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Official Report

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Wednesday 1 February 2012

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[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Shaykh Amer Jamil, who is co-director of the Solas Foundation and a family support consultant at Unity Family Services.

Shaykh Amer Jamil (Solas Foundation and Unity Family Services): Bismillah-hir-Rahman-nir-Rahim. In the name of the compassionate most merciful.

There is an Islamic tradition that narrates that, for two types of people, if they are upright, the whole nation becomes upright and if they are corrupt, the entire nation becomes corrupt. One type carries the moral authority in society and the other commands legislative authority. Both have enormous influence on the lives of people and, therefore, just as they have the ability to lead society towards good, their failure in their duties impacts negatively on the whole of society.

It is for this reason that those two groups are held to a very high level of scrutiny in what they say, how they behave and how they execute their roles. Not only is immoral behaviour not accepted from these people, but there can often be public outcry at such behaviour, even where no legal laws have been broken. Who, you may ask, yields such power, influence and responsibility? It is the scholars and political rulers.

In Islamic teachings, the good political ruler regards himself as a servant of God who has been given the honour of serving other people; the just ruler has a high rank with Almighty God. Very often, such people say that they entered public life to serve the people. That intention is a noble one and is regarded in Islam as being one of the best deeds.

The Prophet Mohammed—peace and blessings be upon him—said:

“The best of people are those that bring most benefit to the rest of mankind.”

However, as the saying goes, with great position comes great responsibility so, just as good leadership can bring peace and prosperity to the people, equally, if position is abused, great injustices can be inflicted. Around the world today, we see how nations can suffer at the hands of oppressive rulers. Therefore, we are reminded that

we will be held accountable for all our actions and the actions of those over whom we have power and influence.

A prophetic saying states:

“Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock.”

The Qur'an reminds us that, on the day of reckoning, every soul will be judged by their actions, even if it is an atom's weight of good or bad, which is why the Islamic faith reminds us to constantly keep ourselves in check. I leave you with the words of the great Caliph Umar who said:

“Hold yourselves to account before you are brought to account.”

Higher and Further Education (Governance)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a statement by Michael Russell on higher and further education governance reports. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:33

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): Last June, I commissioned independent reviews into how our universities and colleges are governed. In September, I launched “Putting Learners at the Centre—Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education”—our ambitious programme of reform of post-16 education. Our governance reforms were prompted by widespread concern that the existing models were in need of review not because they had failed, but because the time was right to consider their fitness for purpose. Moreover, our subsequent plans for reform set a wider context for change. Those plans extend across the spectrum of post-16 learning, from universities to first-step skills provision.

It is fair to say that the college sector occupies a central part of our reform programme, and rightly so, since it provides opportunities for tens of thousands of learners each year. Despite the way in which some people have chosen to characterise the situation, it remains a system in which we shall invest in excess of £2 billion over the spending review period. Therefore, last November, with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, I published a second consultation, this time on a regional system of colleges in which funding would more closely relate to need. We have consulted extensively on both papers and will publish our response to the full consultation in a few weeks. However, I have, being conscious of the need that college representatives expressed for an early announcement, reached conclusions on two important matters: the regions and the colleges that they should comprise.

In my statement I also want to outline next steps on the two governance reviews. On governance, our universities and colleges absorb enormous sums of public money. That is as it should be; they are a good investment. The public rightly expect the highest standards of governance and accountability in our universities and colleges, as in our board rooms, in our council chambers and in the Parliament.

I am delighted to publish two reports: one on governance in universities, by Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski and his committee,

and one by Professor Russel Griggs, on colleges. I very much welcome the reports, which give us a firm basis from which to move forward. We will do so in close consultation with both sectors, to be consistent with the approach that I have taken to all areas of reform.

I will highlight the main issues in the reports. Professor von Prondzynski's committee took evidence from a wide range of interests in Scotland and beyond, including America and Finland. The result is a thoroughly considered piece of work, which I hope will be welcomed across the sector and can form the template for long-term improvements to how our universities are governed. First and foremost, the report recognises the importance of academic freedom and that it is clear that that principle must be protected in any programme of change. I entirely agree.

The report also recognises that the sector receives—as I said—and always has received considerable sums of public money, and that it therefore has a clear responsibility to help the Government to take Scotland forward. Again, I agree. I am sure that the sector will agree, too.

Against that background, the report advocates a single statute that sets out the basis on which our universities are established, which would remove the anachronism that is inherent in the involvement of the Privy Council and would replace the six different models of governance that are identified in the report, thereby allowing future change to be brokered more easily.

The report also addresses the remuneration of senior management, again in the context of the need to give all stakeholders confidence in the leadership of our institutions. Transparency and accountability are, again, the watchwords in that regard.

Given the significant levels of public investment, I want to work more closely with the sector to agree a strategic direction. In that sense, Professor von Prondzynski's proposal for an advisory forum to help to develop strategy is helpful.

If confidence is to be maintained, democracy and transparency need to be at the heart of the systems that are used to appoint the people who govern our institutions. I welcome the proposals to address the shortcomings that exist and, in particular, I welcome the intriguing idea of electing chairs of court.

As I said, I will consider all the proposals with the sector in the period ahead. I broadly welcome them all and wish to see them being taken forward.

On colleges, Russel Griggs has delivered a thought-provoking set of proposals, which links our plans for a regional structure—I shall come to that in a moment—with a new style of governance, which is designed to fit the institutions that will emerge. I am delighted to say that I can accept almost in its entirety the new regional structure that Professor Griggs proposes, which is substantially in tune with our thinking.

Professor Griggs also makes significant recommendations on the relationship between Government and the college sector. Back in 1993, colleges were dragged away from local authority control by the United Kingdom Government of the day. That brought some benefits, but it also offered freedom to individual colleges to engage in what has, at times, turned out to be wasteful competition. It allowed the establishment in individual colleges of systems on pay bargaining and curriculum, for example, which has resulted in expensive duplication. We will look very closely at the recommendations of Professor Griggs that are aimed at addressing that issue.

