently on that point, and I will co-operate with Ash Denham, who is the Minister for Community Safety, to ensure that they get answers to the questions that they have asked.

We have been completing work on the inventory of high-rise domestic buildings. It is being developed in order to provide a central source of information and an overview of the key aspects of high-rise domestic buildings, including all their fire-safety features. The inventory includes information on cladding types, including high-pressure laminate, which Mr Wightman mentioned.

This Government will continue to review all that. The ministerial working group continues to meet and has discussed many matters. As and when more information and analyses come to us, we will take the necessary steps to ensure that people are safe in buildings in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: Three members are waiting patiently to ask questions. If members ask very brief questions and receive similarly concise answers, we will get them all in.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Can the minister offer any reassurance to my constituents who live in buildings with aluminium composite material cladding and who are, as well as being very worried, unable to sell them at the moment?

Kevin Stewart: I think that John Mason is talking about folks who have, on their buildings, cladding that is not made of aluminium composite material, but for whom, in the current situation,

there are difficulties with regard to mortgage lending.

Last week, I answered a question from Jeremy Balfour on that issue. The Scottish Government is trying to seek solutions, but mortgage lending is reserved to the UK Government. I have written twice to the UK Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, to try to get co-operation on the matter. I recognise that there is currently a general election in the offing, but there is still a day job to do.

My officials have also been in discussions with the UK finance industry and are having more meetings this week to try to reach a resolution, so that folks who are currently finding it difficult to buy and sell properties can be helped. I hope that the UK Government will respond to our request for help in finding a solution.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): What work has the Scottish Government done to assess whether local authorities have the staff and resources to ensure that enforcement action can be taken when residents have safety concerns, whether they are students or members of the general public?

Kevin Stewart: I am not aware of any difficulties that local authorities have had in responding to requests that the Government has made, among the multitude of requests since the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. I thank all the local authorities very much for their co-operation and for all that they have done in response to the numerous questions that we have asked in order to ensure that people in Scotland are safe. In particular, I thank them for their co-operation in putting together the inventory of high-rise buildings, which will be very helpful. We will, as a result of that, be required to ask fewer questions in the future, although the inventory will need to be updated regularly so that we know what is going on in respect of such buildings across the country.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): In the light of Grenfell and the blaze in Bolton, does the minister agree with the Association of British Insurers that there must be a total ban on use of combustible materials on the outside of buildings?

Kevin Stewart: The Scottish Government has had an external independent panel of experts looking at that: we will continue to take that panel’s advice. The key is to do the right testing to ensure not only that the right cladding materials are used, but that the fire stopping that is required in buildings is put in place properly on every single occasion.

We will continue to review everything as we move forward, and to take the expert advice that is provided to us, because our job is to ensure that everyone in Scotland is safe in their buildings.

International Year of Plant Health 2020

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Mairi Gougeon, on the international year of plant health 2020.

14:37

The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon): I am delighted to have the opportunity to set out our plans to mark and celebrate the international year of plant health in 2020. This initiative of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization aims to protect plants globally and is described as

“a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development.”

As the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, with responsibility for plant health, I am determined that Scotland will play its part and seize this opportunity.

Many members will probably not have given plant health much thought, and I am pretty sure that it does not come up very often on the doorstep, but it is critical to our very existence, a fundamental building block of our economy and crucial for the environment and for biodiversity. Quite simply, plant health matters.

In Scotland, healthy plants are estimated to be worth around £19.2 billion to the rural economy every year. They help to make Scotland the country that we all know and love, and they underpin tourism, scientific study, medicine and leisure and recreational activities, as well as communities' sense of place and cohesion and people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

I cannot imagine a Scotland in autumn without its woodland coat of many colours, without the white sweep of blackthorn blossom and hills of purple heather in spring, or without the sharp, sweet taste of locally grown raspberries and strawberries in summer.

Freedom of movement of goods and people undoubtedly brings huge benefits to Scotland, but globalisation increases the risk of new pests and diseases reaching us. Plant health threats can travel hidden in nursery plants and the compost that they grow in, in plant products, packaging, wood and vehicles, and in holidaymakers' luggage—even in the soil carried on our shoes.

There are already more than 1,000 pests and diseases threatening the health of plants in the United Kingdom across forestry, crops and the

natural environment, and the number of threats continues to increase due to climate change and trade globalisation. For example, the common ash tree is under real threat from *Chalara fraxinea*—ash dieback—a fungus that is fatal to the species and which has already decimated populations in England. It is predicted to kill 95 to 99 per cent of ash trees in the UK, with an estimated cost to the UK of £15 billion in operational costs and lost benefits such as water and air purification and carbon sequestration. The total cost is 50 times larger than the annual value of trade in live plants to and from the UK, but the biggest cost is said to be the lost benefits to society.

We have legislation in place to prevent the movement of ash trees, plants and seeds, which will help to slow the spread of the fungus to uninfected areas. In 2018, we introduced a *Chalara* action plan, which was agreed with stakeholders and which sets out our key priorities around research, surveillance and monitoring, prophylactic and reactive measures and communications to best minimise the impacts of the disease. However, there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon, with the news just yesterday that a study has identified the genes that give trees resistance to the disease. Although that will not help the trees that are currently affected, it could help future populations.

Likewise, there is a real threat of an outbreak of the bacterium *Xylella*, which has more than 560 identified host species and is decimating crops in parts of Europe. If it arrives in Scotland, it will have a devastating impact on our trade in plants and trees and our wider environment, creating economic loss in the process.

Only last week here in Scotland, experts were advising that the potato cyst nematode is an ongoing concern, due to its longevity in the soil once introduced. That pathogen could potentially wipe out our seed potato industry by 2025 if the current rate of land lost to it continues. We test all soils that are being used to produce seed potatoes for the pathogen, but we need to work collaboratively with industry and researchers to find a sustainable solution to protect the industry.

We must continue to invest in science, research, monitoring and testing, but we must all play our part in minimising and mitigating the risks to plant health, not least as part of our fight against climate change. We simply cannot afford to do nothing, not least because plants and trees are our greatest allies in the fight against climate change. As nature's barometers, they tell us so much about the changing temperatures across the world, including in Scotland, and will help us adapt to climate change and to mitigate it by sequestering and storing greenhouse gases. Scotland's forests are a significant carbon sink,

absorbing around 9.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year. That is why we are committed to planting 24 million trees this year.

That is not all that we are doing. In 2016, we published “The Scottish Plant Health Strategy”, which set out our approach to protecting plants across Scotland and improving biosecurity. In 2017, the Scottish Government appointed the first ever Scottish chief plant health officer to provide strategic leadership across all plant health sectors. In 2018, we established a new virtual plant health centre for Scotland, to co-ordinate activity across sectors, to monitor plant diseases and to help stakeholders understand how to improve their plant health capabilities.

The centre has already strengthened our contingency plans against key threats such as the bacterium *Xylella* and has informed us on the impact to agriculture from the withdrawal of the pesticide metaldehyde. This spring, we published a new forestry strategy for Scotland, setting out a 50-year vision for Scotland’s forests and woodlands with a 10-year action framework to continue to grow and protect our trees, woods and forests.

Every year, the Scottish Government provides core funding of £47 million to Scotland’s research institutes and invests £7 million in plant health research to fill evidence gaps across all sectors. Our world-leading plant scientists such as those at the James Hutton Institute have long benefited from international research funding and collaborations that have contributed to plant health solutions. We will use the international year of plant health to showcase our role as part of a vibrant international research community.

Of course, we also enter 2020 with huge uncertainty about the impact of Brexit on that international activity. We face the loss of scientists who have come to work and live in Scotland, many of whom I have met in recent months. We can never say often enough that they are welcome here and that we want them to stay. We know that Brexit has diminished the enthusiasm of others to collaborate with Scottish institutions on research projects and funding applications. The loss of being part of one of the world’s very best scientific communities, with free and ready access to up-to-date science and evidence, and protections through European Union-wide regulations and standards, threatens to compromise our ability to protect Scotland’s plants and trees. The Government is determined to keep pace with EU standards and regulations and will do all that it can to prevent our high standards from being compromised by trade deals designed for a race to the bottom by future UK Governments.

We will not allow the strides that have been made in building resilience against plant health

threats to be undone. Instead, we will resolve to use the international year of plant health as a platform upon which to build. We plan to engage with industry, scientists, other organisations and the public, particularly children and young people. It is vital that we educate and enthuse children and young people about the role that plants have to play in securing their future and that we inspire their interest and curiosity, while encouraging behaviours that we want them to take into work and life in adulthood. That would provide a lasting legacy for the international year of plant health in Scotland.

Forestry and Land Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland host children’s bug hunts throughout the year at a range of venues, and we will participate in some of Scotland’s science festivals with plant-themed activities. Every person can make a difference, even with small changes and actions. That is the message that we will be promoting through the international year of plant health.

The Scottish Government and its partners will spend more time showing the public, especially the nation’s gardeners, how they can help protect Scotland’s biosecurity. We will therefore join forces with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to help celebrate its 350th year in 2020, with a year-long biosecurity exhibition in the John Hope gateway. The Scottish Government will host a plant health conference in March, and there will be a series of industry round-table events to explore current and emerging threats to plant health.

I have provided just a snapshot of some of the activities that are currently being planned to celebrate and mark the international year of plant health. I am hopeful that there will be activity in the Parliament and activity that all members can engage with. I am happy to update Parliament with more detail of the planned programme as it develops.

I hope that we can agree today that ensuring that Scotland is fully involved in the international year of plant health is not just a good use of our time and energy, but an essential one. It will allow us to share our often world-leading research and science in the area. With the threats to plant health increasing, and given that the impacts of an outbreak are potentially devastating, our involvement will allow us to spread the message to safeguard our plants, and it will enable us to raise awareness and understanding of the critical role that plants and trees play in our everyday life, not least in tackling climate change.

I look forward to working with members across the Parliament to make our programme for the international year of plant health a success.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries)

(Con): I thank the minister for early sight of her statement, and I welcome the opportunity that we all have in 2020 to celebrate the international year of plant health, and to raise awareness of the importance of plant health to the economy and, indeed, to the natural environment and the biodiversity of Scotland—particularly now, when the “State of Nature 2019” report says that, of the 6,413 species found in Scotland, 11 per cent are currently threatened with extinction, which highlights the fact that Scotland’s wildlife has declined substantially in recent decades.

Data is important, but I question the priority that the Government places on research and data collection, given that last year Ellen Wilson, who is the chair of the Scottish biodiversity information forum, urged the Scottish Government

“to establish integrated local and national structures for collecting, analysing and sharing biological data to inform decision making processes to benefit biodiversity.”

As we heard at the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee in September, there remain concerns over the lack of funding. A year on from her plea in 2018, Ellen Wilson stated:

“We have heard brilliant words that are often not backed up with sufficient sustainable funding that would take the pressure off the network.”—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, 17 September 2019; c 5.*]

Can the minister give us an assurance that the statement that we have just heard is not just about “brilliant words”, but ensures that we have the funding and a national data collection structure in place so that we will have accurate data available in order to make the best interventions to safeguard plant health and, in turn, tackle our biodiversity emergency?

Mairi Gougeon: Finlay Carson is right that we are in a biodiversity emergency. I do not think that I need to explain to anybody in the chamber just what an emergency we are in and the situation that we face. As well as the “State of Nature 2019” report, we had the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report earlier this year that stated that around a million species are expected to become extinct if we do not take action now to tackle climate change and biodiversity.

The two are, of course, intrinsically linked. That is why we put such emphasis on tackling invasive non-native species—I note that I took a question from Finlay Carson on invasive non-native species in portfolio questions a couple of weeks ago. As he has said, the research element is vital—I was at Forest Research recently to hear about the work that it does. The work that is done by the Plant Health Centre and others, which I talked

about in my statement today, is vital. We are leading the way with that work, which brings together the scientific community to look at our research needs, so that we can prioritise and continue to be the world leader that I believe we are.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the UN FAO ambition and the international year of plant health. I agree with the minister that those are significant issues, here and abroad, and that protection of our plant health needs resilience, which is also imperative in securing the right to food for all and much more. In our increasingly globalised world, what measures is the Government taking to improve action on biosecurity across all departments and levels of Government?

The limiting of our co-operative research and science projects by Brexit would be a terrible loss. Will the minister give a bit more detail about the arrangements to address the potential gap in funding and research placements, specifically with regard to the long-term vision that is important with regard to ecological issues?

Does the minister think that there is also a need to examine further the provenance of our native species and work to develop resilient strains of native seeds in the face of disease and climate change? How is the Government supporting farmers and crofters to adopt best-practice methods of nature-friendly farming, and will that be a consideration in forthcoming agriculture legislation?

Mairi Gougeon: There were quite a few questions there. I will try to address as many of them as I can and, if I do not address them all, I will commit to getting back to Claudia Beamish on the ones that I miss.

Because there is still so much that is unknown about Brexit, one commitment that I will give is that we still fully intend to keep pace with what is happening in the EU. We want to continue to have some of the highest standards in the world. That can be seen with our seed potatoes, which are in demand across the world because of their high health status, which is vital.

On support for farmers and crofters, I note that Claudia Beamish mentioned nature-friendly farming. Our initiatives, including the climate change champions initiative—Lynn and Sandra from Lynbreck Croft are in that group—are promoting best practice. We want to spread the word about that as much as possible. A great deal of important work is going on around climate change and agriculture at the moment through things such as Farming for a Better Climate and our soil regenerative agriculture programme. We want to get the message out to as many farmers

and crofters as we can about what is possible and the work that is under way.

Again, I am sorry if I have missed any points, but I will get back to Claudia Beamish on them.

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I welcome the minister's statement. As a keen gardener, I am aware of the importance of plant health to biosecurity, and of the need for all of us to garden more sustainably. How can we ensure that gardeners are getting consistent and reliable advice, and that they play their part to promote plant health and secure practice?

Mairi Gougeon: I am well aware that Gail Ross is a keen gardener. She has experience that could be well shared with us all.

During the international year of plant health, our chief plant health officer's team and the Plant Health Centre will be engaging with gardeners and the general public to raise awareness of biosecurity issues and the best practice that can be followed. Details on that will appear on the chief plant health officer's web pages soon. Last year, we worked with the BBC's "Beechgrove Garden" to highlight biosecurity issues to a wide audience.

We regularly liaise with stakeholders about biosecurity guidance and advice issues. We always advise gardeners to source plants from a reputable local trader that can advise where its plants have been sourced from, and we actively promote the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization's "Don't risk it" campaign, which highlights the danger of bringing home plants from overseas trips.

I cannot emphasise enough exactly how important the issue is, especially with regard to diseases that I mentioned in my statement, including Xylella, and the impact that they are having across Europe, particularly in Italy, where they have completely decimated olive tree plantations. We need to do absolutely everything that we can to prevent those diseases from reaching our shores.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The minister has mentioned the excellent work of the James Hutton Institute. Given the loss of international collaborations and funding after Brexit and the urgent need for a climate emergency budget in Scotland, what consideration is being given to restoring the funding support to the James Hutton Institute?

Mairi Gougeon: We have to see how we can best work with all our research institutes. We want to continue to support them and the valuable work that they do. A lot of the work that I mentioned in my statement would not have been possible without the research that those important bodies

undertake, and they are a key part of the work of the Plant Health Centre. Therefore, we have to see how we can continue to support them.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I want to press the minister on that point. With Brexit, we face the loss of expert scientists who have come to work here. The minister said that that threatens to compromise our ability to protect Scotland's plants and trees. How exactly does she plan to tackle that problem?

Mairi Gougeon: Mike Rumbles is absolutely right. Without knowing exactly what the outcome of Brexit will be, what funding opportunities will exist as a result of that, and whether we will still be able to play a role in the likes of horizon 2020, which has been absolutely vital for our research communities, it is hard to know exactly what support there will be. That is why we continue to press the United Kingdom Government for information on that. Obviously, we are in a general election campaign, and we do not know what the outcome of that will be. That continues the uncertainty.