Professor Griggs has made a number of other helpful suggestions. He covers the anachronistic stipulations on how a college must be governed, including the rule that debar people aged over 70 from being appointed to a college's governing body, the provision that debar local councillors—but no other level of elected representative—from accepting an invitation to chair a college's board of management, and the provision that no local authority employee may accept an invitation to chair a college board, which makes no sense at all. The important point is the principle that underpins Professor Griggs's work. Our overall approach should be one that holds a college's governing body closely to account for the outcomes that we want to see, while allowing the governing body the latitude to deliver those outcomes as it sees fit.

We have made significant headway on college regionalisation and we have been working closely with the sector on how we will take forward that central element of reform from the next academic year. We can too easily slip into education jargon. Regionalisation is merely the means of restructuring the sector so that colleges work together to plan strategically while continuing to deliver locally; it does not mean "merger". We need to work out the exact relationship between the regional structures and individual colleges, and we will do so with the colleges themselves. A healthy debate is now under way and that debate includes, where such an approach is desired, institutional merger and other delivery models.

I can report that active discussions are taking place on those developments. This week, for example, I discussed with the education director of

Glasgow City Council and the principal of Glasgow Caledonian University the prospect of a broader strategic partnership involving schools, colleges and universities in the Glasgow region. Both were hugely enthusiastic about the education benefits that could flow from such a move, so I hope that they will play an active part in shaping and delivering a new plan for that region. Such a model in Glasgow could act as a real force in planning and delivering the sort of coherent learner journey to which we are committed, and the learning and skills pipeline that the city—and, indeed, Scotland—needs in order to accelerate growth.

The next important step, therefore, is to confirm the regions, and the colleges that will fall within them in order to allow the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to give colleges the detailed budget information that they need to plan provision for the next academic year and to begin doing so on a regional basis, ahead of full roll-out next year.

As this is the best way of meeting the needs of learners and employers, let me outline what I have concluded. There will be 12 regions, most of which are now finalised, but with some detail in two places still to be concluded. The Highlands and Islands region will include Perth College, Lews Castle College, Orkney College, Shetland College, Inverness College, Moray College, North Highland College, Argyll College and West Highland College. The Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire region will comprise Aberdeen College and Banff and Buchan College. Some work still has to be done on the Fife region, but it will be formed by Adam Smith College and Carnegie College with the non-land-based provision at Elmwood College and the possible involvement of another third sector partner.

The Tayside region will be formed by Dundee College and Angus College. The Glasgow region will comprise Anniesland College, North Glasgow College, Stow College, John Wheatley College, Cardonald College, Langside College and City of Glasgow College. The west region will comprise Reid Kerr College and Clydebank College and the Inverclyde campus of James Watt College. The Ayrshire region will include Ayr College, Kilmarnock College and the Kilwinning campus of James Watt College. The Dumfries and Galloway region will comprise Dumfries and Galloway College, but it will be linked at the Crichton site with a wide range of other provision to make a very exciting model. The Borders region will comprise only Borders College.

The Lanarkshire region will comprise Coatbridge College, Cumbernauld College, Motherwell College and South Lanarkshire College and the Edinburgh and the Lothians region will comprise

Jewel & Esk College, Stevenson College and Telford College, and there will be a central region that might comprise just Forth Valley College. The position of West Lothian College remains uncertain. There has been a great deal of debate about it and I have asked the funding council to progress the issue in discussions. I will meet some of those who are involved in those discussions next week. Finally, I make clear my view that with the land-based colleges it makes better sense to have an arrangement that is based on specialism rather than on geography: they are already working in partnership and are moving to a merger with the Scottish Agricultural College.

In summary, those will be the 12 regions for the purposes of planning and funding of FE provision. I am writing today to the funding council to confirm my views. Not everyone will agree, although I think that many will. In any event, I need to make the decisions now so that the sector can get on with restructuring and we can begin to realise the benefits for learners.

I conclude with the future governance of the University of the Highlands and Islands—an issue that neither Professor Griggs nor Professor von Prondzynski was asked to consider in detail but which is of key importance. Yesterday, I met all 13 of the university's academic partners, along with the principal and chair of the university court, to consider how we might move towards the creation of a genuinely integrated structure. I was delighted that the partners offered their support in a number of highly significant areas, including agreement in principle to a new tripartite framework within which the leadership of the institution would sit. Such an arrangement would attach equal weight to the interests of higher education, non-advanced further education and research and specialism. I will meet the partners again in March to progress that approach.

In what was a busy day yesterday, I also met representatives of the National Union of Students Scotland who—I am delighted to report—agreed to work with me on examining how we might distribute more effectively the resources that we make available to fund financial support to college students. That will include examining the scope to remove some of the uncertainty that is currently associated with the system's discretionary nature.

I have made a personal commitment to work closely with the sector to tackle the challenges. I have met principals on many occasions collectively and individually; I have listened and am listening. The £15 million college transformation fund and our work with the SFC to alleviate the drop in funding between this academic year and the next are hard evidence of that. We are having the kinds of conversations that people once said were impossible.

However, we still have a lot to do. The next step is to give the sector the detail that it needs about next year's funding. With a decision on the regions, the funding council is now in a position to do that and I expect that information to be with colleges imminently.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on issues that were raised in his statement. I intend to allow about 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I thank the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning for the copy of his statement, and I welcome many of the recommendations that he has made.

Labour does not dispute the need to look at issues of governance and accountability when scarce public resources are involved; indeed, with my former colleague George Foulkes, I raised concerns about the scandalous way in which remuneration packages for university principals have soared to beyond £200,000 per year. I believe that the old boys' network needs to be broken, and that more women should be involved not only on university courts, but in senior positions.

There are issues around college governance and accountability that were never fully addressed when the colleges were taken away from local authority oversight. However, the cabinet secretary should not confuse accountability with ministerial interference. I welcome and agree with his comments on academic freedom, but I want a clear indication of the boundaries between accountability for use of public funds and the role of ministers.

As for colleges, I worry that the agenda for regionalisation and governance is being used as an attempt to move attention away from cuts, job losses, course reductions and reduced student choice. The plans that the cabinet secretary has outlined indicate a shotgun marriage rather than agreement based on consensus.

Can the cabinet secretary guarantee that nothing will be done that would risk the loss of charitable status for colleges? Will he reconsider the damaging cuts to college funding that are hindering colleges' ability to respond to current challenges? Will he fully fund all the costs associated with changes to governance and structures? Will he review the role of the funding council and look at how it can help to improve accountability and governance in Scotland's universities and colleges?

Michael Russell: There are elements in Mr Henry's points with which I agree. There is a strong role for the funding council—its role will

have to change and develop to match the new circumstances. Accountability is one of the issues that we are looking at. I hope that the Labour Party has responded to the post-16 consultation, which raised the issue of the funding council's role.

I welcome Mr Henry's views on changes in universities. I am grateful for the report on that, which we will take forward through discussion and consensus, because there are some very important things in it. A key point is that the accountability of universities is central to how we view universities in Scotland. There is a great deal in the report on which we can agree.

I also agree that charitable status is important, so we need to find the right way forward on that. There are a number of possible ways forward, and the view of Scotland's Colleges is not the only important view in that regard.

I disagree on regionalisation, of course. It is not a shotgun marriage or a forced marriage: there has been a great deal of discussion about the proper regions. Indeed, the whole purpose of today's statement is to respond to the report from Russel Griggs, which outlines the ideas for regionalisation and makes a very cogent argument for ensuring that it takes place broadly as I have outlined today.

On funding, I simply say this: as a Government, we are in a difficult position. We should have a normal funding situation in this country, but we do not. In discussion of funding in the chamber, with the Labour Party and everyone else, I have not heard on even one occasion a member say, "We will find the money here." What they have said is, "Give us more money." There is a solution to that. Give us independence.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for prior sight of his statement. He said that the two reports have not been written on the basis of concerns about the failure of governance in either sector. Both reports recommend very radical reforms, which include ministerial oversight of the regional college board appointment process and the new constitutional regulations for university courts. If the cabinet secretary believes—as I know he does—that our universities and colleges are doing very well in their educational outcomes and international standing, why is he so intent on making these changes?

Secondly, can he confirm that Mr Alan Simpson was, in effect, representing the university chairmen rather than speaking on his own behalf, and that the chairmen have very serious concerns about the proposals for reform of university governance?

Finally, there are to be regional boards, and those boards—rather than specific colleges—will

now receive Scottish funding council funding allocations. How does the cabinet secretary envisage that that will increase accountability in comparison with the existing system?

Michael Russell: Those were three interesting questions. The first represents the very basis of Conservatism: a refusal to modernise and to change and a determination to stay where one is and to ensure that nothing gets better.

In 1993, we saw the incorporation of the colleges—

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): That was a Conservative reform.

Michael Russell: In 1993, there was of course a Conservative reform to colleges—

Murdo Fraser: It was a radical reform.

Michael Russell: The radical nature of it was that it removed any—

The Presiding Officer: I ask members to stop having conversations across the chamber.

Michael Russell: Thank you, Presiding Officer. Let me respond to those who have made remarks from a sedentary position. The nature of that reform was to remove any democratic accountability whatever, to drag the universities and colleges out of democratic accountability and to stuff them full of Tory cronies. That did not succeed in Scotland because there were not that many Tory cronies—there is a distinct lack of Tory cronies in Scotland, thank goodness. It is not the best model and we can move forward with a better model.

The Conservatives could and should welcome change and progressive thinking. However, on modernisation, they are against it; on the change to university structures and functions, they are against it; and on regional boards, they are against them. The Conservatives are defined by what they are against, not by what they are for. I would like their close involvement in, for example, the debate on university chairs. Alan Simpson was a representative of the chairs and he has issued a minority report that disagrees with three items. He has the right to do so and that debate will take place. I have spoken to one of the university chairs in the past week and have listened to his point of view. I have also agreed to meet other university chairs. Such debate and discussion is the hallmark of the Government's involvement in educational reform. Reform is a good thing; it is only the Tories who are always against it.

The Presiding Officer: There are many questions for the cabinet secretary. I ask members to keep their questions brief, and the cabinet secretary to keep his answers just as brief.

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):

Ensuring that boards are representative of the communities that they serve will play an important part in guaranteeing that reform of post-16 education is a success. Indeed, Professor Griggs's report makes some recommendations in that area. How will the Scottish Government progress those recommendations and ensure that all regional boards have a good level of staff and student representation on them?

Michael Russell: That is a strong point. The regional boards and, I hope, the university courts must be cognisant of the fact that they serve a range of communities, which must be represented on and participate in the boards. I give the member a guarantee that staff and students will certainly be a part of the regional board structure.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I am pleased that the report has taken account of the views of staff, students and stakeholders at West Lothian College. There is almost unanimous support in the community for the college to be recognised as a region on its own. When will the cabinet secretary make a final decision on West Lothian College and what factors will he take into account in making that decision?

Michael Russell: Neil Findlay makes a good point. The reason why I have not made a final decision is that a cogent argument to look at the matter in a different way is being put forward by the college, by West Lothian Council, by other partners, by the constituency member and by regional members. I am keen for us to get the right solutions in each part of the country. As I indicated briefly in my statement—I am happy to discuss it at greater length with any member, although not immediately—different patterns will emerge in different parts of the country. In Glasgow, for example, it is likely that senior-phase school education and university education will be involved. In West Lothian, a pattern that involves the community, the council, the college, Skills Development Scotland and others would be perfectly feasible. I will meet the council leader and others next week, and I would be happy to hear from those who have interests in the matter. If Mr Findlay would like to write to me on it, I would be happy to consider his representations.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): In consulting on plans to reform post-16 education, the Scottish Government has consistently stated that local access to college education will be maintained. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that that is still the case and that the plans for further education governance that have been outlined today will help to achieve that?