As I outlined in my response to Mark Ruskell's question, I absolutely recognise the importance of our research institutions and the valuable work that they do. That is why we have a close relationship with them. We will continue to work with them to see how we can maintain that and continue to fund them.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): The minister will be aware of the threat that is posed to oak trees from the oak processionary moth. Have there been any instances of the oak processionary moth in Scotland? How concerned is the Government about that threat?

Mairi Gougeon: Oak processionary moths are a particular risk, but they are more of an animal and plant health risk because of the serious skin irritations and allergic reactions that they can cause.

Scotland is part of the United Kingdom oak processionary moth protected zone. In July this year, following the introduction of oak processionary moth-infested trees into England, the Scottish Government further strengthened protection by introducing emergency measures, which have restricted the movement of larger oak trees that are deemed to be at the highest risk of OPMs. Similar legislation was introduced throughout the UK.

Scottish Government officials are working with other parts of the UK to share intelligence on the scale and distribution of trees that have been imported into the UK, and our inspectors are investigating all Scottish sites in which suspect trees have been planted since September 2018.

I can confirm to Angus MacDonald that Scotland has had six positive findings, that the infested trees have been destroyed, and that Scottish Government inspectors have visited 157 sites in total to inspect for oak processionary moths. As a precautionary measure, pheromone traps were deployed at each of the positive sites. However, all of those tested negative for OPM.

Rachael Hamilton (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The Scotland and north of England high-grade seed potato industry is worth £100 million to the British economy. Just two of the top 15 Scottish varieties of seed potatoes that are currently grown are resistant to the *Globodera pallida* species of potato cyst nematode. What is the Scottish Government doing to support Scotland's leading agricultural research units, in particular the Soil Association Scotland led rural innovation support service, which is discussing the latest research on PCN? Will the minister commit to exploring successful projects in Germany, where cases of PCN have been greatly reduced? That could be of huge benefit to the Scottish seed potato industry.

Mairi Gougeon: Absolutely. I am grateful to the member for that question, because, as I highlighted in my response to Claudia Beamish, that is a valuable and important sector to Scotland. That is why maintaining the high health status of our seed potatoes is vital.

The news about potato cyst nematodes will have reached the news this week. In line with EU directives, Scottish Government scientists test all fields that are used for seed-potato production for the presence of cyst nematodes in the soil. Only fields that test clear for PCN can be used for seed potato production.

Our research partners, the James Hutton Institute and Scotland's Rural College, undertake research on control strategies, including breeding for resistance to nematodes. Scotland's Plant Health Centre is working with stakeholders to determine why the problem is increasing and to identify likely future scenarios, to inform the industry. Through the rural innovation support service, a consortium is working to develop innovative control strategies to safeguard the long-term future of our potato industry. Also, as part of the international year of plant health, one ministerial round-table event with industry will focus on the threat to Scotland from nematode pests, including PCN.

I was not aware of the strategies that are being used in Germany, which Rachael Hamilton raised; of course, if there are strategies being put in place in other countries, we have to look at them and see whether we can learn from them.

We do not take the threats lightly. Work is continuing in order that we can tackle these problems.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): This summer, I joined members of Markinch Heritage Group and volunteers from the Fife Coast & Countryside Trust to help to tackle Himalayan balsam. The minister is aware of the devastating effect on local biodiversity that invasive species can have, so will she set out how we can increase awareness among local groups and the wider public of such species? Will she join me in commending groups such as Markinch Heritage Group in my constituency that help to manage the biodiversity of our countryside?

Mairi Gougeon: I absolutely commend those groups. Jenny Gilruth raises an extremely important point about invasive non-native species which, as I said in my response to Finlay Carson, are one of the biggest threats to our biodiversity. We get more of a sense of the scale of the problem when we look at its financial impact. I think that I mentioned this in portfolio questions a couple of weeks ago, but it is worth repeating that invasive species cost Scotland in the region of £250 million a year. The involvement of communities and local groups is vital if we are to get on top of the problem and tackle it.

I visited the Scottish invasive species initiative, which is a four-year project, to see some of the work that it does on the River South Esk in my constituency. Figures from that project show that 342 volunteers have taken part, 736km of giant hogweed has been treated and 195 volunteers have helped to monitor mink rafts. Community involvement and volunteer work are vital there, too, and I commend the groups and volunteers in Jenny Gilruth's constituency, my constituency and across Scotland for the work that they do. We depend on them to be the eyes and ears to monitor invasive species spread in their local communities.

The member is right to ask what more we can do to make more people aware of the issue. Scottish Natural Heritage leads on tackling invasive non-native species such as Himalayan balsam, and it will work with the plant health centre to raise awareness of the issue across networks and among groups, and to encourage more people to get involved, in order to minimise the threat to our native plants. I will give more thought to that as we go into international year for plant health, and I will explore what more can be done with our lead agencies in that regard.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): How is the Government working with farmers and crofters to secure a reduction in reliance on pesticides and artificial fertilisers, given that pollution and agricultural intensification are identified as key

drivers in the nature emergency and that fertilisers also contribute to climate change? What support and education on those issues is being made available to local communities that are involved in gardening and the management of our urban environment to ensure plant health and biodiversity?

Mairi Gougeon: On what we are doing to encourage a reduction in the use of pesticides, the Scottish Government considers that pesticides should be authorised where the available scientific evidence shows that they do not pose an unacceptable risk to human health, animals and the environment. The Scottish Government promotes a targeted approach to pesticide use. Integrated pest management, which enables farmers to protect their crops using a full range of measures, with pesticides used as sparingly as possible, is already promoted through strategies such as the pesticides national action plan. We will continue to work with land managers to further reduce reliance on pesticides, as was outlined recently in our programme for government.

I think that there was another part to that question, which I did not quite pick up, but I will contact the member with that information.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Will the minister expand on what role the first ever Scottish chief plant health officer will play?

Mairi Gougeon: The fact that we recently created that new role shows the important value that we place on plant health, as does the fact that we established the virtual plant health centre. As I outlined in a previous response, the plant health centre brings together all key stakeholders and researchers, allowing us to be at the forefront of tackling plant health issues.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): Given the Scottish Government's failure to forward plan, will the minister confirm that there is a shortage of young trees in nurseries to achieve our target of 12,000 hectares of new forestry planting next year? Are we therefore in danger of importing disease from young trees from abroad?

Mairi Gougeon: This seems to be becoming a habit, but I say that it is a bit rich of Peter Chapman to talk about a lack of forward planning. It is hard to forward plan when the UK Administration will not work with us or share information. Trust me, if we were given all that information, it would be easier to plan and to answer such questions.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): We tend to think of woodlands, forests and agriculture as being mainly rural issues. However, does the minister think that urban settings have

any part to play in maintaining and developing the health and the number of trees and plants?

Mairi Gougeon: I absolutely agree with that. Urban trees are vital for mitigating the effects of climate change. They also have aesthetic qualities and, because of that, they are a prominent feature in urban developments.

The plant health centre is commissioning a biosecurity project in 2020 that will address the risks resulting from imported rather than domestically produced trees being planted in those developments. The project outputs will help us to work with councils and landscapers to ensure that urban planting continues, but with fewer biosecurity risks.

When it comes to urban planning and what we are doing in urban environments, we support projects through the community growing fund. I visited a project that North Edinburgh Arts set up after successfully applying for that funding. In addition, the Central Scotland Green Network Trust covers 3.6 million people and 86 per cent of Scotland's most deprived areas. It is tackling derelict land and promoting active travel.

We recognise the importance of tree planting, planting hedges and pollinator corridors in our urban areas, and we are determined to continue that work.

Fisheries Negotiations

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on S5M-19922, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations.

15:07

The Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy (Fergus Ewing): I very much welcome the opportunity to set out the Government's approach to this year's fisheries negotiations. I look forward to hearing the views of all members, particularly those who represent fishing communities. I hope that all members will recognise the importance to the fundamentals of our negotiating position of sending a strong message of united support from this debate.

I will highlight key developments in the past year. We all know the risks and challenges of fishing. I pay tribute to all our fishermen and their families for their resilience and their bravery. The number of accidents and lives lost at sea is simply unacceptable, so in May, I founded the Scottish fishing safety group. That forum involves Government officials and industry working together to explore all the issues and make fishing safer for everyone working in the industry. I have already agreed to invest £855,000 in fisheries safety and diversification.

I also want to highlight the activity to modernise inshore fisheries. Since 2014, we have invested £4.4 million in inshore research and development, diversification and vessel health and safety. We have also acted to enhance our compliance capacity in key inshore waters.

Through the European maritime and fisheries fund, we have supported harbour works, ice plants and marketing initiatives that benefit the inshore fleet. This year, we have committed a further £1.5 million to drive forward implementation of a two-year project on vessel tracking and monitoring technology. Contracts for that will be awarded before the end of the year.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): It would be helpful to know whether that will include all vessels, which was an issue that was debated in Parliament earlier this year. Perhaps small vessels that collect lobster pots, or whatever, will have exemptions. Scottish Labour expressed concern about that matter at that time.

Fergus Ewing: The aim is to extend the technology throughout the inshore fleet, starting with the scallop vessels. There are two framework contracts, which are expected to be signed by the end of this year. It is hoped that the installation of remote electronic monitoring technology in those

scallop dredgers that are not currently fitted with the equipment—some already have it—can proceed in the spring. That will be a major step forward. I know that Claudia Beamish takes an interest in the issue, and I can give her further details of that in due course.

Statistics for 2018 show an industry that is in generally good health. Although the volume of landings decreased slightly, their value was up at £574 million, with the largest increase in both volume and value of landings coming from demersal species. There has been an increase in the number of vessels in the Scottish fleet—largely due to growth in the 10m-and-under fleet—as well as a welcome increase in the number of people who work on fishing vessels. That provides an important reminder that a lot of jobs and livelihoods depend on the outcome of these annual negotiations. Put simply, we have a lot to lose.

I will summarise where we are in this year's negotiations. The scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea has been published for all stocks, and there is no doubt that it is an extremely challenging picture for some of our key white-fish stocks. Reductions are advised for whiting, saithe and hake, and, on the west coast, zero-catch advice remains in place for cod and whiting. There is some good news in the form of advised increases for haddock and nephrops. The standout white-fish advice for North Sea cod recommends a 61 per cent reduction in catches in 2020, which poses an immediate and severe choke risk under the landing obligation. There has been more positive news for the pelagic stocks, with advised increases for mackerel, blue whiting and North Sea herring in 2020.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): The cabinet secretary clearly has all the numbers at his fingertips, and vast expertise and experience. Would it be sensible for the Scottish minister to lead on behalf of the United Kingdom on this vital interest? Although I have said that before, in the present circumstances—where there is a lacuna at the UK Government level—it would be particularly timely, would it not?

Fergus Ewing: I do not know whether Stewart Stevenson is perhaps being overly kind. However, I have been part of the annual negotiations for the past three years; this will be my fourth year. I have developed a workmanlike relationship with the Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice, as well as with UK officials, and I see at first hand the collaborative approach that is being taken with negotiations.

At this point, there is no certainty about who will form the next UK Government. We do not know—

nor do the officials know—who the UK minister will be. George Eustice, whom I mentioned, is respected, but we simply do not know whether he will be around. There is uncertainty on that matter, and so it would make sense for Scotland to lead this year's negotiations on behalf of the UK. I hope that the UK Government might agree on such a sensible and pragmatic approach, which would, I believe, benefit the whole of the UK. In that spirit, I will write to the current Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Theresa Villiers, offering to do so.

I was talking about the severe choke risk under the landing obligation resultant from the advice regarding a 61 per cent reduction in cod catches in 2020, and about how there has been more positive news for pelagic stocks, with advised increases for mackerel, blue whiting and North Sea herring in 2020. However, the final quotas that are agreed for next year may not directly translate from the advice. The negotiations themselves are where the final quotas will be set. Those negotiations are under way, and have resulted in a number of positive outcomes.

First, the coastal states pelagic negotiations took place in October, and agreement was reached on fishing levels in 2020 for mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring, or ASH, which directly followed scientific advice. That is welcome, particularly after last year's drawn-out and difficult negotiations.

For mackerel, which is Scotland's single most valuable stock, that equates to a 41 per cent increase on the agreed limits for last year, which could deliver a potential benefit to Scotland of around £175 million, particularly if we can increase the volume of landings.

However, parties were again unable to agree comprehensive sharing arrangements for those stocks, meaning that fishing is likely to go beyond the agreed limits again in 2020. That is neither sustainable nor acceptable.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of the project developed by my constituents, Grant Fulton and Angus Campbell, which tracks Atlantic bluefin tuna off the coast of the Western Isles. What opportunities does the cabinet secretary see for developing the highly lucrative commercial fishing of this species, which could benefit my constituency in the future?

Fergus Ewing: I discussed that with members of the Western Isles Fishermen's Association on Friday 8 November in Tarbert. I want to support the wellbeing, diversity and positive development of our coastal communities, including those in Dr Allan's constituency.

A bluefin tuna tagging programme is under way and I am delighted that it has been awarded an EMFF grant through the Western Isles fisheries local action group. The Government intends not only to support a tagging programme but to seek a small quota that is primarily designed for sport and recreational fishing activities.

Going back to the negotiations, the annual meeting of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission took place last week in London. There, agreement was reached on a number of proposals that aim to ensure conservation and optimum utilisation of fisheries resource in the international waters of the NEAFC regulatory area. This year, a significant achievement was the tabling of the European Union's proposal to introduce a cap on all parties that fish mackerel in international waters. That was one of my key objectives, and it was a move led by Scotland because, in the absence of full-party agreements for pelagic stocks, uncontrolled fishing in international waters is the biggest risk of unsustainable fishing. Although it was not adopted this year, I regard the tabling of such a proposal as an extremely positive step, and one that I hope and intend for us to work with other parties to enact in future, in the interests of having sustainable fisheries.

This year's EU-Norway negotiations are under way in London as I speak, and a second round is scheduled to take place in Norway at the beginning of December. On the setting of total allowable catches for jointly managed stocks, Scottish officials are working tirelessly with colleagues across the EU and Norway to establish the necessary multinational response to deal with the very difficult scientific advice that is involved. I am especially encouraged that both the industry and the non-governmental organisations have indicated their support for our negotiating strategy for our overall objectives for those negotiations. In particular, that applies to the two-stage approach to the challenging North Sea cod situation. Not that many years ago, such a united position between the industry and the NGOs could not have been achieved; much credit is due to all who have been involved and who have agreed to set aside their differences to put forward a common front.

We also have a number of quota exchanges with Norway. Again, our priority is to secure a fair and balanced exchange of fishing opportunities that does not disadvantage our own vessels while mitigating choke risks.

I turn to the EU-Faroe Islands consultations, which are scheduled to take place on 9 and 10 December. Agreement in that forum allows quota and access opportunities to Faroese waters for our white-fish fleet. My aim is to ensure a

balanced outcome for Scotland, with all elements of the agreement truly on the negotiating table, and any arrangements for 2020 delivering a fair and proportionate outcome for all sectors.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)
rose—

Fergus Ewing: I will certainly give way.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): No—the cabinet secretary is in his last minute.

I can allow you a little extra time for the interventions that you have taken, cabinet secretary.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): May I not intervene?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, I am sorry—not this time.

I ask all members to bear in mind the fact that we are rather short of time.

Fergus Ewing: Perhaps I could respond to Ms Wishart in my closing remarks.

The EU fisheries council meeting in December will bring negotiations to a conclusion. I will cut the detail on that, if I may, Presiding Officer, except to say that a tough job lies ahead of us. I am conscious that conducting those negotiations against the backdrop of the UK general election does not make things any easier than they already are.