Michael Russell: Yes. The regional boards are about taking a strategic overview of what is delivered. They should allow the priorities within

regions to be more closely focused on the requirements of the regions and, indeed, of parts of those regions. They are not about centralising provision or activity. I visited Angus College with Graeme Dey before Christmas. We saw the work that was being done locally and we saw an intriguing and innovative approach to ensuring that students in Angus who live distant from the college can make it to the college for classes. Colleges can and should be imaginative about a wide range of access issues. This is not about reducing local provision; it is about focusing local provision more closely on local need.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): As a member for West Scotland, I have received a number of representations about the future of James Watt College, both in Inverclyde and North Ayrshire, as well as about Reid Kerr College and Clydebank College. It is crucial that students will have the same choice of subjects as they have at present. How will communities and students hold the colleges to account to maintain subject choice, and what guarantees can be given that the courses that are currently available locally will continue to be available locally, thereby avoiding lengthy travel for students who want to access a particular course?

Michael Russell: I have just addressed travel in one area. Travel in the new west region will be an important issue. In a region that comprises Clydebank College, Reid Kerr College and the Inverclyde campus of James Watt College, travel issues will be raised. Through working together in the regional board, those colleges will be able to make more closely together strategic decisions about the courses that are delivered in the area.

At present, Clydebank College looks west to Dumbarton and has tended to look to Glasgow as well. If it looked across the river and took a different approach, that would require something of a reorientation, but it has entered voluntarily into the discussion. Such an approach might enhance the subject choice that is available to people who normally go to that college. It would certainly enhance the subject choice in Inverclyde, because Clydebank College has other specialisms.

There are lots of new opportunities. I am sure that the college principals, working with the regional board, will work out closely what is required and how they can deliver it.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will remember the many meetings that we have had about universities and particularly about the University of Glasgow, which is in my Glasgow Kelvin constituency. How will the plans that he has just outlined, such as those for electing the chairs of university courts, strengthen the system in courts and ensure transparency and accountability?

Michael Russell: During the election campaign last spring, Sandra White and I were actively involved in discussions with the University of Glasgow. One issue that we all recognised then was that better dialogue was needed in the institution—the principal has accepted that in comments that he has made since then. The proposed changes are likely to produce that, as they will create a modernised university system that is based on a single statute, with accountability through the chair—if chairs are elected, which is up for discussion.

The proposal to have elected chairs is modest. It would involve a nominating committee that would deal with a limited number of candidates who would be offered to a limited electorate—although that electorate has still to be fully defined. We should remember universities' wider responsibility to their communities. Election of chairs would be an additional democratic element in ensuring that universities are responsive. Modernising the underpinning statute for universities should also allow for that.

We have some distance to go, but we have started on the journey positively with Professor von Prondzynski's report, which addresses the issues that arose last year, including the salary and accountability point that Mr Henry made.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): Will the cabinet secretary spell out what autonomy, if any, individual colleges will have within the proposed regional board structure?

I am particularly concerned by the proposal to siphon off college reserves for central Government use, which comes on top of swingeing cuts. Will the cabinet secretary acknowledge that they are not necessarily rainy-day reserves and that they are the result of careful budgeting to support long-term planning and investment in our colleges? Will he approach that proposal with great caution?

Michael Russell: There is no such proposal. I say charitably to Alison McInnes that both the points that she made are chimeras. There is no proposal to "siphon off ... reserves". The question whether reserves should be part of the resource that colleges use when they undergo reform and transformation has arisen. As for "rainy-day reserves", colleges that have reserves for new buildings and other matters will want to retain them, but colleges should invest in the future.

On autonomy, I have made it absolutely clear that colleges will continue to operate locally and serve locally. The member is either ill-informed or scaremongering; I hope that it is the former.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): I note that, under the 12-region framework, the excellent South Lanarkshire College in East Kilbride will be part of the Lanarkshire region, along with three

other colleges. Much negotiation over senior management positions will take place across Scotland, so does the cabinet secretary have a remit in, or view on, how management structures should be modelled in the interests of best value?

Michael Russell: That question is important. I hope that, as discussions take place—especially when mergers are to occur—those who are involved will consider successful activity elsewhere. It is interesting that the City of Glasgow College has just established a resource to make more widely available all the information that was generated in the merger that created it, in order to allow people to study and learn from what took place. There have been other mergers from which we can learn; the merger has been a commonplace process in Scottish education in the past 30 years.

Perhaps the important thing to stress—Linda Fabiani was right to raise the point—is that the process of education is about learners; it is not about institutions or managers. If we keep that in mind, I am sure that good sense will prevail.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): The cabinet secretary rightly mentions the amount of money that is spent, particularly in higher education. He will be aware that I have previously raised with him the issue of Audit Scotland's scrutiny of spending in higher education. Does he expect that to be taken forward?

Following on from Linda Fabiani's question, what assurance can the minister give us that negotiations on college mergers will not be influenced by the ambitions of college principals in relation to potential salaries or, indeed, severance payments?

Michael Russell: I make the point again—I make it very genuinely—that the interests of learners and education must be paramount. I expect principals, boards and the rest of the system to recognise that. I have made it clear in one or two cases in which I thought that mergers became a matter of institutional preference because of managers that that was the wrong thing to happen. We need continually to bear that in mind.