I look forward to listening to the debate. I hope that it is a constructive, rational, positive, evidence-based, forward-looking, forensic, helpful and courteous debate—and I hope that my hopes are not too highly set.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the conclusion of coastal state negotiations, the ongoing bilateral negotiation with Norway on shared stocks in the North Sea, and the forthcoming annual fisheries negotiations in the Faroe Islands and Brussels; notes that 2019 saw the full implementation of the landing obligation for whitefish stocks and that the outcome of negotiations will be pivotal in helping Scotland's fishing fleet to reduce the potential impacts of choke species in mixed fisheries; is concerned that failure to explore and adopt all available solutions in this regard, coupled with challenging scientific advice, could potentially tie the fleet up; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to respect stock sustainability in relation to next year's quotas, and supports its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland's fishermen, the wider seafood sector and coastal communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you for concluding so quickly, cabinet secretary. It might be useful for members to know that we are short of time in this debate. I hope that the cabinet

secretary can address points in closing. Brevity would be appreciated.

15:20

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): I hope to be courteous throughout this debate.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to continue to work with the fishing industry this year, and I am pleased to speak on the industry's behalf in this important debate and to open the debate for the Scottish Conservatives.

It is great to see Peterhead port going from strength to strength, following the opening of the new market. Fish landings topped £200 million for the first time ever last year, and Peterhead continues to consolidate its position as the largest whitefish market in Europe.

It is also hugely encouraging that landings by Scottish vessels increased in worth last year, with a gross value of £574 million, and it is good to see an increase of 24 vessels since last year, due to growth in the fleet of vessels of 10m and under.

The number of fishers who are working on vessels has also increased: it is up 1 per cent on the previous year. However, work must continue to be done to encourage newcomers to the profession.

There will undoubtedly be difficult negotiations on quota, especially cod quota, this year, but the quota for pelagic fish looks healthy and there is a big rise in the mackerel quota for next year. There is mixed news on that front.

The news that landings are up in the industry as a whole is welcome, but it cannot be said that there are such encouraging signs in the seafood processing industry. My region has the largest share of Scotland's processing sector, providing more than 4,000 jobs, and it is worrying to note that the number of processing sites in the north-east decreased by almost 25 per cent between 2010 and 2018. As I have said in the chamber in the past couple of years, the north-east is losing business and jobs to Humberside, where fish processing is growing. I strongly encourage the Scottish Government to support the processors by reducing business rates and water and effluent charges.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Peter Chapman: If it is brief.

Stewart Stevenson: Is the member aware of the research from Seafish that shows that the rateable value per square metre in Peterhead and Fraserburgh is almost identical to that in Humberside?

Peter Chapman: I am indeed aware of that, but the situation in Aberdeen is completely different: business rates there are almost double. If fish processing businesses were relieved of such high rates, they could reverse the current decline and create more jobs around the country, especially in Aberdeen city.

As Jimmy Buchan, the chief executive of the Scottish Seafood Association, said, we have rich resources in our seas and a modern fleet of fishing vessels, with highly skilled skippers and crews; now we need to match that onshore in well-thought-through business initiatives that will encourage business and our youth to build this industry up for the long-term benefit of the communities in which it operates. Jimmy Buchan went on to say that high operational costs, squeezed margins, limited funding, access to raw material, political uncertainty in the current climate and uncertainty over a further Scottish independence referendum are all business risks that restrict investments and growth.

The seas around Scotland contain some of the most productive, valuable and diverse fisheries to be found anywhere in the world. The opportunity to claim the exclusive economic zone out to 200 nautical miles will allow Scotland to take back control of this rich resource and ensure that our fishermen can increase their catch and share of our fine fish.

Surely not even the Scottish National Party can argue that it is fair that 60 per cent of the fish in our waters are caught by foreign boats.

The route to securing a larger proportion of the fish that are found in Scotland's waters is, of course, the UK becoming an independent coastal state when it leaves the EU. That would allow the UK to control access to its waters and to its fishing opportunities, enabling the UK to decide who catches what, where and when in UK waters.

Fergus Ewing: The withdrawal agreement that has been negotiated by the current Prime Minister with the EU does nothing to take back control of our waters. If Mr Chapman disagrees, can he read the extract from the agreement where that is agreed to? Given that that does not exist, does he not agree that Boris Johnson has simply kicked the can down the road, and that any negotiation that has not been carried out now may never be carried out, and will be fiercely resisted by the EU under any circumstance?

Peter Chapman: It is absolutely astonishing to hear our SNP cabinet secretary come out with such nonsense. We are the party that will take the UK out of the EU and take fishermen out of the common fisheries policy, and his is the party that would take us straight back in. The SNP has

nothing to say to our fishing communities in the north-east.

We should be in no doubt that the SNP's stated objective is to stop Brexit, rejoin the EU as quickly as possible and take us straight back into the CFP. The message to our fishermen is clear. The SNP will do everything that it possibly can to keep them in the hated CFP, with no chance of taking control of our EEZ, no chance of redressing the balance when we catch only 40 per cent of the fish that are caught in our waters, no chance of coming up with solutions to the landing obligation and no chance of growing the prosperity in our rural communities.

Dr Allan: Will the member take an intervention?

Peter Chapman: I will not. I do not have time.

The Scottish Government's own report, which was published in 2018, showed that leaving the CFP has the potential to double the raw material that is caught by the industry in Scotland and could result in an increase of £500 million to the economy and the creation of 5,000 jobs. On this side of the chamber, we fully realise that Brexit provides a great opportunity to the fishing industry through our leaving the CFP. Leaving it behind will improve sustainability by allowing us to move from a system that is based on historical fishing activity to zonal attachment—a modern, evidence-based method of allocating shares according to where the fish stocks are located now, and not a method that is based on the fishing practices of 30 or 40 years ago.

The critical path to securing those economic benefits is for the UK to become a sovereign coastal state and regain full control over its waters. We must do that by December 2020 to allow us to take our place at the table at next year's talks on fishing opportunities for 2021. That will allow the UK and Scottish Governments to determine who gets to catch what, where and when in our waters.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you close, please?

Peter Chapman: I will. Access by the EU fleet to our waters will no longer be an automatic right, as it is under the CFP, but will be subject to annual negotiations, as is the case between the EU and countries that are not bound by the CFP, such as Norway.

Can I just finish, Presiding Officer—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thought that you had, Mr Chapman.

Peter Chapman: Oh. You think that I have finished.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes, I think that you have. *[Laughter.]*

Peter Chapman: I had not quite finished, but I will bow to your greater knowledge and finish there. Thank you.

I move amendment S5M-19922.2, to insert at end:

“, and recognises the opportunities that leaving the EU and Common Fisheries Policy presents for the Scottish fishing industry.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are short of time and I am already at the point of having to curtail back-bench contributions.

I call Colin Smyth to speak to and move amendment S5M-19922.3. You have six minutes, Mr Smyth.

15:28

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Brexit is not the focus of this debate but, as we have heard, the forthcoming annual fisheries negotiations will take place with that issue casting a shadow over them, so I will touch on it first. Whether we believe that the sector will be better served by our being in or out of the EU, no one could disagree that the way that the Brexit negotiations have been handled over the past three years has given little certainty to our fishing communities and the wider sector. If we leave the EU, we do not know on what terms we will do so, and the prospect of a devastating no-deal Brexit still hangs over us.

To be frank, the claims that we will “get Brexit done” by agreeing to the withdrawal agreement that is on the table from the Prime Minister are just not credible. This is simply the start of the process. We do not know what trade deals will be negotiated in the future or what compromises will be made.

It is also important to reflect on the fact that the impact of Brexit on the fishing sector does not relate only to quotas and catches; there are wider implications throughout the supply chain. Currently, more than 4,500 EU citizens work in the Scottish fishing industry, with EU citizens making up 58 per cent of the fish processing labour force. The end of freedom of movement will have a potentially devastating impact on the processing sector, which is already under pressure, as Peter Chapman highlighted.

Likewise, leaving the single market poses a threat to the sale of Scottish fish. In 2016, the UK exported £1.6 billion of fish and fish preparations, 71 per cent of which went to EU countries. Any new tariffs or delays that are caused by increased border checks will have a profound impact on trading, particularly that of perishable products such as seafood. We cannot ignore those wider implications when discussing the impact of Brexit

on the sector and on the communities that rely on it.

The short-term challenge that we face and the topic for today’s debate is the current round of quota negotiations. Our starting point is the scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. The proposed uplifts that it recommends in total allowable catch for northern haddock, plaice and mackerel will be welcomed by the sector. However, as the cabinet secretary said, there are challenges in the advice, particularly in relation to the proposed reduction in the total allowable catch for North Sea cod.

The industry has raised concerns about the high risk of cod becoming a choke species, which will impact on the industry’s ability to catch other species, so the reference in the Scottish Government’s motion to work with the sector to try to find solutions to that issue is important. Interventions that are made to address the issue of choke species in mixed fisheries must be carefully targeted and well thought through. If any additional quotas are secured for that purpose, it is critical that they are used for that purpose.

In the negotiations in the weeks ahead, prioritising sustainability will not only be the right thing to do from an environmental perspective; it will be crucial to the long-term viability of the industry. The fishing sector provides thousands of jobs, often in some of Scotland’s most fragile rural communities, and it generates more than £300 million a year in gross value added, while the processing sector contributes more than that again. If fish stocks are not managed responsibly, those jobs and that income will be at risk.

Whether we are in or out of the common fisheries policy, we need to ensure that decisions on quotas deliver sustainability and are grounded in robust scientific evidence. There is no doubt that fish stocks and the industry would benefit from a more accurate and reliable scientific evidence base. For example, last year, it looked as though only 318,000 tonnes of mackerel would be allowed, based on the scientific advice, but that figure rose to 770,000 tonnes this summer and concluded at 920,000 tonnes. Had the cuts taken place, following the advice that was given at the time, that could well have damaged the industry—arguably, unnecessarily. It is critical that we are led by scientific evidence but, for that to work, there must be shared confidence in the science behind any recommendations. That will be key in determining a way forward when it comes to cod quotas this year. The Scottish Government’s proposed approach to cod, which has secured consensus from the sector and NGOs, is welcome.

However, when we come to quota distribution further down the line, the social importance of the

sector must be taken into account, in ensuring that small boats and those rooted in their communities are supported. Quota consolidation remains a major challenge in the sector, and it is a barrier to delivering the full social and economic benefits that can be provided. In some island communities, local authorities have taken their quotas into public hands and have leased them to fishing communities to ensure that they cannot be traded away. Crucially, that also allows them to lease the quotas in a way that meets local needs and achieves the maximum benefits for their areas—for example, by prioritising local fishermen or new entrants.

Beyond catching, we need to consider how to grow the sector more broadly, by developing fish processing capacity and providing a more localised supply chain. There is also a great deal more to be done outwith quota negotiations to prevent overfishing. There has been a failure to invest fully in fisheries science and to develop comprehensive fisheries management plans, and many of the aims of the inshore fisheries strategy are still unfulfilled. Better vessel tracking and monitoring systems, which the Government promised and which were supported by the Parliament in last year's debate, will be important in addressing illegal activities in Scottish waters. However, progress has been slow and there is a need for appropriate exemptions.

Fishing is a key sector of Scotland's economy, but it is also at the heart of our coastal communities. In my home region of Dumfries and Galloway, the fishing sector is worth more than £9 million in GVA, while the wider marine sector is worth more than £100 million. The region has a thriving shellfish sector—indeed, it has the UK's largest scallop port, in Kirkcudbright.

However, the region has also experienced tragic losses at sea, with the loss of crew members on boats such as the Solway Harvester and the Mhari-L. Those tragedies remind us of the incredibly dangerous conditions that our fishermen often face. I therefore place on record my admiration and respect for the bravery of the workers, and I pay tribute to those who have lost their lives at sea.

During and beyond the current quota negotiations, there is a need to strengthen Scotland's fishing industry and the jobs and growth that it provides, whether we are in or out of the European Union. We must ensure that the sector is managed in a way that maximises its social and economic benefits while protecting its long-term future and preserving Scotland's marine environment on the basis of sound scientific advice.

Securing the best possible sustainable quotas during those negotiations is essential, but it is only

one part of the work that must be done to develop a strong and sustainable fishery sector for future generations.

I move amendment S5M-19922.3, to insert at end:

“recognises the value of the fishing sector and the jobs it provides, often in rural communities; believes that Scotland's quota allocations must be distributed fairly, with a view to delivering the maximum social benefits; recognises the effect of climate change on the sector and emphasises the need to protect and enhance the sector's long-term sustainability and Scotland's marine environment; notes the need to support and develop Scotland's fish processing industry; commends those working in the sector, and recognises the resilience and bravery of Scotland's fishermen.”

15:35

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): A segment of amendment S5M-19922.1 asks that the Parliament

“recognises Scotland's commitments under EU legislation to ensure that the marine environment is in good ecological status and that fishing stocks reflect maximum sustainable yield by 2020”.

Article 2 of the common fisheries policy sets out the overarching objective of ensuring that fish stocks are rebuilt to a level that can produce maximum sustainable yield. For the avoidance of doubt, that means that they will be as productive as they can be without being unsustainable in the long term. That objective was to be achieved by 2015, or 2020 at the latest, for all stocks. The point of the objective is not to limit economic activity; it is to allow recovery of collapsed fish stocks, including inshore herring, and to create more productive seas. Ultimately, that is in the best interests of the environment, fishermen, and a country that generates revenues from its seas.

In 2019, and following last year's debate, EU negotiations set the North Sea cod quota at 25.4 per cent above the level in scientific advice, and set the cod quota on the west coast at 1,735 tonnes, when the advice was for zero. The cabinet secretary said that he specifically negotiated that quota, as well as quota for many other stocks including whiting and herring in the Celtic Sea. That decision has led in part to the Marine Stewardship Council's certification of the North Sea fishery being revoked, which is in no one's long-term interests. The Government motion talks about “challenging scientific advice”: maybe the cabinet secretary can firm that up in his summing up.

Stewart Stevenson: We heard at the north-east Scotland fisheries development partnership that this year, of the four strands of research, three are not to be relied on. That is a one-off, but it indicates the real difficulties in understanding and

responding to the science, which is broadly admitted to be deeply flawed this year.

John Finnie: I do not know that I would admit that any science is “flawed”. However, Stewart Stevenson knows that I am not a scientist, and that people often select information that best suits their needs. What I was trying to say about the overarching principle of article 2 of the CFP is that surely we can all sign up to responding positively when there is scientific evidence, so that fishing has a sustainable future.

The true level of overfishing is likely to be more severe, especially given that the Government has created a bonus uplift quota to account for the fish that fishermen now have to land that they would have discarded before the discard ban. However, the discard ban is not enforced, which means that the total amount of fish stock being killed each year is the original quota, the quota uplift amount, and the discarded fish. That is pushing our fish populations dangerously below sustainable levels.

The recent assessment of progress towards the EU marine framework directive found that the main problem is caused by physical disruption of the sea bed from fishing gear. There are many challenges. Our amendment expresses concern

“that the marine environment is not currently in good ecological status and that ongoing discarding and quota limits in excess of maximum sustainable yield for 2020 may result in continued over-fishing”.

We do not know exactly what the Scottish Government negotiating objectives are, but we understand that it will not accept advice to cut the North Sea cod quota.

I am citing many briefings: I am grateful to the various organisations that have provided them. They are all practitioners, and the role that they play in the deliberations is important.

I do not understand the bonanza. If the people in the fishing industry to whom I speak were wanting a spokesman, they certainly would not, because they want a sustainable future, turn to Peter Chapman, who is their self-appointed spokesperson. Regardless of the complex reasoning on sanctioning overfishing, the only benefits are to big fishing, which argues against science because it makes a big profit. Of course, profit is a factor in any area of business, but profit at the expense of our maritime resource is to be avoided.

Our amendment also asks that Parliament reaffirm

“its call for a robust maritime protection regime, including effective vessel tracking”.

The cabinet secretary has touched on the issue. Open Seas has had many reports of illegal dredging and trawling in marine protected areas

since last year’s debate. Those that it feels confident to report on include dredging around the Garvellachs near Oban, in the Sound of Mull, near Ullapool, off Jura and off St Abbs. It is the view of Open Seas that the Government has failed to react properly to those incidents. The illegality near Oban was witnessed and reported three nights in a row without any patrol vessel or aircraft stopping it. Likewise, in the Sound of Mull, a dredger had its publicly viewable vessel tracker switched on.