With regard to the question about Audit Scotland, I remain open to ensuring that there is effective scrutiny of the actions of every public body. We should remember that, although there are substantial sums of money in the university sector, it is not a simple issue. For example, around 30 per cent of the budget of the University of St Andrews comes from Scottish Government sources, but the amount is around 80 per cent for the University of the West of Scotland, so there are differences in levels of scrutiny. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council

needs to be part of that, but we should debate whether other organisations need to be involved. As we move towards legislation, I make it clear that I am interested in having that discussion. I am quite sure that the Education and Culture Committee will also wish to do so, as will others. When legislation comes along, there will be an opportunity not only to scrutinise it, but to amend it.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement, and particularly his proposal that the Ayrshire region will include the colleges in Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning. Can he tell Parliament whether any problems remain to be overcome and will he note my view that the Kilwinning college campus should become part of a pan-Ayrshire college group, and that the appropriate funding should be directed—or, indeed, redirected—towards making that happen?

Michael Russell: I am aware of the strong representations on the matter that have been made by local members. I wish that I had had time in my full statement to go through what will now take place. I spoke to the principal of James Watt College earlier this afternoon to inform her of this decision. It is not the decision that she wanted, but we had a useful discussion. We now need to get the mechanism to take the issue forward, as the member suggests.

I would perhaps seek a mechanism that would, first of all, give the lead responsibility for the Kilwinning campus to one of the Ayrshire colleges. Some 95 per cent of the students at the Kilwinning campus come from Ayrshire. Once that lead responsibility is in place, but with the payment of staff and other domestic arrangements still in the hands of James Watt College, a process of negotiation should take place for that asset and responsibility to move over time. The most important thing is that that process should not be disruptive to the students. If lead responsibility is part of a pan-Ayrshire structure, and financial and structural responsibility are negotiated over a period of time, we will handle the situation well and constructively. The principal gave me the commitment that the college would engage in those constructive negotiations.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Given the tight timescale that has been announced for the regionalisation, does the cabinet secretary share my concern that Coatbridge College was excluded from the recent joint statement by the management of the other three colleges on the creation of a Lanarkshire federation? Most importantly, what is the likely impact of the situation on my constituents with regard to course provision, travel and jobs? Will the cabinet secretary meet me to discuss my concerns?

Michael Russell: I will meet Elaine Smith and another constituency member who has asked for such a meeting.

It would be a brave man who took sides in some of these disputes. I have seen the arguments from both sides. Those who read last week's *Times Educational Supplement* will know that there are two sides to the issue. We need to sit down and discuss how the issue will move forward. The announcement today of the Lanarkshire regional board gives a context in which things can go ahead. It would be perfectly possible, within that regional structure, to have one merged college consisting of three coming together, and another college that is not merged. It would be up to the colleges to decide how they wanted to arrange that.

If, as seems to be the case, the colleges have a genuine interest in merger but some difficulty about how the merger will take place, a discussion could take place with the funding council and others to see how they might be of assistance.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): How does the cabinet secretary's statement on the future of FE governance fit into the wider objectives of the 16 to 19-year-old opportunities for all programme?

Michael Russell: What I have announced is crucial to the delivery of opportunities for all. I am glad that the Minister for Youth Employment agrees with me on that. We have a joint responsibility to ensure that opportunities for all makes the contribution that we believe it can make in eliminating people who do not have positive destinations. The college sector, with SDS in particular, will be crucial in allowing that. We envisage a college sector that focuses on regional and employment need as being crucial, and what I have announced will produce that.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary explain his logic in restructuring the colleges on a geographical rather than specialism basis while he extols the virtues of specialism over geography in the restructuring of the land-based colleges?

Michael Russell: Life is made more exciting by paradox. There is a paradox in this case, and I am happy to explain it.

The land-based colleges demonstrated well to me their desire to work together. The colleges volunteered to work with the Scottish Agricultural College and are engaged in a merger process. It would have been perverse of me to stop that in its tracks and to tell them to do something different. In reality, the merger of the land-based colleges produces two issues that require to be addressed, one of which is how specialised colleges work

together. Pinning that on the SAC's involvement gives a structure.

Secondly, there is, in Elmwood College, provision that is not land based, and I have mentioned that that will require to be undertaken in the Fife region. However, there is a big opportunity. Indeed, I am sorry that Alex Fergusson did not ask about the opportunity in Dumfries and Galloway. One of the most exciting things in all the proposals is the possibility on the Crichton site—which I recognise is partially outwith the member's constituency—of providing something that is unique in Scotland, which will possibly run from a sixth-form college through Dumfries and Galloway College to three universities, the Scottish Agricultural College and research institutes. That is tremendous, and I am very much looking forward to discussions that can help to take it forward. I hope that the member will help to do so.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that Scotland's colleges have a social obligation to the communities in which they operate? Will he therefore meet me—as the convener of the cross-party group on learning disability—Enable Scotland and the Learning Disability Alliance Scotland to discuss the provision of courses, and student numbers throughout the country, so that some of our most vulnerable citizens can continue to access educational opportunities and fully participate in our society?

Michael Russell: Of course I would be happy to meet the member and the cross-party group. I am regularly asked about that issue in colleges; indeed, it was raised when I was in John Wheatley College on Friday.

I make it absolutely clear that nobody—and I mean nobody—should be refused a place in college or university because of their disability. Colleges exist to help individuals to prepare for employment; that is what they are all about. Allowing and encouraging people to use the college sector to move forward is exactly what we should be doing. Therefore, I am happy to meet the member and his group.

Murdo Fraser: The cabinet secretary acknowledged earlier that there are real concerns in the sector about the threat to charitable status from ministerial oversight of appointments to the chairs of colleges' governing bodies, with the potential loss of £52 million per annum. What discussions have the cabinet secretary and his officials had with Scotland's Colleges and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator about the impact that those changes will have on charitable status?

Michael Russell: The matter is not as simple as Murdo Fraser outlines. There is a charitable status issue, but there are other issues that affect the viability of colleges, and I am constantly engaged with all of them.

The member should wait to see what happens with the proposals. It was not particularly helpful for the matter to be made an issue today by Scotland's Colleges. It should be more focused, as its members are, on ensuring that we agree the basis of regionalisation and move forward. Scotland's Colleges sometimes needs to listen a bit more closely to the concerns of its members on the matter. To raise the issue today of all days was perhaps a little bit of a red herring.

Year of Creative Scotland 2012

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-01870 on the year of creative Scotland 2012. Members who wish to take part in the debate should please press their request-to-speak button now.

15:10

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I am very pleased to lead this debate on the year of creative Scotland, which is the third in a series of four focus years that showcase some of Scotland's great creative, cultural and tourism assets and build the momentum as we progress towards homecoming 2014. Building on the success of the earlier focus years, the year of creative Scotland will spotlight, celebrate and promote Scotland's cultural and creative strengths. The year is underpinned by four objectives: to support events and activities; to inspire our people and visitors to participate; to raise the profile of Scotland; and to encourage partner collaboration. Although public finances are tough, I have been able to protect front-line funding for culture where possible.

The programme for 2012 features fantastic events and outstanding new work taking place in communities the length and breadth of Scotland. It is only 1 February, and already an incredible amount of activity has happened in support of the year. The year got off to a great start this hogmanay with the extended and stunning fireworks display at Edinburgh castle. On 1 January, for the first time, an exciting day of fun and games for all the family in Edinburgh's old town was provided in the form of the new year games. Ten thousand people took part, competing for the red stag of the doonies or the silver eagle of the uppies. In the end, the doonies were triumphant, but a fantastic time was had by all. Last Friday, I launched the fantastic new Big Burns Supper festival in Dumfries—a new, inspirational festival with 45 venues, 80 artists and an estimated 2,000 performers. That is an example of the year reaching different communities, and I—literally—raised the flag for the year of creative Scotland with the organisers.

Last week, I attended the year of creative Scotland's creative places awards, which celebrate and recognise the exceptional creativity and cultural activity that go into nurturing the fabric—the social and economic lives—of our communities. I was hugely impressed by the line-up of shortlisted applicants. Organisations and partnerships supporting performers in St Andrews, craftspeople in West Kilbride, poets and writers in Wigtown, and budding artists in Creetown and in

Huntly were recognised, with funding awards ranging from £40,000 to £150,000 for new, expanded activity.

More widely, a wealth of activity will happen as part of the extensive partner programme. For example, the trad trails of Fèis Rois and the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland will, for the first time, take place in central Scotland, enabling visitors and local people to experience the very best of Scottish traditional music throughout 2012. From March to November, Scotland's pubs, village halls, historic sites, farmers' markets and other venues will resound to the strains of Scotland's traditional musicians. Many of the events are free and all will guarantee an authentic experience of Scottish culture. Events and community projects such as these, coupled with our already vibrant cultural calendar, will offer something for everyone to enjoy, all year round, and will complement the cultural activity taking place around the Olympic and Paralympic games. In that spirit, I am happy to accept the Labour amendment.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): As the cabinet secretary says, 2012 is the year of the London Olympics. She will be aware that there has been some controversy about the Olympic rings coming to Scotland. Is she aware that Glasgow City Council has also requested the Olympic rings and suggested that Glasgow is an ideal site? Does she agree that George Square or the squinty bridge would be an ideal location for the Olympic rings in Scotland given the connections between Glasgow 2014 and London 2012?

Fiona Hyslop: I diplomatically leave the matter of the most appropriate site for the rings as one to be resolved between the City of Edinburgh Council and Glasgow City Council.

Creative Scotland has provided £6.5 million of lottery funding to support a range of activities in places across the country. Newly funded projects announced so far include Dancing Voices and Mission: Possible, which promote dance in Glasgow and Dundee, and Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust's enLIGHTen project, which will bring the streets of Edinburgh to life in February with spectacular projections of literature from the Scottish enlightenment. Between July and September 2012 in the Scottish Borders, there will be a celebration of contemporary Scottish printmaking to bring that activity in the Borders to a wider audience.

There will be activity to celebrate Scotland as a land of ideas and innovation with a world-class creative legacy in the fields of education, science, engineering, medicine and ecology. For example, during 2012, to celebrate the year of creative Scotland, National Museums of Scotland will host a series of museum talks focusing on Scottish

innovation and pioneering spirit across a wide range of fields including sport, business and science.

To harness the full potential of the exceptional programme of activity that we have planned, it is essential that our communities and visitors know what is happening and are inspired to take part, so a wealth of marketing and promotional activity in support of the year has already happened.

I took the opportunity during my recent visit to North America to showcase the year of creative Scotland and warmly invite our friends overseas to visit Scotland during 2012. We have more marketing activity planned and the momentum will ramp up significantly during 2012 as more exciting events and activities are announced.

In January, I was pleased to launch the new year of creative Scotland television advert, which is expected to reach around 20 million people. It spearheads a wide range of co-ordinated partner activities—boosted by £500,000 from the Scottish Government—to showcase what we have planned for 2012 and extend a warm Scottish welcome to the world.

Today, I unveiled the groundbreaking short film “Scotland the World Over”. That new work, which has been made by Scots and Scots at heart in 32 countries around the globe, is a great showcase of our creativity on the global stage and has already captured the imagination of more than 1,500 people at home and abroad who have contributed. Already, more than that have viewed it since 9 o’clock. It can be viewed at the Scotland.org website.

Organisations, communities and businesses the length and breadth of the country are enthusiastically contributing to the celebration of the year of creative Scotland. The partner events programme already showcases more than 4,000 cultural events and activities throughout the country.

VisitScotland’s consumer website can help people to find out what is happening in their area and enables them to sign up for a newsletter to keep themselves informed as things develop over the year. In addition, its corporate website provides a range of tools to help businesses and organisations to gain maximum benefit from the year of creative Scotland, including advice on how to have their event or activity added to the programme.

The media, marketing and promotional activities that we have developed are not the only things that will help to celebrate and promote Scotland’s culture. Our collective and active enthusiasm for our creativity will also spotlight, celebrate and promote Scotland’s strengths on the world stage.