There are a great number of challenges, and we want a sustainable future, not only for those who are directly involved in fisheries, but for the many jobs onshore that are supported by it.

I move amendment S5M-19922.1, to leave out from “and that the outcome” to “efforts” and insert:

“; recognises Scotland’s commitments under EU legislation to ensure that the marine environment is in good ecological status and that fishing stocks reflect maximum sustainable yield by 2020; is concerned that the marine environment is not currently in good ecological status and that ongoing discarding and quota limits in excess of maximum sustainable yield for 2020 may result in continued over-fishing; reaffirms its call for a robust maritime protection regime, including effective vessel tracking and monitoring technology on all Scottish fishing vessels, and calls on the Scottish Government to take a spatial approach to fisheries management, including extending and improving the Marine Protected Area network and reintroducing the three-mile limit”.

15:41

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD):

This important annual debate focuses, as it should, on the annual fisheries negotiations with our partners in the European Union to settle the fishing opportunities that will be available to all during 2020.

Of course, there is an added factor in the negotiations because, quite frankly, we do not know whether the people of our United Kingdom will endorse the aim of the current UK Government to leave the European Union, or whether they will reject it. Whatever happens, one thing is sure: the December negotiations will affect us whether we are in or out of the European Union, because even if we leave, we have the transition period that runs to the end of 2020.

As Peter Chapman pointed out, 60 per cent of the fish that are currently caught in the UK’s exclusive economic zone are not caught by the UK fleet, while, according to the briefing from the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation, more than 90 per cent of the fish that are caught in Norway’s exclusive economic zone are caught by its own fleet.

I note that some people imply that leaving the European Union will be all sweetness and light.

We would gain control once again over our own exclusive economic zone, and surely—they say or, certainly, imply—just like Norway, the share of fish that are caught by our own fleet could jump from 60 per cent to 90 per cent overnight. I must gently point out to Peter Chapman in particular that that is a completely unrealistic expectation.

Peter Chapman: I have never, ever said that that would happen “overnight”, and I have never spoken to a fisherman in the north-east who expects it to happen overnight. Over time, however, it certainly will happen.

Mike Rumbles: Well. There we have it. Peter Chapman says that “Over time” the share will raise to 90 per cent. I just do not believe that. It is not practical—

Peter Chapman: Why not?

Mike Rumbles: When fishing rights are being addressed—here is why I do not believe what Peter Chapman said—historical fishing opportunities will need to be respected. Even if we wanted to do so—I did not know anyone who seriously believes that we could, although perhaps I do now—we could not ban all foreign vessels from our exclusive economic zone, although Peter Chapman wishes that that were the case.

If the UK actually leaves the European Union on 31 January, Brexit will not be “done”. The hard work of negotiating trade deals with the European Union will just be getting under way. I do not believe for one minute that, having taken more than three years to negotiate the exit terms, we could settle all our trade negotiations, including on fishing, by the end of next year. I include negotiations on fishing as part of our trade negotiations because if we leave, we will have to negotiate all our trade with the European Union. Anyone who says that fishing will somehow be magically excluded is being totally unrealistic.

Fergus Ewing: On that point, does Mr Rumbles share my concern that, in the event of Brexit, the negotiations on fishing would get caught up in those that would concurrently be conducted on trade? Does he share my fear that the result might be that the UK sells out a proper deal on fish in order to get some kind of deal on trade?

Mike Rumbles: I agree with the cabinet secretary, who has hit the nail on the head. I have always been sceptical of the claim that our fishing industry will be much better off as that of an independent state outside the European Union for those reasons. I suspect that—

Peter Chapman: Will the member give way?

Mike Rumbles: I am sorry. I would certainly give way if I had the time, but I have only two minutes left.

It is clear to me that when we negotiate trade deals, we negotiate trade deals; we cannot say to the European Union, “We want to negotiate everything—oh, except fishing.” That is just not going to happen.

In the short time that I have left, I will focus on our inshore waters. Members will have received a briefing from the Scottish Creel Fishermen’s Federation. In contrast to the “sea of opportunity” that we have so often heard that Brexit will offer our fishing industry, the creel fishermen are worried about what Brexit might bring. Three quarters of Scotland’s 2,000 fishing boats are under 10m long. The fishermen have little to gain but much to lose from Brexit. If our trade talks fail and we face a no-deal Brexit at the end of next year, fishermen face the real possibility of their produce going bad in the lorry parks of Dover as the lorries wait for access to our European markets. To them, Brexit is far from being a “sea of opportunity”. I will quote Alistair Sinclair, who is the SCFF’s national co-ordinator. He has said that

“shellfish are now our main target species and we are witnessing signs that before long they too could decline dramatically as has already been witnessed in some areas. We do not need tariffs and lengthy customs barriers as well.”

I could not agree more. That is why we perhaps need an inshore fisheries bill sooner rather than later.

The Liberal Democrats support the Scottish Government’s motion and wish the cabinet secretary well in the annual December negotiations. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that in the run-up to those negotiations, the threat—that is what it is—of Brexit is hanging over them.

We support the Scottish Government’s commitment to respect stock sustainability in next year’s quotas, and we support its efforts to achieve the best possible outcomes for Scotland’s fishermen, the wider sector and all our coastal communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I will be very strict with timings—members have up to six minutes.

15:47

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): So, here we are again—one year down the line, we are having another debate on the end-year negotiations. However, this year’s debate is a bit different, as we face the UK’s departure from the EU, sort of, on 31 January. Although we could leave with a deal that includes a transitional period, we still face the possible nightmare situation of a no-deal exit.

We know that the European Commission has released its TAC proposals for 2020 for 72 stocks

in the North Sea and the north-east Atlantic and, as always, there is good news and bad news. Cuts are proposed for 23 stocks that are important to Scotland's fishermen, but we know that coastal states have agreed on a 41 per cent rise in the north-east Atlantic TAC for 2020. Agreement has been reached on management measures for mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring, for all three of which a TAC has been set in accordance with the recommended scientific advice. That is a positive outcome for Scotland—apart, perhaps, from the 11 per cent decrease for Atlanto-Scandian herring.

Unfortunately, however, as I understand it, the Marine Stewardship Council has so far refused to reinstate its eco label for mackerel, which was suspended earlier this year when the stock assessment was drastically reduced. It was then revised significantly upwards, but the MSC said that it would still not reinstate its sustainability eco label because of the absence of a long-term management plan. Despite the MSC's strange stance on mackerel, the rise in the TAC is still good news for our fishermen.

Although there is good news on mackerel, the news on cod is not so good. There is no doubt that the scientific advice continues to be challenging. In particular, there is a risk of a choke in the North Sea fisheries because of the big cut of 70 per cent that is proposed in the TAC for cod, which is being discussed this week in London at the EU-Norway negotiations on shared stocks, as the cabinet secretary mentioned.

With regard to future fisheries management, we are heading into an unfamiliar situation, with the UK being classed as a third country when it comes to fisheries negotiations with the EU. Perhaps UK officials will find out how Scotland felt in previous years and decades when we were sometimes locked out of negotiations in Brussels and left to sit in anterooms and hang about in corridors while UK ministers with little direct knowledge of the needs of the Scottish industry led on the talks.

We know that, even if we leave with a deal on 31 January, we will continue to operate under EU rules during the implementation period, but only as a consultee. The problem with that is that we would not be able to negotiate anything independently until the implementation period ended. That is far from ideal, and I am sure that it is not what east coast or northern fishermen thought that they were voting for when they voted to leave the EU.

To save the day, it is clear that Scotland needs a seat at the top table for key fisheries negotiations. Allowing Scotland to lead the negotiations on behalf of the UK when the fisheries council begins on 16 December would mean that full preparations can be made away

from the post-election turmoil in London. Given that Scotland is the primary fishing nation in the UK, accounting for around two thirds of UK landings, the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy should be the obvious choice to lead the UK delegation.

I turn—regretfully—to Brexit and the likely impact on the west coast. The Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation, to which Mike Rumbles referred, has been consistently warning for years of the risks that a no-deal Brexit poses to small operators. I just hope that all fishermen will not be judged on the misguided decisions and actions of others.

When the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee held a round-table meeting a couple of months ago, we heard from Alistair Sinclair of the SCFF. He warned that, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, exports of seafood would be held up because of a lack of environmental health officers and vets to provide the paperwork required. He also claimed that live shellfish exports to Europe could be disrupted by demonstrations at the channel from French fishermen who had been denied access to British waters post our withdrawal from the EU.

Those risks still hover in the background, given that a no-deal Brexit is still a possibility. However, a real concern for fishermen, processors and exporters is the issuing of export health certificates. When the cabinet secretary appeared before the REC Committee on 6 November, he suggested that there had been talk of an additional 150,000 or 200,000 export health certificates being required, which would cost between £7 million and £15 million. He advised the committee that the UK Government had been approached to agree to "dynamic alignment", which would avoid the need for export health certificates.

If the cabinet secretary has time, I would be keen to hear in his summing-up speech whether his counterpart in London, George Eustice, has made any effort to apply to the EU for dynamic alignment, or whether, as I suspect, the fishing industry and seafood exports are being kept as a bargaining chip. As recently as last Sunday, the Tory Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, admitted that EU vessels will keep access to Scottish waters in a Tory Brexit trade deal—so much for Boris Johnson's long-promised "sea of opportunity" for the Scottish fishing industry.

I believe that the best solution for Scotland is, as I suggested, that our cabinet secretary should be permitted to lead the UK delegation, not just for the December talks but for as long as we remain in the common fisheries policy during the transition period.

15:53

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am pleased to speak in the debate at this important time in the fishing industry's annual calendar. It is always a welcome opportunity for members on all sides of the chamber to put on record our thanks to our brave skippers and fishermen and our industry representatives, who work tirelessly to support the industry in what is a challenging meteorological and political climate.

Inshore vessels of less than 10m in length make up 74 per cent of the Scottish fishing fleet. I represent many coastal communities in my constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries, where the majority of our fishermen work in the inshore sector. As has been mentioned, Kirkcudbright, in the heart of my constituency, is home to the UK's largest scallop port, so I am very conscious of the need to protect all our fishing interests.

In 2017, non-UK European fishing boats landed around 700,000 tonnes of fish and shellfish from the UK's exclusive economic zone—about eight times more in weight than our own registered vessels landed from the EU EEZ. That equates to a staggering £2.5 billion, which represents a massive potential loss of income to our coastal communities.

With that in mind, it is incredible, when we look back at the SNP's track record, to see that its members of the European Parliament backed a report calling for the continuation of the CFP, even after Brexit.

Fergus Ewing rose—

Finlay Carson: I am not taking any interventions.

The Scottish Government admitted that it wishes to hand back powers to Brussels, and SNP minister Maree Todd is quoted in *The Shetland Times* as saying that being a member of the EU meant

“going along with the CFP”.

Stewart Stevenson: On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I hope that it is a point of order. You know how I feel about specious points of order.

Stewart Stevenson: Is it appropriate to miscall the activities of another Parliament—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order. Please sit down. However, it is important for members to treat one another with respect. In this circumstance, please proceed cautiously, Mr Carson.

Finlay Carson: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will go back to what I was saying.

Maree Todd has been quoted in *The Shetland Times* as saying that being a member of the EU meant

“going along with the CFP”.

Even the SNP's independence white paper said that an independent Scotland in the EU would be in the common fisheries policy. Make no mistake: if the SNP Government gets its way, it will lock our fishermen into the already intolerable CFP.

All that is in direct contrast to the view of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which wants real change to the current common fisheries policy and sees Brexit as the opportunity to revisit the decision to allow all European vessels to fish between 12 and 200 nautical miles off the UK. Indeed, many people see leaving the CFP as a chance to redress the situation for the benefit of Scotland's fishing communities.

I see a real opportunity for change in all our fishing communities, including our inshore fisheries communities, to improve management and work towards a fully transparent and sustainable industry while addressing the need to ensure a healthy and sustainable marine environment.

Only yesterday, I was fortunate enough to visit Shetland to see the commendable and impressive way in which the various stakeholders have worked together on their marine plan to ensure an economically and environmentally sustainable marine environment. There was also acknowledgement of the potential £1 billion increase in landings and the predicted positive impact, which has resulted in sufficient confidence to enable the local authority to fund a new fish market.

I welcome the cabinet secretary's mention of GPS on scallop boats. In the past, I have spoken about the need for new technology on our boats, which could play a part in addressing illegal fishing. Therefore, I am pleased that the UK Government has announced a fisheries technology fund, which should help to transform the industry using research and innovation.

In Shetland, I heard about new satellite and drone technologies that will assist in detecting areas with high nutrient levels, which will help to identify the best locations for mussel farms. That same technology can be used to better predict where the target fish shoals are, which will make a massive difference in relation to discard bans, as we are reaching the limits when it comes to net technology.

Those technologies might result in fewer fishermen on our boats, but that should not result

in fewer jobs in our fishing and rural communities. We need to ensure that science and technology jobs are located in rural areas. We have a real opportunity to revitalise our coastal communities while setting the highest standards of marine conservation, which will allow for additional jobs in the industry and an environmental and sustainable future for Scotland.

I wish the cabinet secretary well for next week's meeting, because it can play a vital role, and not just in ensuring fit-for-purpose quotas; it should also be an opportunity to step up the engagement to deliver the industry's aspirations for the future.

As deputy convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, I believe that it is vital that the Parliament plays its part in delivering for our fishing industry and the communities and businesses that are involved in it. We need a successful outcome for jobs, economic activity and sustainable production in order to enhance our natural environment and deliver for our fishermen and the future of our coastal communities.

15:59

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): My throat might mean that I will sit down early, which I am sure that you will welcome, Presiding Officer.

Just to pick up on the points that Finlay Carson made, I think that his comments are an abuse of parliamentary privilege and I will explain why. We are granted privilege to protect us from the legal consequences of what we say for very particular purposes. The vote that Mr Carson referred to never took place in the form that he set out. The reason why is that the clerks at the European Parliament recorded the SNP votes incorrectly; that was corrected within hours of its being drawn to their attention. Therefore, anyone who asserts otherwise is abusing the privileges of this Parliament.

Having said that, let me congratulate Finlay Carson. I join with him on this, and I shake hands with him across the chamber, having said what I have said: when he refers to our "brave" fishermen, there will be no one in the chamber who disagrees with that. We see that in the Government's motion, and we have heard that from Colin Smyth. We unite in that.

My very first constituency activity after being elected in 2001 was to attend the Fishermen's Mission in Peterhead for the presentation of a Royal Humane Society medal to a fisherman. He had been on a vessel off the coast of Greenland in January or February, when there was ice on the superstructure of the fishing vessel, and one of the crew members got swept overboard. This

gentleman leapt into the sea, where the survival time was a matter of a few minutes, rescued the other fisherman and brought him back to safety. As my very first activity in my constituency, that reinforced my previous understanding of the risks to which fishermen expose themselves and of the bravery that they are prepared to show. Incidentally, the fisherman who won the award said that he was much more concerned about speaking to the audience who were there to see him receive his medal. I sort of understand that.

Now to the matter in hand and the end-of-year negotiations. Unusually, there are some particular and acknowledged difficulties with the scientific information this year. There is also a long-run problem with some of the baselines for the scientific information, which I think that it is time for the scientists to do something about. They acknowledge the difficulties. The science is not an exact one—let us not pretend that it is—but, this year, we are hearing of particular problems.

It is a great delight that Fergus Ewing has such a high regard for George Eustice, his opposite number in the UK Government, but I hope that in the aftermath of the election we will see Fergus Ewing taking the lead if George Eustice is not available—or, more to the point, if he cannot get any guidance from the new UK Government.

Where are we in the whole thing? Conservative colleagues are focusing on but one aspect of the industry—that of the catchers. I led a members' business debate on the sea of opportunity campaign, and I welcome the sea of opportunity for our catchers. However, that cannot be disconnected from the seafood sector and the need for wider coastal communities to benefit, should it be the case that more fish can be caught by our fishermen—and, fundamentally, landed in Scotland to be processed.