Jackie Kay writes:

“A poem is a little moment of belief”,

and I like to think that the year of creative Scotland is about belief in ourselves, our culture and our creative aspirations. It will provide economic growth and investment in new work, but it also offers the opportunity to celebrate, value and experience the great wealth of cultural activity that our communities already enjoy and to which our artists contribute.

The year of creative Scotland programme clearly has a global and international reach, and we expect that to evolve continually as the year progresses.

The year of creative Scotland supports the London 2012 cultural olympiad and offers us the opportunity to participate on the global stage. We have an opportunity to ensure that the quality and reach of festival 2012, as it is being called, relate to the work that we are doing and that we can be proud of that work. Indeed, the first festival 2012 performance is Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, performing alongside Sistema Scotland’s big noise orchestra in the Raploch in June.

Our museums and galleries will also contribute. The national collections are producing a range of work and activities to enhance a key theme of international reach in this creative and Olympic year. That includes: “Fascinating Mummies”—the title will interest my children, although I am not sure that they find me fascinating—an exhibition of antiquities from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom that will provide an insight into life and death in ancient Egypt; and “Sounds Global”, which puts young people at the heart of the curatorial process and is delivered in collaboration with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games—LOCOG—as part of the cultural olympiad. National Galleries of Scotland will also host a series of exhibitions that will focus on celebrated artists from Scotland and around the world.

All five of the national performing companies will showcase some of the best of Scotland’s creative talent at performances this year. The year of creative Scotland will also see them produce a range of community-based activity to promote creativity throughout Scotland—that relates to Patricia Ferguson’s amendment.

That activity has been made possible as part of Creative Scotland’s first-in-a-lifetime awards. For example, Scottish Ballet will visit a number of communities throughout Scotland—Arran, Mull, Islay, Perth, Fort William, Dumfries and Greenock—four days and nights at a time in the autumn of 2012, working in partnership with

organisations such as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to improve dance participation.

What is more, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, with Nicola Benedetti, will perform Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" in Ayr, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

In addition, the 12 main Edinburgh festivals, which are supported through the expo fund, are fully engaged with the year although, of course, Scotland's festivals are not confined simply to Edinburgh. The year offers us the opportunity to promote, enjoy and visit festivals throughout Scotland. Visitors and residents alike can take advantage of *The List* and Creative Scotland's free "Guide to Scottish Festivals 2012", which showcases more than 350 festivals across the country. On top of that, Creative Scotland has produced an interactive festivals map to showcase Scotland's rich cultural events through its international touring programmes.

In the time that is available, it is difficult to encompass the incredible wealth of cultural and creative activity that will take place in Scotland during the year of creative Scotland, which will take place on top of the activity that takes place each and every year. The year of creative Scotland provides us with a fantastic opportunity to celebrate and promote our writers, artists, musicians and performers, and it does not all end on 31 December 2012. On 1 January 2013, Scotland will enter the year of natural Scotland with a stronger than ever global reputation for culture and creativity. As Einstein was famously quoted as saying,

"Creativity is contagious. Pass it on."

The year will continue to have an impact and reach beyond 2012. To help to ensure the cultural legacy of the year, I am pleased to confirm that an additional £1.1 million of the money that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth announced yesterday would be released from UK capital consequential will be allocated to culture. Of that allocation, £840,000 will be invested in key infrastructure: £300,000 will go to the National Library of Scotland to help with the Kelvin hall project and other improvements; £300,000 will go to the National Gallery of Scotland for essential improvements; and £240,000 will go to the national performing companies for new equipment for performance and education work. Further announcements will follow on how the remainder will be allocated. In addition, I am pleased to announce a further allocation of £300,000 from existing budgets to the National Museums of Scotland for repairs and maintenance.

Those resources, our existing world-class portfolio of cultural events and activities, the new

initiatives and projects that will be funded under the year of creative Scotland, the wealth of partner events that will form part of and benefit from the celebration, the London 2012 festival and torch relay, and all the partnerships that will be strengthened during 2012 place us in an excellent position to build towards the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will arise in 2014, when Scotland will welcome the world to join us for our second year of homecoming and when, as a nation, we will take centre stage in world terms as host of the Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that the Year of Creative Scotland is the third in a series of focus years leading to Homecoming 2014; recognises the role it will play in celebrating and promoting Scotland's creativity, innovation and culture; welcomes the Year as the start of a three-year cultural plan of creative and cultural activity embracing the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 through to the Commonwealth Games in 2014, and acknowledges the economic and cultural benefits that can be realised by taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Year of Creative Scotland to raise the profile of Scotland both nationally and internationally as a world-class cultural tourism destination.

15:23

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): I genuinely welcome the allocation of £1.1 million of consequential to culture in Scotland, which I am sure will be put to very good use.

In January 2006, I was pleased to announce to Parliament that a new body, which was to be called creative Scotland, would be established. That new body would be charged with supporting the arts in Scotland and creating a climate in which culture could flourish and in which people could experience and enjoy all that a truly creative Scotland had to offer.

The gestation of creative Scotland may have been difficult and it may have gone on longer than any of us could have imagined in 2006, but we now have an organisation that is fully equipped to carry out the changed role that it has been tasked with. Creative Scotland is up and running and is beginning to establish itself as an important part of the cultural and artistic life of Scotland.

Therefore, as an organisation, Creative Scotland is well placed to play a key role in the year of creative Scotland and to work with its partners—particularly EventScotland and VisitScotland—to bring forward a programme of exciting and inspiring events across the country. I am delighted to see the collaboration between the agencies and their partners continue, and to see that the cultural olympiad, which will accompany the London Olympic and Paralympic games, will be a component of that.

I congratulate the minister, who body-swerved for Scotland in avoiding Mr Smith's request on this occasion. It was interesting to hear more detail about the Olympics festival, but I wonder whether Mr Ewing—if it is he who will be closing the debate—will say a little more about the festival events that will take place immediately around the football events in Glasgow.