Leaving the customs union and the single market presents immense challenges for the processing sector, however. That sector does not just involve the big processors in my constituency; there are also the wee smokehouses on the west coast, which are a vital part of very small communities there. Like my constituents, people there might employ one or two EU workers, who are vital to making that local enterprise work. We are already seeing that workers are not so willing to come to the north-east and elsewhere in Scotland as they once were, partly because of the devaluation of the pound but also because of the hostile immigration environment that is promulgated and operated by the UK Tory Government.

The notion of thousands of new jobs in processing is utterly fictional, at a time when we have record vacancies in the industry in the north-east. If the industry cannot process, we have to

have the same rights and privileges that our friends and colleagues across the Irish Sea in Northern Ireland are being given: they are allowed to stay in the single market and the customs union—so our competitors and our rivals are potentially undermining our industry.

I end with a word about how well prepared the Tory Government is for this sea of opportunity and everything that goes with it. Two days before the end of October, the UK Government still could not tell fish processors what labels to print to put on the side of fish exports. That tells us something about the shambles of this Tory Government's approach to fishing.

16:05

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): In this year's negotiations, I encourage the Scottish Government to seek the best arrangement for our coastal communities with respect to the pillars of science and sustainability.

The coming year is a significant one for our seas, as we celebrate the year of coasts and waters and a decade since the passing of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. It will also be a testing year, with deadlines for sustainability and environmental status levels, and it may be the year that we exit the EU—although I will be campaigning, along with Scottish Labour colleagues, to remain, and I hope that that will be in relation to a referendum that will be held under a Labour Government. The philosophy of protection and enhancement of our natural marine environment should be at the forefront of this Government's approach more than ever, as the ally of a strong and resilient fishing industry.

In the context of the "State of Nature 2019" report, threats to biodiversity and the climate emergency, I am pleased to speak in this debate and to approach it from the perspective of my brief. I firmly believe that sustainable fishing makes for a sustainable industry, which makes for sustainable communities.

I commend those who work in the fishing industry for their resilience in these turbulent times, and pay respect to them for the dangers that they face every time they set sail. Coastal communities can be fragile economies that depend very much on these negotiations and Scottish Government direction, and they must be given the certainty of science and the tools to fish in a way that is appropriate to their local marine environments. In that context, I have concerns about Alasdair Allan's request involving the possible fishing of tuna, a species that is here due to climate change, as I understand it from the science.

The marine environment is precious and a public good, and the intention of the 2010 act was for our stocks to be managed in the public interest and in such a way as to enhance the marine environment as well as to protect it. Our fish stocks are only a renewable source if they are properly managed. The way to sustain communities is to manage ecosystems for productivity. That is the sensible option. Everyone wins with clean, healthy seas. Can the cabinet secretary, in his closing remarks, give us an update on progress towards managing stocks in line with maximum sustainable yield?

Sadly, as we have heard from John Finnie, the issue of illegality has not been resolved. I was disheartened to learn of reports of illegal scallop dredging in St Abbs recently. I thank Open Seas for stating that, in spite of excellent practice by many fishing boats

"it is without doubt that overfishing, ongoing illegal discarding and illegal damage to MPAs only benefits a few for a short period of time and is to the long term detriment of our coastal communities and fisheries. We need Parliament to take this long view and respond to the challenge in our seas."

Can the cabinet secretary give any reason why Marine Scotland was not able to take action for a full week after the reports at St Abbs were made? Will he also explain why £1.5 million of EU money that was committed in October 2018 to resolving the issue has not been fully spent?

We should, of course, be using any EU funds while they are still available to us—which I hope that they will be in the long term, whatever the result of Brexit. The European maritime and fisheries fund is one such valuable resource. It has offered support for the just transition of the industry and for fragile communities. It has made an impact across our country and has been significant in relation to diversifying coastal economies, improving the quality of life in coastal communities and shifting to more sustainable approaches. In its most recent round, the fund enabled businesses to make improvements to processing and storage, to take on research projects, maximise global and UK-wide market opportunities, tackle seafood waste and more. Reinforcing the community-led approach to the sustainable development of fishing areas is hugely important. The EMFF can open up the industry to the sidelined, empower young people by aiding start-ups or training for the unemployed, progress family businesses by training partners and advise smaller fleets on diversification. Can the cabinet secretary offer any further assurance that that fund will be replicated in its funding and purpose, whatever the Brexit outcome?

I will briefly deal with inshore fisheries, as I have been privately approached by people with serious concerns about the future of that industry, and this

annual debate is one of the few opportunities to discuss fishing issues in Parliament.

The Scottish fishing industry must be considered holistically. It would be an immense loss if Scottish low-impact fishermen and communities were to pay the price for any Government focus on the industrialisation of our inshore waters. I urge the cabinet secretary to appraise the possible impacts of Brexit on creel fishermen in inshore waters, to take very seriously the “3 Mile Limit” document that the Scottish Creel Fishermen’s Federation published this week and to consider consulting on that proposals or on other, less broad alternatives. I also ask the cabinet secretary to give an update on the commitment to an inshore fisheries bill, as promised in 2016.

Finally, I wish the cabinet secretary luck with the negotiations.

16:11

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Although it might sometimes seem that there is a predictable element of pre-Christmas ritual in Europe’s annual December fisheries talks, their consequences for livelihoods around Scotland’s coastline could not be more serious. That is true not least in my constituency.

Some 300 people in the Western Isles are directly employed in fishing, and many others are employed in processing, haulage, markets, boat repairs, restaurants and many other areas of the local economy. The shellfish sector represents a significant slice of the fishing industry on the west coast. It has major markets in France, Spain and Portugal.

Whatever happens between now and the current Brexit deadline of 31 January, access to markets and the ability to transport live shellfish without delays at borders remain uppermost in the minds of most island fishermen.

Andrew Charles, who is co-chair of the Scottish Seafood Association, has warned that Brexit could have a “catastrophic” impact on Scots fishermen, with the sector facing an estimated £34 million a year bill to sell its catch to Europe after Brexit. Likewise, it has been estimated that additional paperwork and charges alone could cost exporters £160 per sale. Exports of fresh seafood would require additional export health certificates, at an estimated cost of at least £15 million a year.

That is before we consider the impact of the loss of the European fisheries fund on Scotland. In addition, there is, of course, no guarantee—indeed, there is not even a clue out there—about what, if any, free trade agreement would be reached with the European Union. The loss of our

existing rights to free trade certainly presents the imminent risk of new barriers for key Scottish food exports, such as salmon, langoustines and scallops. That wider context around the annual fisheries talks takes on a new and urgent importance this year, and we cannot ignore that today.

Scotland must get a fair deal in the talks that are under way, and it is clear that the Scottish Government has every interest in reaching a fair deal, in as far as its limited role in some of the negotiations can take it. There is much already to indicate that that is being done, not least in this year’s coastal states and EU-Norway negotiations, which have provided encouraging results in respect of fishing opportunities for pelagic and North Sea white-fish stocks. October’s mackerel consultations resulted in a 41 per cent increase in total allowable catch, in line with scientific evidence.

However, it is impossible to divorce the fishing negotiations from the politics around them, and it is painfully obvious now that the UK Government seems to be unable to bring itself to restate in any specific detail many of the promises of a “sea of opportunity” for Scotland’s fishermen that were made at the time of the Brexit referendum.

With that in mind, I must respectfully differ with Mr Chapman on his assessment, which was that leaving the common fisheries policy, as part of the kind of Brexit that he envisages, would provide a £500 million increase in the economic value of fishing and 5,000 new jobs. I should say that some of those claims have been made not by Mr Chapman but by the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation.

Peter Chapman: Those figures are from the Scottish Government—they are the minister’s figures.

Dr Allan: My point is that I differ, respectfully, with the SFF’s assessment of the statements by Marine Scotland on that issue, and with the scenario that the SFF anticipates.

In fact, even if an EU-Norway, European Economic Area-type agreement were reached—which the UK Government has consistently refused to countenance—total fisheries output would decrease by up to 7 per cent, with export values lower by 0.9 to 6.6 per cent, depending on the species, due to the effect of tariff and non-tariff barriers, which I mentioned earlier.

It is clear that there is a balance to be struck between increasing total allowable catch shares, or fishing quota, and getting tariff-free trade with the EU. Unlike the UK Government, Scotland has consistently offered a compromise option that would achieve that; however, Scotland’s voice on

that and most other matters continues to be ignored by the UK Government.

Meanwhile, the UK Government's internal operation yellowhammer document on Brexit preparation accepts that, following a no-deal Brexit, European fishing vessels will likely continue to fish—legally or illegally—in Scotland's waters, anticipating that 100 such vessels might continue to be active. It is clear that both access to waters and access to markets will be the subject of very uncertain negotiation for months, indeed probably years, ahead, with Scotland's fishing communities, as ever, a bargaining chip, just as they have always been for successive UK Governments.

Our fishing policy should be determined by conservation, science and the needs of the industry. I regret to say, however, that I see little evidence that Westminster has changed its view of Scottish fishermen, which it clearly views as being just as expendable—to use the Tories' own word from 1970—on the way out of Europe as they were on the way in.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Edward Mountain, to be followed by Richard Lyle and then Lewis Macdonald. All of you have agreed to cut your speeches to five minutes, and I thank you for that.

16:17

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Bearing that in mind, I will cut from my speech my comments about quotas and the way things look for next year.

It is a real pity for our fishing industry that yet another year of negotiations has gone by with the UK unable to negotiate as an independent coastal state. It is clear that Scottish fishermen want nothing more than for the UK to leave the hated common fisheries policy and take its place at the negotiating table. Scottish fishermen know that there is a better deal to be had outside the EU. We should not forget that 60 per cent of fish currently caught in the UK exclusive economic zone are not caught by UK fishing vessels. How can that be fair? It is not.

I take a moment to remind this Government how unfair the common fisheries policy is. On average, EU vessels landed £540 million-worth of fish from UK waters between 2012 and 2016. By comparison, UK vessels landed £110 million-worth of fish from EU waters in the same period. That is not equitable, and we should not allow our fishermen to be short changed. Quotas and access rights will still be a central part of UK fisheries, but the UK will have a duty to get the best deal for our fishermen, and hopefully we will see our fishing industry expand.

John Finnie rose—

Fergus Ewing rose—

Edward Mountain: I do not know who stood up first, Presiding Officer. I will let you choose.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am only the arbiter.

John Finnie: We had the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation in recently. Does Mr Mountain feel that the views that he attributes to fishermen include the inshore fishermen, given all the damage that will be done to exports of their quality product if we leave the EU?

Edward Mountain: I think that inshore fishermen are a special case, and it is deeply disappointing that the Government has scrapped its promise made in 2016 to introduce an inshore fisheries bill in this session.

Fergus Ewing: We have done masses of things to promote inshore fisheries. If a better deal on fishing is to be done, why has it not been done as part of the Brexit negotiations? Does the member not agree that the withdrawal agreement that the Prime Minister negotiated contains no agreement on fishing whatsoever?

Edward Mountain: My comment to the cabinet secretary is simple: if he sits back and says that it will all be doom and gloom and that it is never going to happen, it never will happen. Let us make it happen; let us get on with it. That is what we want to do, and that is what my party will push for.

Scottish fishermen look at Norway and see that 90 per cent of the fish caught in the Norwegian exclusive economic zone is caught by the Norwegian fleet. That is what life looks like for an independent coastal state outside the hated common fisheries policy.

When the UK has the power to negotiate its own fishing quotas, we will have the potential to stop the bad deals that are often presented to us by the EU. When the UK sits at the table, it will be able to strike a bilateral deal with Norway on the northern North Sea and a tripartite deal with the EU and Norway on the southern North Sea. I believe that those deals would better serve the interests of Scottish fishermen, and I believe that the Scottish Government knows that, too.

I welcome the Scottish Government's report and believe the figures in it, which found that leaving the common fisheries policy has the potential to double the amount of fish caught by the industry in Scotland and could result in an increase of £500 million to and an extra 5,000 extra jobs for our fisheries sector .

We also have a duty to ensure that our quotas and access rights reflect sustainable goals, so that the UK fishing industry as a whole can have a

secure future for generations to come. We do not need scientists to tell us that fish are not fixated on borders. They are not Scottish, English, Northern Irish or, indeed, Welsh. Therefore, we have to manage across our borders.

It does not make any sense to force Scottish fishing vessels to land all their catch in Scotland. It is better to encourage them to do so by reducing rates and encouraging processing. That is the way that free trade works.

A “sea of opportunity” awaits our fishing industry, and the UK Government is determined—*[Interruption.]* Mike Rumbles might moan, but that is what fishermen said. If he wants to moan, he can get up and make an intervention.

Mike Rumbles *rose*—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his last 30 seconds.

Mike Rumbles: What a shame.

Edward Mountain: Do not moan then, Mr Rumbles.

Any more attempts to frustrate our exit from the common fisheries policy would be more than an insult to our coastal communities across Scotland. Let us get Brexit done, ditch the common fisheries policy and rebuild our fishing industry.

16:23

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Scotland needs a seat at the top table for these key fisheries negotiations now more than ever. In fact, allowing our cabinet secretary to lead the negotiations on behalf of the UK would mean that full preparations could be made away from the post-election turmoil in London.

That said, I wish to reflect on some of the salient issues in the debate: namely, that we should follow the best available scientific advice, support a progressive move towards sustainable fishing levels for all stocks, maintain stocks above safe biological limits and in good reproductive health, and protect the socioeconomic wellbeing of our industry and the communities that depend on it.

Scottish sea fisheries are now more sustainable than they were in 2007. That is thanks to the approach of the Scottish National Party Scottish Government and the leadership of our excellent cabinet secretary.

I believe that Boris Johnson’s bad Brexit deal would trade away the long-promised “sea of opportunity” for the Scottish fishing industry. The Brexit deal’s commitment to a separate fisheries agreement as part of the economic partnership would mean that the UK cedes access to UK waters for EU vessels, or accepts tariffs and

custom barriers on trade in fish, seafood and farmed salmon with the EU. Once again, the UK will be selling out our fishermen and fisherwomen.

The political declaration is clear. It states:

“Within the context of the overall economic partnership the Parties should establish a new fisheries agreement on, inter alia, access to waters and quota shares.”

That concession from the UK Government indicates that access and quota shares will, to some degree, be traded away before the annual coastal state negotiations take place. It is clear that the fisheries agreement that is reached in advance of the UK operating as an independent coastal state will include core determined agreements on access and quota shares.

As has been said, Tory Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, admitted that EU vessels will keep access to Scottish waters in a Tory Brexit trade deal. As well as tariffs, which will inevitably increase the cost of exports, seafood businesses will face a range of new non-tariff barriers, such as significantly increased certification requirements and delays at customs due to inspections, which will be devastating to the fish industry.

As a responsible Government, this SNP Scottish Government will do what it can to mitigate the significant risks that will be posed by those potential new trade barriers after Brexit—or, as some would say, breakfast. However, the onus is clearly on the UK Government to finally start to listen to the legitimate concerns of Scottish business, and to take the steps that are necessary to prevent profound economic damage.

In my 43 years of politics, I have known some hypocrites. Whatever they say today, the Tories have been selling out the Scottish fish industry for nearly half a century. Under Ted Heath in the 1970s, the Tories considered fisheries expendable. Under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, the UK Government signed us up to the original doomed common fisheries policy, which consigned our fishermen to decades of mismanagement. Then we had John Major’s Tories sign us up to a revised common fisheries policy in the 1990s, which, at its very heart, scrapped vessels and livelihoods.

Peter Chapman: Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lyle: Do not lecture me. No, I will not take an intervention—you did not take some of ours.

In the 21st century, the Tories were attempting to enshrine the common fisheries policy in the European treaties, while the SNP was attempting to return controls to the fishing industry.

To be fair to the Tories, it was not always them. Successive Westminster Governments—under the Tories, Labour, and the Tories and Lib Dems in coalition—have constantly seen Scottish fishing as expendable. When they had the chance to fight Scotland's corner in Brussels, they actively decided not to bother. For the past 25 years, they did not attend the European Parliament Fisheries Committee, or PECH. Labour and the Lib Dems have not had an MEP on it for more than a decade, and the Scottish Tories have had no representation since 2014, with their sole Scottish MEP only recently gaining a place on the committee. That tells you all that you need to know about who cares about the Scottish fishing sector.

The SNP will continue to demand the scrapping or the fundamental reform of the CFP. Much is at stake, and we will continue to champion the important issues and fight for Scottish fishermen.

16:28

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): As members have said, another year is ending and another fisheries council is approaching. The pattern has not changed much since the first session of this Parliament 20 years ago, when I, and others who are here, were members of the first Rural Affairs Committee in 1999. It has certainly not changed as much as members around the chamber predicted that it would this time last year, or even the year before that. We are, again, approaching what might be the last meeting of the fisheries council that the United Kingdom attends as a member state of the European Union; then again, it might not be. We were allegedly there for the last time on that basis last year.

I am struck by the fact that the Government's motion does not mention the European Union or the common fisheries policy by name, talking instead of

"annual fisheries negotiations in the Faroe Islands and Brussels",

as if our bilateral discussions with the Faroese were on a par with our membership of the EU and the CFP. The negotiations with the Faroes, Norway and, indeed, the wider group of coastal states in the north-east Atlantic are important, but our participation through the UK delegation to the European Union fisheries council makes us an insider, not an outsider, in Brussels, at least for one more year. Our talks with other coastal states this year are on a quite different basis from what might apply in the future.

I noted in particular Mr Ewing's reference to proposals for caps on effort in international waters that were initiated by the Scottish Government and taken forward by the UK before being proposed by

the EU. Having that kind of clout in international fisheries negotiations cannot be guaranteed in the future.

The fog of uncertainty has not yet shifted. For catchers, processors and seafood exporters, that uncertainty remains unchanged.

However, there have been other changes in the past year. I record my personal thanks to Bertie Armstrong, who stepped down earlier this year after providing clear and honest leadership for the Scottish Fishermen's Federation since 2004, and I welcome the appointment of Elspeth Macdonald as his successor. I look forward to working with her, as members of all parties seek to do, on behalf of fishing communities across North East Scotland and beyond.

The largest change highlighted today is global warming, and what that means for fisheries in the North Sea and north Atlantic, now and into the future. One of the outstanding issues in recent years has been conflict among coastal states over mackerel. Although, as we have heard, the quota for mackerel this year is going up, not down, the potential for future conflict remains. Indeed, we heard this week from the SFF that not only Iceland but Greenland and Russia have been identified as countries whose mackerel catches in international waters may be a cause for concern.

Of course, one country's overfishing is another's increased access. In recent years, issues have been raised about increased catches within territorial waters as well as outwith them. As a number of members have said, the truth is that the rise in ocean temperatures means that questions of who catches what and where are not—and cannot be—static. Cold-water species are migrating to colder waters and those favouring warmer waters, such as Atlantic bluefin tuna, are taking their place.

No doubt the Scottish pelagic fleet will follow the mackerel into ever more northerly waters. That means that priorities for interstate negotiations are bound to change: countries with which we have previously had fewer issues in fishing might become more important, while others' traditional or historical interests in Scottish waters might become less so.

Climate change also has wider impacts on fish stocks, not just in north Atlantic waters but worldwide. Although some in the sector may still be sceptical about scientific advice, the fact is that Scotland is now well placed to give a lead on how to deliver long-term sustainability in a world in which that is ever more in demand—not least in promoting partnerships between catching and conservation interests.

Achieving maximum sustainable yield is not a one-year wonder in a mixed fishery; it is

something to work towards across a number of years. Having that as a goal for fishing in Scottish waters is worth while in itself, but in the future it will also make our experience even more valuable to sustainable fisheries worldwide, at a time when sustainable management of fish stocks is truly becoming a global challenge.

We should not just look forward, Presiding Officer; we should continue to look outwards as well.

16:33

John Finnie: I think that it was my colleague Angus MacDonald who said, "Here we are again". I hope that we will be here again next year.

As other speakers have done, I pay tribute to those in the fishing industry—both onshore and offshore—for providing us with what we hope will be a sustainable food source for the longer term. I also acknowledge the cabinet secretary's remark in his opening speech about the Scottish Government's investment in safety and diversity. That is very welcome, and I hope that there will be more of it.

If I noted his remarks correctly, the cabinet secretary said that we have a lot to lose. In her speech, my friend and colleague Claudia Beamish spoke about the pillars of science, sustainability and public interest. It is for those reasons that, on many occasions, I have raised with the cabinet secretary and his colleagues the issue of maritime protection—most recently at meetings of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. As the cabinet secretary quite rightly said, the police cannot be everywhere, and neither can the marine protection people. I pay tribute to both those organisations, which do sterling work.

A fisherman on the west coast once very helpfully tried to explain such matters to me in simple terms. He said: "You know, John, it's like when the traffic department in Dingwall used to go to the west coast to catch drunk drivers. By the time that they got there, everyone knew that they were on the road." It is also pretty much like the television detector van stories of the past. It is the same for the fishing industry: everyone knows where everyone else is, and there are very few secrets.

If we are really going to manage fisheries in a way that protects the ecosystem and moves damaging fisheries away from fragile habitats, areas that are used for spawning and nursery grounds, we will have to get our act together.

Such support for protection does not come simply from environmental interests. The Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation and the Scottish Scallop Divers Association both support a ban on

trawling and dredging within 3 miles of the west coast. Many members have mentioned the document from the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation, "The 3 Mile Limit", which I commend. It is also significant that Open Seas said in its briefing for the debate:

"Scottish Government's own research has found that establishing such a ban would create more profitable landings and greater employment in these fisheries, offsetting any harm done to the trawl and dredge sector and allowing crashed fish stocks such as cod and whiting to recover."

If we are talking about the long term, not least in the context of the climate emergency, we will have to ensure that fisheries are sustainable.

Mr Stevenson talked about the importance of single smokehouses on the west coast. We know that there is considerable employment in the inshore fishing fleet. The fleet does not rely on imported labour to maintain its profit margins; it employs locally and, as the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation said in its briefing,

"our 'Live products' achieve up to five times more value to Scotland PLC than trawled."

Given the nature of the resource, the arena is very competitive. I certainly go along with the people in the Scottish Inshore Fisheries Trust who talk about integrating fisheries with other marine activities. As I said, it is not just people at sea who are involved in the matter.

On the thorny question of the on-going negotiations, it is self-evident that the people who have the most interest should be involved. I am a long-time supporter of the Scottish Government having direct involvement in the negotiations. Whether someone is present in an anteroom or in the room itself seems to vary, depending on personalities. Fish know no boundaries, and the reality is that it is good relationships at Government and official level that will bring about the benefits that we all seek. I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary talk about his good relationship with his opposite number.

I say, frankly, that I cannot better Mr Rumbles's demolition job on Mr Chapman's speech. It is very important that we deal with facts.

Colin Smyth talked about certainty: all industries want certainty, but the fisheries sector, on which many factors impact, has been given uncertainty. It is disgusting to think that food will potentially be wasted as valuable produce rots in a car park in Kent, particularly given the industry that will have gone into delivering that produce.

In my final minute, I want to strike a consensual note and talk about a fishery that has grown in importance. Scotland's marine aquaculture industry currently purchases 1 million live wrasse each year for use as cleaner fish for the removal

of sea lice infestations on farmed salmon. The important point to make is that the capture of wrasse is being undertaken under only voluntary measures. In the short time that I have, I do not have the opportunity to go into the science of that and the challenges of the environment in which capture takes place. However, on a consensual note, I refer to recommendation 28 of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's report on salmon farming in Scotland, which said:

"The Committee strongly recommends that the Scottish Government consider the need for regulation of cleaner fish fishing to preserve wild stocks and avoid negative knock on impact in local ecosystems."

That is the philosophy that should be adopted right across the fisheries sector.

16:39

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

Like Colin Smyth and other members, I pay tribute to the fishing community and remember the many people who have lost their lives in a dangerous line of work. I welcome the funding for safety measures that the cabinet secretary described in his opening speech.

Given what is in play in relation to the general election, it is impossible to say whether or when Brexit will happen. We do not know whether there will be a deal that benefits the fishing industry, a deal that trades away our fishing rights, or no deal at all, so that we crash out of the EU. It is completely unpredictable. As Lewis Macdonald said, we cannot even say that this will be the last year in which we take part in the fisheries negotiations as an EU member state. Who knows?

Whatever the outcome, any new quota must be allocated for maximum economic benefit to rural communities and we need to safeguard it from being traded away, as has happened in the past. Some island communities already lead the way by keeping their quota in public hands and releasing it to the fishing community. That means that their quota cannot be traded away; nor can it gain an inflated value that puts it out of the reach of new entrants to the industry. To provide maximum economic impact in remote rural areas, priority should be given to smaller boats that are rooted in their communities.

As many members have said, there are numerous downsides to Brexit for the fishing community. For example, Mike Rumbles and Alasdair Allan spoke about access to markets. Fish is fresh produce and any delays or bureaucracy can mean that it can lose some of or all its value, so we need to be very careful about how we trade it going forward.

Colin Smyth made the point that 58 per cent of our processing workers come from the EU, and so

do some of our workers at sea. If they are not allowed to remain, it will create an issue for the community. We also need to attract new workers into the community.

Although I am winding up in this debate, I want to flag up to the cabinet secretary an issue that did not come up during it. He might wish to look at gill netters, who use long lines of nets that take up a huge area of sea and lock out other vessels. Gill netting is causing major problems in Shetland as the fleet is locked out of such areas. The time limit for the nets to be in the water is 72 hours. Nobody is suggesting that they should not be used at all, but a reduction in the time for which they can be left in the sea—say to 24 hours—would free up areas and enable other members of the fishing fleet to get access to them. It would also end some of the disquiet that surrounds gill netting.

We all agree with the discard ban, but it is disappointing that, as yet, there is no solution to choke species. Colin Smyth also spoke about that. We have a mixed fishery, and where there is no quota for bycatch, the fishing industry cannot catch the species that it has quota for and can legally pursue. We must look at solutions to that, maybe looking abroad to countries such as Norway to see how they handle that without having their fleet tied up.

The cabinet secretary suggested that, for the cod fishery, there might be a cut to quota of as much as 61 per cent this year. If that happens, cod will become a choke species, as Colin Smyth pointed out. Rather than just cut the quota, will the cabinet secretary pursue other measures that could be put in place to reduce the need for a cut of that size, such as avoiding spawning areas and areas with high numbers of juveniles?

Lewis Macdonald made a point about global warming. It seems that it could be affecting cod, which is plentiful in the northern North Sea but not in the southern North Sea. Could cod be moving north to find colder waters, just as Atlantic bluefin tuna are coming into our waters as they warm up? We need to be switched on to how global warming affects fisheries.

We also need to be much more switched on to the science that surrounds fisheries. We have discussed the Norway negotiations on mackerel and how the catch and the science have changed in that regard, leading to a 41 per cent increase this year. We need the science to be accurate, and we need to invest in it to make it so. We need to ensure that the fishing community has confidence in the science, because it will look to avoid keeping to the quotas if it believes that they are not correctly based in science. I appeal to the cabinet secretary to work with the industry to ensure that the science is right.

There have been years when the debate on fishing negotiations has been all about cutting effort. Tough decisions were taken, and there are still tough decisions to be made, but we need to recognise that difficult decisions in the past have led to the recovery of stocks. Therefore, we need to ensure that we have the most robust science to back up any cuts. I wish the Scottish Government well in making that case at the negotiations.

16:45

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am delighted to close the debate for the Scottish Conservatives. In fact, this is my third year of closing the debate, and nostalgia is already creeping in. I have fond memories of Tavish Scott, Stewart Stevenson and even the cabinet secretary jousting over the finer details of various quotas and species. Long may that continue. I listened to Richard Lyle's historical diatribe, which was, of course, nonsense from start to finish, but it was hugely enjoyable nonsense.

Fishing is a crucial industry for Scotland as a whole, and for the Highlands and Islands. I have said this previously, but it is important to acknowledge that the industry extends beyond the north-east and takes in our inshore fisheries, including the shellfish sector, as many members have mentioned. Many fishermen and fisherwomen operate on the west coast of Scotland, but they are often ignored in the wider political debate.

Today, we address specifically sea fisheries and the end-of-year negotiations. It is a poignant debate because—I truly believe—it will be our last debate on end-of-year negotiations before the UK leaves the EU and we take back control of our waters. That is one of the many reasons why Scottish Conservatives support the deal that the UK Government negotiated to exit the EU, which was finalised last month.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Donald Cameron: I will not. I am sorry, but I have a lot of ground to cover.

The deal will ensure continuity during the transition period, and it will also ensure a smooth and orderly move to a new arrangement. The cabinet secretary said many times that the withdrawal agreement does not mention fisheries. I was surprised by that. Is it seriously his contention that exiting the EU does not also mean exiting the common fisheries policy?

Fergus Ewing: Will the member give way?

Donald Cameron: I will carry on for a second.

Article 130 of the withdrawal agreement deals with arrangements specifically relating to fisheries. As we know, the withdrawal agreement must be read in tandem with the political declaration, which notes, at paragraph 71, that

“the United Kingdom will be an independent coastal state.”

That is the interpretation of both the UK and the EU. It is there in black and white.

Stewart Stevenson: Paragraph 73!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stevenson, please desist from shouting.

Fergus Ewing: The Tories say that a better deal will inevitably happen, so why has that not already been negotiated? They have had three years. Is not it the case that there is no deal on fishing at all in the withdrawal agreement because the Tories know fine well that they will be completely unable to deliver on the expectations that they have engendered among the fishing community?

Donald Cameron: That was a good try, but the SNP did not back the deal earlier this year and still refuses to back a deal that will mean that we leave the hated common fisheries policy, which has devastated Scottish fishing and the many communities that rely on the industry across Scotland. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has noted that

“leaving the CFP will provide the change in governance to redress this situation for the benefit of Scotland's fishing communities”.

As Finlay Carson said, the SNP said that rejoining the EU would mean rejoining the CFP. In its 2014 white paper, the SNP said:

“the EU's Common Fisheries Policy provides any member state's vessels with access to all member states' waters.”

There is no ambiguity.

I turn to some of the more positive news of the year. I concur with some of the remarks that have been made by members across the chamber. It is welcome news that the most recent fisheries statistics show that, in 2018, the number of vessels of 10m and under increased by 36 to 1,539 vessels. It is also welcome that there was a rise in the number of fishers employed in the industry in 2018 from the number in 2017, with the overall figure having gone up by 1 per cent. Of course, it is also positive news that the value of sea fish and shellfish that landed in 2018 increased by 1 per cent in real terms.

However, as the cabinet secretary and other members have noted, it is clear that deep challenges remain for other parts of the industry, and that there must be cross-party efforts to support our offshore fleets.

I listened with interest to the contributions by Alasdair Allan and John Finnie—as John Finnie does, I represent the Highlands and Islands—and they were full of doom and gloom. I visited a shellfish processing plant in Alasdair Allan’s constituency a month ago, and had a frank discussion about Brexit with the staff. They do not see Brexit as a major barrier. Although it might produce short-term challenges, they view it as a long-term opportunity to have greater autonomy in the waters that they fish, and greater chances to export their product to new markets.

Dr Allan: Will the member take an intervention?

Donald Cameron: I will not. I am afraid that I do not have time.

Straight after the Brexit referendum, the Western Isles Fishermen’s Association’s secretary said that

“Withdrawal from the EU offers the local fishing industry a unique opportunity to develop a sustainable long-term industry.”

The Shetland Fishermen Association’s executive officer said in September:

“Give us Brexit as cleanly and as quickly as possible.”

All the doom and gloom that we have heard today is in sharp contrast to what the industry says. It is optimistic and positive, and so are we.