The three agencies—EventScotland, VisitScotland and Creative Scotland—were always intended to complement one another and to work with other partners for the benefit of our country. I am pleased to see that they are working so well in practice.

People come to Scotland as visitors for many reasons, but research tells us that culture in its widest sense is a key reason for visiting our country. People know about our festivals, particularly the Edinburgh festivals, and they increasingly recognise Glasgow as the home of world-class galleries and museums but, as we know, every area of our country has its own unique culture and there is no single identifiable Scottish artistic style, any more than there is one type of scenery or even consistent weather throughout Scotland.

It is vital, therefore, that the year of creative Scotland emphasises those differences. Scotland is not a homogenous destination or place to live, and that is part of its attraction both to visitors from abroad and to those who live here. We must do everything that we can to protect and enhance that local cultural scene.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): I absolutely agree with what the member has said on that point. Does she agree that the trad trails collaboration between the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland and Fèis Rois, which was launched at Celtic Connections earlier this month, represents an ideal opportunity to enhance both of those important Scottish cultures?

Patricia Ferguson: I absolutely agree with Ms Fabiani on that. To take the connections a little further afield, one thing that has always impressed me is the way in which the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has been able to combine the teaching of classical music at the highest level with the teaching of our more traditional music, also at the highest level. We should be proud of that and celebrate it.

From Celtic Connections to Up Helly Aa to the Wickerman, we celebrate our differences. The creative places strand of the funding arrangements, which we heard about today, has a role to play in that, particularly as it aims to help smaller communities to position themselves as tourism destinations through creative activity.

Scottish Labour's amendment emphasises how important we believe it is that local people—and not just visitors—have the opportunity to enjoy what is on offer in the year of creative Scotland. I suggest that, to be successful, it must achieve that aim. Everyone in Scotland should be able to enjoy and experience the arts and culture in their local area. The excellent outreach work of the national collections and national performing companies is a good example of what can be achieved. I am aware that a great deal of organisation and logistical planning is required to make it happen, but I was delighted to hear the minister outline the additional programme of work that will take place in this special year. I hope, too, that the first-in-a-lifetime fund will go some way towards addressing that point and that, when we look back, we will see that local art and creativity have been stimulated for the longer term by that investment.

I was interested to hear the minister's point about the investment in advertising. It often seems to me that we need to look beyond the usual outlets in advertising our country's cultural life. The minister mentioned the film that she saw today, which the *Evening Times* described as "quirky", and on that basis alone I look forward to seeing it. I often think that these debates offer us an important opportunity to contribute to the advertising package, because we are able to hear and discuss what is going to be available.

It is particularly important that local cultures are celebrated and that local communities are given the opportunity to be involved, particularly at a time when local authorities may have to make cuts in their budgets as a result of Government decisions. My fear is that, in some areas, culture and the arts will be seen as an easy hit. We must ensure that the Government does what it can—by setting an example and by setting the agenda—to discourage local authorities that might be tempted to make sacrifices in their support for art and culture from doing so in their area. By contrast, local authorities that have invested consistently in arts and culture have reaped the benefits, and the benefits have far exceeded the value of any such investment. I hope that the celebratory year will give local authorities a clear view of the direction of travel that the Government and Parliament want them to take.

I note that the material that we have been provided with cites architecture as an important element of our culture, and I whole-heartedly agree that it should be. Indeed, on the day when Parliament is to celebrate Scotland's places, it would be wrong if it were otherwise. Yes, people in Scotland and beyond recognise images of Scotland's scenery, but they also recognise images of our distinctive architecture. I wonder whether, in closing, the minister might be able to explain a little bit about whether Architecture and

Design Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Historic Scotland have a role to play and, if so, what that role might be.

I hope that today's debate can be positive—I am sure that it will be—and that we will consider and discuss what Scotland has to offer. However, in discussing a celebratory year of this sort, it is necessary to remind ministers that financial control must be better than seems to have been the case with the year of homecoming 2009.

The motion draws our attention to the series of focus years that the year of creative Scotland is part of. Perhaps we should pause at this point and consider whether we run the risk of diluting the concept of celebratory years. We need to take stock and ensure that such a valuable contribution to our cultural and tourism offering is not devalued by overuse. We benefited from the year of Highland culture in 2007. The 2009 year of homecoming might have been a bit more of a mixed bag, and there have been some other focus years along the way.

This year—2012—has great potential, but there is a danger that we might try to do too much in 2014 and that the effort might not be focused enough. As members will know, the arts are an abiding interest of mine, as is sport, but so is our history. I am concerned that a year of homecoming that celebrates our sporting effort and achievement while trying to look back to remark on the Bannockburn anniversary might just stretch the concept a little bit too far. Scottish National Party colleagues should note that I do not, for a moment, deny the importance of the Bannockburn anniversary to our country, but I hope that we can do justice to the Commonwealth games, the Ryder cup and Bannockburn by celebrating them all together.

I look forward to the remainder of the year of creative Scotland and, in the months to come, to reading about and perhaps debating the outcome of any monitoring of the event and of the concept that is such a valuable tool for our tourism and cultural offering to the country and beyond.

I move amendment S4M-01870.1, to insert at end:

"but recognises that the Year of Creative Scotland must provide opportunities for people around Scotland to experience cultural events and activities in their communities."

15:33

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to speak in this afternoon's debate on the year of creative Scotland. I am a great supporter of culture, and if my solitude in the chamber today suggests that I am advancing the cause in

isolation, I should say that my party is very much behind what is happening.

Of course, the initiative has already begun. The bells of hogmanay and the spectacular fireworks in our capital city marked the beginning of this creative year, and it is the beginning of an exciting period that embraces London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 and generates momentum towards the homecoming of 2014. Through a year-long programme of activity, Scotland will celebrate our artistic and cultural heritage. Although I recognise that 2012 has been given the title of the year of creative Scotland, we all appreciate that, year in and year out, Scotland showcases its breadth of talent to the world. Scots and tourists alike are treated to wonderful productions, world-class events