I will quickly deal with a few of members’ remarks. Finlay Carson spoke about measures that have been taken to prevent illegal fishing, and about GPS on scallop boats. Claudia Beamish also mentioned that.

I also note the contribution of Lewis Macdonald, who made a good speech about longer-term issues, including global warming and the rise in ocean temperatures. He talked about how, when we talk about maximum sustainable yield, that is not just for one year but for many years. He made some very valid points.

It is clear that leaving the EU and the common fisheries policy presents significant opportunities for the industry and the communities that support it. I take the opportunity to wish the cabinet secretary well in the end-year negotiations.

I support the amendment in Peter Chapman’s name.

16:51

Fergus Ewing: I begin by thanking Mr Cameron for his closing remarks, and all members for what has been a largely constructive debate. I appreciate the support of Mr Smyth, Mr Rumbles and other members in respect of the hard work in the negotiations. We are fortunate to have in Scotland some of the most respected negotiation

officials in the fishing world. We will do our best to get the best result for our fishing community and the future sustainability of stocks.

I do not have time to respond to all the wide range of points that have been made. I mean no disrespect; if a member wishes to pursue a particular point, please press me on it and we will have a discussion.

I welcome the support that Mr Smyth expressed in his speech. There is not a great deal that separates our stances. Equally, in his analysis, Mr Rumbles displayed a shrewd sense of the difficulties that lie in wait in the—unfortunate, in my view—event that Brexit proceeds.

Angus MacDonald asked me about the impact of having up to 200,000 export health certificates and whether the UK Government had responded to my request for that to be avoided through derogation and by agreeing to dynamic alignment. I have had no further information from the UK Government. At a meeting some weeks ago, I asked George Eustice whether the UK Government would press for that and he said that if they did, they would be turned down. I said, “How do you know if you don’t ask?” That is where matters stand. That could cost the industry between £7 million and £15 million.

Mr Finnie, Dr Allan, Mr Stevenson, Angus MacDonald and many other members said that if there are delays, particularly for shellfish from small operators and businesses on the west coast in places such as Loch Fyne, where I was yesterday—Elaine Whyte of the Clyde Fishermen’s Association made this point—the goods will become valueless and the businesses will face bankruptcy. That will be disastrous.

In the past nine days, I have visited Harris, Campbeltown and Portree, so I can say—I think that Mr Finnie will agree—that many people in the fishing communities on the west coast are not ardent Brexiteers, but quite the opposite. The point needs to be made that fishing around the coast is diverse; it is not homogeneous and there are many aspects to it. It is therefore wrong to present opinion as if it is a monolith, because it is not.

Beatrice Wishart: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Fergus Ewing: I am very sorry, but I want to cover more points.

Both John Finnie and Claudia Beamish made a great number of points about—broadly speaking—sustainability and conservation. I have three points to make. First, the principles that we adopt in our approach to negotiations include sustainability of stocks. Nobody loses more than fishermen if fish stocks are fished out: nobody is a greater loser than the fishermen of future generations. That is

one of the four guiding principles that govern our negotiations.

Secondly, I mentioned that the non-governmental organisations support the position that we adopted in our negotiation stance at the fisheries management and conservation group meeting on 11 November. That was a first, and it is a good thing, which shows that the approach that we are taking is sustainable.

Finally, I am happy to have a further discussion, if John Finnie wishes, about wrasse. I do not have time now, but I am aware of the RECC Committee report, and we take the concerns very seriously. That conversation is not for today, but I am happy to meet him about that if he wishes.

I think that it was Angus MacDonald who referred to Bertie Armstrong. I, too, respected Bertie's service and leadership over a long period. We disagreed, but we did so without rancour. I am working very closely with his successor, Elspeth Macdonald, who is an excellent ambassador for, and leader of, the SFF. It is right and proper that we work closely with that organisation.

My main task is to secure the best deal in the negotiations. The point that I made about leading the British delegation was serious; it was not meant to be provocative or frivolous. It might well be that in the immediate aftermath of the general election—I think that the meeting is two business days afterwards—the British Government will not have been formed. However, we are here: we are continuity. I have been there and done it, and we stand ready to take on the responsibility. It is a matter for agreement by the UK Government, but the offer will be made.

In an act of kindness, I suggest to the Conservatives that there is a fundamental flaw in their message to the fishing community. It is really very simple: they are promising the earth, the moon and the stars to fishermen in Scotland—that is how it is perceived—and they have been doing it for three years now, every day, every week, in every speech and in every debate. However, what has the Prime Minister negotiated? He has negotiated a withdrawal agreement, but what does it say about fishing? Where is the deal? All it is is an agreement to try to agree something in the future.

I am a lawyer, so I can say without fear of contradiction that an agreement to try to agree something is not a contract and is not a legally binding agreement. There ain't one, but today the Tories have presented the withdrawal agreement as delivering enormous benefits, as a done deal, and as a contract that is binding on both the UK and the EU. [*Interruption.*] The Tories do not like this, but there is a lot more, so they should listen.

In the withdrawal agreement that the Prime Minister negotiated, there is no deal; there is only an intention to seek a deal. Not only is the deal not done, it ain't yet begun. Where in the withdrawal agreement does it say that the EU will yield one tonne of quota? Where in the withdrawal agreement does it say that any EU countries will cease to argue determinedly for access? Nowhere in the deal does it say those things.

The reason is very simple: the UK Government knew fine well that it would be utterly impossible for it to negotiate the deal that is has promised fishing communities in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK. The negotiations on a fishing deal have been caught up in the trade deal, and once that happens and the two become concurrent, there will be tremendous pressure on the UK Government to do a deal on trade by yielding on fish. Fish will be snagged and enmeshed in a post-Brexit net of the UK Government's own making.

To assert that the deed is done and that the promises will be delivered is an exaggeration of Trumpian proportions. It is propaganda that will come back to haunt the Conservatives. At a time when Britain needed, in negotiating terms, a Metternich, it has instead ended up with someone who is like Inspector Clouseau. Believe you me—the Conservatives will repent at leisure in the months to come.

Committee Announcement (Education and Skills Committee)

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a committee announcement. I call the convener of the Education and Skills Committee, Clare Adamson.

17:00

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Today, the Education and Skills Committee published its “Report on STEM in early years education”. I appreciate the opportunity to highlight some of its findings to Parliament this afternoon.

I thank the 50 secondary 1 girls who took part in the hackathon on the committee’s report here in Parliament this morning. It was one of many events that are aimed at imploding the myth that computing careers are not for girls. There was so much talent in the room, and what they produced to promote the committee’s recommendations was phenomenal.

The committee decided to focus its inquiry on three to seven-year-olds because, in early fact-finding evidence, it was suggested to us that young people as young as seven have set ideas about the jobs that they can or cannot do because of their gender, ethnicity or social circumstances. The committee is aware that that is a longstanding and systemic issue. We are also aware that for the kind of inclusive economic growth that is needed for the fourth industrial revolution, progress is needed in uptake of science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects.

The committee’s inquiry therefore looked at what work makes a real impact, including scrutinising progress towards the aims of the Scottish Government’s 2017 STEM strategy. Improving teacher and early learning practitioner confidence in the STEM disciplines is key, particularly in the disciplines of technology and engineering. The committee heard, from practitioners in those areas, consistent evidence of a lack of confidence.

We also learned that, in some schools, poor internet connectivity is a barrier to teaching computing and other disciplines. In addition, the committee heard that limited resources have meant that some teachers and parents pay for materials that are needed for lessons.

When we looked at differences of opportunity based on levels of deprivation or gender, we found that sustained long-term interventions in nurseries and schools that extend out to the local community are crucial in making meaningful change.

We also heard about a myriad of STEM initiatives. The challenge is to ensure that the work of talented and motivated people who are keen to promote STEM can, in time, translate into STEM learning being core to the education of all children and young people in Scotland. For example, we heard that small initiatives are often based in the central belt and do not have the resources to undertake work further afield, in rural areas. In addition, there is sometimes a self-selection bias, whereby only schools and nurseries that are already interested in STEM seek learning experiences from such initiatives.

Finally, we heard about the value of interdisciplinary learning, including in supporting improving literacy skills, numeracy skills and other core elements of the curriculum.

The committee has made a series of recommendations for change—some for the Scottish Government, some for Education Scotland and some for our regional improvement collaboratives. Given the importance and relevance of the issues that the committee has been grappling with, I hope that members from across Parliament have an opportunity to look at our recommendations.

Business Motion

17:04

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We turn to consideration of business motion S5M-19949, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out revisions to tomorrow's business. I invite Graeme Dey to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 20 November 2019—

delete

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Culture, Tourism and External Affairs;
Education and Skills

and insert

1.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

1.30 pm Ministerial Statement: 30th Anniversary
of the UNCRC

followed by Ministerial Statement: Queen Elizabeth
University Hospital Ward Closures

followed by Portfolio Questions:
Culture, Tourism and External Affairs;
Education and Skills

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.30 pm Decision Time—[*Graeme Dey.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:04

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-19922.2, in the name of Peter Chapman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19922, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)

Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 20, Against 72, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-19922.3, in the name of Colin Smyth, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19922, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 86, Against 6, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-19922.1, in the name of John Finnie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19922, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and

Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 6, Against 75, Abstentions 11.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-19922, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on sea fisheries and end-year negotiations, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)

Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 86, Against 6, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament acknowledges the conclusion of coastal state negotiations, the ongoing bilateral negotiation with Norway on shared stocks in the North Sea, and the forthcoming annual fisheries negotiations in the Faroe Islands and Brussels; notes that 2019 saw the full implementation of the landing obligation for whitefish stocks and that the outcome of negotiations will be pivotal in helping Scotland's fishing fleet to reduce the potential impacts of choke species in mixed fisheries; is concerned that failure to explore and adopt all available solutions in this regard, coupled with challenging scientific advice, could potentially tie the fleet up; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to respect stock sustainability in relation to next year's quotas, and supports its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland's fishermen, the wider seafood sector and coastal communities; recognises the value of the fishing sector and the jobs it provides, often in rural communities; believes that Scotland's quota allocations must be distributed fairly, with a view to delivering the maximum social benefits; recognises the effect of climate change on the sector and emphasises the need to protect and enhance the sector's long-term sustainability and Scotland's marine environment; notes the need to support and develop Scotland's fish processing industry; commends those working in the sector, and recognises the resilience and bravery of Scotland's fishermen.

Road Safety Week 2019

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-19344, in the name of Stuart McMillan, on road safety week 2019. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes Road Safety Week 2019, which runs from 18 to 24 November 2019, with this year's theme being "Step up for Safe Streets"; notes that this is an annual event to raise awareness about road safety, which was started in 1997 by Brake, a road safety charity that works to prevent road death or injury, campaigns to make streets and communities safer, and supports the victims of road crashes; notes calls during this Road Safety Week for everyone to "Step up for Safe Streets" and learn about, shout about and celebrate the amazing design-led solutions that will allow people to get around in safe and healthy ways, every day; commends Road Safety Week for promoting steps that everyone can take to stop needless road deaths and injuries year round; supports the thousands of schools, organisations and communities that are involved in the event each year, and acknowledges hopes that this event will inspire communities to take action on road safety through promoting lifesaving messages during the week and beyond.

17:10

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I thank all members who signed the motion and those who will speak in the debate.

As colleagues will know, road safety measures are a mix of reserved and devolved matters. The reserved matters include the training and licensing of drivers; the licensing of public service vehicle and goods vehicle operators; the construction and use of vehicles; road traffic offences; and vehicle licensing and taxation. Those that are devolved include the setting of national speed limits; road signs; the use of seat belts on school transport vehicles; and the promotion of road safety. The Scottish Government also has operational responsibility for trunk roads. I will come back to that point in a few moments.

I commend Brake for establishing road safety week in 1997 and for making it an annual event. Road safety is everyone's business. Sadly, all members will be aware of incidents in our constituencies or regions in which someone's life has been changed forever or, even worse, lost. Both those situations will be devastating for family and friends alike. When someone survives an accident, they may well have to face many challenges in future years. I pay tribute to every campaigner for road safety and road safety measures. In relation to campaigns about speed restrictions or road safety measures, any new policy implementation must be fully considered and, crucially, workable.

I pay tribute to and thank my friend and colleague Councillor Jim MacLeod from Port Glasgow—he does not know that I am talking about him today. He has been a councillor since 2007 and has been a long-term advocate for disabled rights. As a child, Jim was knocked down, which caused a spinal injury, and he has used a wheelchair ever since. One of his many campaigns has been on the issue of road safety in Inverclyde. Our streets and roads are safer as a result of his interventions. He has raised awareness among the local community through many articles in the *Greenock Telegraph*.

The issue of road safety measures will never go away. Indeed, it has become even more important with every passing year, as there are more vehicles on the roads. Life is stressful and, if we are honest, we will all know that there are occasions when we believe that we are the most important person on the road at that time. It is important for all of us to remember that, although a vehicle is a positive invention, it is a hulk of metal that can be a killing machine if used incorrectly.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Does Stuart McMillan agree that more could be done to educate young drivers, particularly those who drive in rural areas?

Stuart McMillan: I absolutely agree that more could be done on that. I will say more about younger drivers in a moment, but they certainly have a propensity to be a bit more impetuous and to give less consideration to their surroundings on the roads and to other drivers.

About two months ago, I had another meeting with representatives from Transport Scotland and Scotland TranServ about the condition of the trunk road network in my constituency and the condition of the M8 as it comes into it. I put on record my thanks to both organisations for the fact that, as a result of my continued lobbying, improvements are being made to the network and road users are beginning to have better travel experiences. I am sure that both organisations will be delighted to be receiving fewer emails from me now—although I am still on their case, because I want further improvements to take place.

At the end of that discussion, we spoke about road maintenance and about how some road closures affect communities and drivers. I was provided with some examples of the workforce of those organisations being threatened, both verbally and by drivers speeding towards workers as if to knock them over. Ultimately, the workers are there fixing the roads or laying new ones—they are actually there to help us. Indeed, they help every single person who uses the road network. They do not deserve physical or verbal abuse from inconsiderate motorists. It is just

ridiculous that some idiots think it is acceptable to drive their car at a person.

This week, Brake published research on road safety, and it is clear that the issue will not go away—it is something that we have to continually talk about. Of the 2,000 people who took part in that research, nearly one third had had either a collision or a near miss in the previous 12 months. The proportion rises to more than half when we look at just young adults—18 to 34-year-olds. That strengthens Gillian Martin's point.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): In light of Gillian Martin's point, would Stuart McMillan support the graduated driver licensing scheme that is being launched in America, New Zealand and Australia? The scheme is designed for young drivers and aims to cut new and inexperienced driver accident rates.

Stuart McMillan: I certainly would not be against anything like that. To go back to an earlier comment, any measure has to be workable. As long as it is fully thought through and fully managed, such a scheme would certainly be a useful addition for young drivers.

The figures that I mentioned are startling, and they justify Brake's "Step up for safe streets" campaign. My motion mentions that schools, organisations and communities are involved in the campaign every year. I am pleased that so many organisations are involved in the various activities this year to improve education about road safety and the solutions that can eliminate road deaths and serious injury.

We can all step up to help by leaving the car at home when possible, which helps to improve safety and air quality, and by pledging to be a safe driver, always keeping within speed limits and never drinking or taking drugs and driving. For some people, those suggestions will never need to be considered. Unfortunately, however, there are still too many people who think that it is fine to drink and drive. Having campaigned on the issue for some time, I am pleased that the Scottish Government has brought in new measures regarding drug-driving offences. Sadly, such measures are required.

I thank Kwik Fit and Specsavers, which have both been involved in the campaign. I know that Specsavers gets involved in various campaigns throughout the year. With its support for the Royal National Institute of Blind People Scotland, the company has been particularly helpful during eye health week. I chair the cross-party group on visual impairment, so I am very much aware of Specsavers' support. In my opinion, when private business gets involved in campaigns, that strengthens the arguments, highlights the issues and presents an opportunity to reach other people.

Over the years, various measures have been implemented to make our roads safer. The introduction of seat-belt legislation was quite controversial at the time—I might not look that old, but I was around at that point—but it was certainly the right thing to do. I do not know of anyone now who would seriously consider driving a car without putting on their seat belt.

I genuinely believe that our roads are safer as a consequence of the many measures that have been implemented over the years alongside the huge increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. Despite that, we can never be complacent. One life lost or changed forever due to a road accident is one too many. Some people consider that the roads belong to them. They do not; they belong to all of us, including cyclists, runners and pedestrians.

If members would like more information about road safety week, I would encourage them to go to roadsafetyweek.org.uk. I again thank all members who signed the motion and those who are about to contribute to the debate.

17:19

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Stuart McMillan for introducing this timely debate to the chamber, and I gladly support his motion. Every year, road safety week gives us a chance to remind ourselves of how important it is to use our roads cautiously and with care for others as well as for the environment.

This annual event was established by the charity Brake, as Stuart McMillan said. The week began on Sunday with the world day of remembrance for road traffic victims, which was a sobering reminder of what we need to do to prevent such tragedies from continuing to happen. In the UK, five people are killed on our roads every day, and among five to 29-year-olds, road accidents are the most common cause of death. Such alarming statistics should be enough to propel us into action to promote road safety.

This year's theme for road safety week, "Step up for safe streets", is all about raising awareness of what we can do to promote road safety and safe-system solutions. When designing road works, we need first and foremost to prioritise safety and our health. Safe systems, which offer design-led solutions, mean that road transport networks can be built in a way that lends itself to prevention and protection for everyone. Every road death is unacceptable, so this year's road safety week puts a spotlight on prevention strategies that create safe spaces, especially for those who are walking or cycling. For children in particular, safer streets mean that they have the

option to play outside without any heightened risks from traffic.

The charity Brake has suggested ways in which we can all step up to do our part. Policy makers can work to actively encourage safe-system solutions, and we can embrace the technology at our disposal to make that possible. Schools can equip young people to boldly push for change and improvements in road safety. In essence, everyone can step up by committing to less vehicle use and by advocating for safe-system approaches.

I welcome the many ways in which people have been taking part in and raising money for road safety week. For instance, some will be holding a coffee morning or a bake for Brake fundraiser for the cause. Others will be organising a sponsored walk or aiming to reach 10,000 steps to show the immense benefits of being active outside.

Schools have embraced road safety week, and rightly so—children must be at the forefront when it comes to understanding road safety, because they will be the agents for change in the future. Of those who registered to take part in last year's road safety week, more than half were educators. Dangerous roads severely limit the participation of children and young people in activities such as cycling or their ability to lead active and healthy lifestyles. It is for their sakes that streets need to be as free as possible from the threat that is posed by traffic. Through positive engagement and interactive workshops, educators are making road safety week real and relevant for young people.

In Scotland, this year's road safety week will involve an estimated 100,000 people across 450 schools and other organisations, as well as individuals. Of that number, an amazing 60,000 will be children, young people and staff. In the West Scotland region that I represent, Braehead and Carleith in Dumbarton are just two of the primary schools that have registered to take part this year, which is a commendable effort. It is an excellent opportunity to teach young people about the risks on roads to be aware of, and, through the campaign, educators can reach out to parents and the wider community.

We all need to learn those lessons and remember that every road accident is preventable and does not need to happen, with the right approach to and understanding of safety. For drivers, it can be especially easy to forget the vulnerability of the cyclists and pedestrians around us. Every road user needs to be considered, not only by drivers but by road designers and policy makers. That is what "Step up for safe streets" is all about.

I firmly believe that it takes a community working together to encourage road safety. Each one of us

in Scotland, myself included, could endeavour to use our car less and opt to walk, cycle or take public transport. We all need to step up our commitment and approach to road safety, not just during road safety week, but every day.

17:23

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I thank Stuart McMillan for this motion, which is about an event that I have supported for many years. As convener of the cross-party group on accident prevention and safety awareness, I commend Brake for its perseverance and for establishing road safety week.

There have been a lot of interesting comments in the chamber this evening. Stuart McMillan spoke about our being kinder to one another when we are driving, and about consideration being part of that approach. That is an important message, and the point that we cannot fix this issue individually and that we have to do it as a community was very well made.

I will highlight a couple of things that are happening in my community.

A few months ago, I attended an event at an advocacy service for people with learning disabilities, where I met what is known as the clan, which is a bunch of people with learning disabilities. They were very concerned about an injury happening to one of their friends in the group as a result of crossing a road to a sports centre. That road is frequently crossed and very busy, and the sports centre is accessed by people of all ages and all abilities. There is no safe crossing there at all—no pedestrian crossing and no zebra crossing. The group is taking the campaign to the council and to the local area to highlight that we should, when we think about road safety, the nature of our streets and how they are used, and about caring for one other, consider that people have different perceptions of the risks that might be in front of them. That work will be presented to our cross-party group early next year. I look forward to that.

Through the cross-party group, I have got to know about the work of a logistics company, Gist Limited, that works in my area—it is based just outside my Motherwell and Wishaw constituency. Gist feels that it has a commitment to its community. It delivers to many small convenience stores and realises that it drives into our communities and housing areas. It thought that it could do something to improve safety for younger people.

Gist takes its articulated lorries into primary schools, and it has set up educational events that have demonstrated to young people the dangers of being in an articulated lorry at blind spots in

particular, and how little can be seen of young people in their environment. The aim is to raise the awareness of young people in the area. It provides equipment, high-visibility vests for young people walking to and from school, and materials with safety messaging on them, for use in schools. It does that work as part of its community engagement. That is a wonderful example of how a company can come together with people and work with them to make our roads and communities safer.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents had its centenary last year, and it produced some safety messaging. One of its most successful campaigns was to do with people walking towards traffic holding a light when they were coming home. That was in the days before street lights were normal or in rural areas. It seemed quite radical at the time to ask people to do such things. It seemed quite radical to ask people to wear a seat belt—Stuart McMillan talked about that. However, safety messages get through to people over time, and people start to change their behaviour and respond in a way that should cause fewer road deaths in the future.

17:28

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Stuart McMillan on securing the debate and on the quality of his contribution.

As we have heard, road safety week is arranged annually by the Brake road safety charity. Like many colleagues throughout the chamber, I have spoken several times in similar debates over the years. We have heard that Brake goes the extra mile—if members will pardon the pun—on the education of all road users. I have dealt with it for many years; it is evangelistic about education and road safety and works very efficiently with schools, colleges, businesses and, of course, the Scottish Parliament, the Westminster Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.

We have heard about this year's "Step up for safe streets" campaign, which is about creating design-led solutions to make our streets safer. As Brake has made clear, every 20 minutes, someone is killed or seriously injured on a British road, and each of those tragedies is preventable.

For the past decade, I have worked closely with Brake on road safety issues. Along with that road safety group, I set up the north of Scotland driver awareness team, or NOSDAT. We have run more than 24 road safety campaigns in the Highlands and have been fortunate to pick up five Brake campaign awards.

The primary campaign that I launched was on the proposal to introduce a graduated licence scheme for young and new drivers. The prompt for

me to act came back in early 2010, when, after a double fatal road collision that involved two 17-year-olds in the city of Inverness, I was contacted by the parents of one of the young people involved, who pleaded with me to do whatever I could to address the on-going carnage.

The campaign was based on the evidence of the eminent Dr Sarah Jones, formerly of Cardiff University, who carried out 10 years of study of Scottish and Welsh road traffic collisions. Dr Jones's evidence indicated that the introduction of a graduated driving licence scheme in Scotland could save up to £18 million in the Scottish economy. More important, up to 22 lives per year could be saved.

Every week in Scotland, one young person is killed on our roads and 17 young people are seriously injured. Many of them will be permanently disabled or scarred. Education is key. Where education and enlightenment do not work, however, we have to move to enforcement. Those are the three Es: education, enlightenment and enforcement.

There is no doubt that there is a strong voice in support of that form of graduated licence in Scotland. In fairness, the Scottish Government has always supported it. It is, of course, a reserved issue, but do we have the courage to move ahead on this very important issue in the long term, as we know that it will save lives?

We need to prevent unnecessary serious injury, disfigurement and death among our young people—they are our next generation.

For families who have lost loved ones, unfortunately we cannot turn the clock back. However, we can adopt a new, safer, proven driving regime that is aimed at slashing the carnage on our roads and preventing the deaths and injuries of our young drivers. I believe that a form of graduated licence is the way forward. It is supported by Brake, and that message needs to be reinforced during road safety week.

As the American revolutionary author Tom Paine said:

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again."

Yes—but let us do it with road safety in mind.

17:31

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): I welcome Brake and Stuart McMillan's highlighting this week of the importance of road safety across the country. As others have done, I offer my thanks to Stuart McMillan for securing the debate, and I thank everyone who has made thoughtful contributions to it.

As Stuart McMillan, Maurice Corry and others have correctly stated, one death on Scotland's roads is one too many. Families, friends and communities are left entirely traumatised following a road death, and the loss of a life can impact many others in profound ways. Such loss of life does not have to happen and we must do everything that we can to prevent it. We should also not lose sight of the fact that, as David Stewart said, there are many examples of people being seriously injured, the impact of which can be life changing.

Scotland has a proud history of road safety performance. I want not only to continue that record but to improve upon it, with the aim of becoming the safest country in the world. I cannot stress enough that road safety is of paramount importance to the Scottish Government. My colleagues and I recognise that we all have our part to play, as road safety is everyone's responsibility.

This is an important time for road safety, as we near the end of our casualty reduction targets to 2020 and focus on the next decade. The European Commission recently published its road safety policy framework to 2030, which employs the safe system approach for the first time, systematically at European Union level, to underpin the target of a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities and serious injuries by 2030 from a 2020 baseline—an ambitious but worthwhile aim.

Before I touch on points raised by colleagues, I want to cover what has been happening here in Scotland. The 2018 casualty figures were recently published, and casualties were at the lowest level since records began. However, more people were killed on our roads last year than in 2017. That is a matter of great sadness, and it tells me that we need to be ambitious and push to ensure that all our casualty statistics are on a downward trend. As colleagues have said, there is no room for complacency.

The road safety framework to 2020 has served us well. As we have heard tonight, the framework has resulted in a strong partnership approach to the delivery of many road safety strategies and initiatives. That would not have been achieved without the drive and determination of all our stakeholders—Brake, ROSPA, and indeed NOSDAT, to which David Stewart referred—working together to make a positive impact on casualty reduction. However, as we enter the final year of the framework, it is really important that we continue to work together as, collectively, we make the final push to meet all of our 2020 road casualty reduction targets.

I believe that the Transport (Scotland) Bill, which recently passed stage 3, will help to make Scotland's transport network cleaner, smarter and

more accessible for Scotland's citizens and visitors alike. The new laws on footway parking should make our streets safer for pedestrians, and low-emission zones will improve air quality and health for walking and cycling. Both contribute to road safety week's "Step up for safe streets" theme, which colleagues have referenced. How we manage speed and emissions on Scotland's roads could also have its part to play in addressing our climate emergency needs.

I will say something about the importance of protecting people who choose to walk and cycle in order to ensure safe and healthy journeys, which this year's road safety week promotes. Maurice Corry is quite right: we can improve safety by not using our cars as much and undertaking as many journeys as possible through sustainable active travel.

With our climate change and health ambitions, this Government is more committed than ever to our vision that communities are shaped around people, with walking and cycling the most popular choice for shorter everyday journeys. We know that the perception that roads are unsafe is a barrier against walking and cycling for everyday journeys, and that the reduction of traffic speed can be a positive step in making our towns and cities safer places, where people are confident to walk and cycle more often than they do now. For the second year running, we are committing £80 million a year to support local authorities and our partners to deliver ambitious segregated infrastructure that makes our towns and cities friendlier and, more important, safer.

That budget has also supported innovative behavioural change campaigns, including Cycling Scotland's #GiveCycleSpace campaign and Police Scotland's operation close pass, to help change behaviours and better safeguard vulnerable road users—whether they are pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders or anyone else—in our communities who are clearly put at risk by dangerous driving.

The Government also encourages the introduction of 20mph speed limits in the right environment, because they have real potential to encourage more active travel and increase people's perceptions of feeling safe. We continue to work with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to help identify more straightforward, efficient and effective procedures for local authorities that want to introduce more 20mph speed limits in the right environment. One example of work that is being undertaken is a review of the traffic regulation order process, which will determine whether that creates a barrier to the implementation of 20mph speed limits.

Solutions will be found through collaborative working between COSLA, which is a key stakeholder in road safety, and the Government.

In addition, the recently updated “Scottish Safety Camera Programme: Handbook of Rules and Guidance” introduces the ability to flexibly deploy safety camera resources, which can ensure continued support of improved driver behaviour and speed limit compliance in high-footfall areas, where active travel could be encouraged by lower speeds and reduced risk exposure.

The Government places a strong emphasis on road safety education. Road Safety Scotland—the Government’s principal road safety delivery partner—has developed numerous learning resources and social marketing campaigns aimed at tackling the use of inappropriate speed and other poor behaviours on Scotland’s roads.

Stuart McMillan: Inconsiderate drivers are driving at workers who are out improving the roads on the network. Does the minister agree that that is unacceptable? Will the Government consider undertaking a campaign on the issue, to protect the workers who are trying to help us?

Paul Wheelhouse: I very much agree. I was going to come on to that point, and I apologise that I did not do that earlier.

I certainly agree with everything that Stuart McMillan has said about how unacceptable such behaviour is. In 2018 and 2019, Transport Scotland, through its operating companies and the design, build, finance and operate contracts, ran road work safety campaigns that covered the safety of road workers and road works. It also recorded the number of vehicle incursions into sites and the abuse of staff. I was disturbed to hear Stuart McMillan reference that and what the people with whom he has discussed the issue told him.

The campaign was picked up by various media outlets across the industry, but we cannot be complacent, and we obviously need to continue that messaging. In 2020, Transport Scotland will run a campaign highlighting that verbal and physical abuse and any threat to road workers or office-based staff will not be tolerated by this Government. I thank Stuart McMillan for raising that point.

On the other points that have been raised, I think that Dave Stewart mentioned graduated driving licensing twice, and he is quite right to say that it is a reserved matter. I inform those in the chamber that Michael Matheson has recently written to the UK Government to suggest that a pilot of the graduated driving licence could be undertaken in Scotland. We have yet to receive a response from UK ministers—that may be because of the purdah and the general election—but we look forward to receiving one. We are willing to look at such a scheme, and I hope that our request will be positively received.

I thank Stuart McMillan for raising and campaigning on the issue of drug-driving laws, which were introduced as of last week. Those obviously have an impact on the police’s ability to test motorists who have been involved in accidents, stopped for a traffic offence or suspected of drug-driving. I hope that that, too, will help to improve safety.

Gillian Martin, who is no longer in the chamber, raised the issue of young drivers. We can signpost great examples of young driver training programmes, not least Police Scotland’s excellent work in the Borders.

Looking towards 2030, now is a great opportunity for us all to strengthen Scotland’s position as a world leader in road safety. Work on the development of a new framework is well under way, and key stakeholders are heavily involved in the process. We will continue with the award-winning breathtaking roads motorbike safety campaign, and with others such as the country roads campaign, which won a Prince Michael international road safety award. We will continue that kind of public messaging.

If we are to meet challenging targets such as those that have been set by the EU, we need to further strengthen the way that road safety is delivered in this country. We need to keep working in our current partnerships with a real enthusiasm and commitment, and we need to explore new opportunities such as new technology and connected and autonomous vehicles, which may help to improve road safety in the future. We need to embed all pillars of the safe system approach, which I referenced earlier, at national and local level, and we need to be shining examples of evidence-based best practice, making sure that what we do makes a real difference.

We are proud of the work that is going on here in Scotland. I thank Brake and colleagues across the chamber for raising the importance of road safety this week, and for using the debate to highlight the importance of road safety across the whole of Scotland.

Meeting closed at 17:41.

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

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

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba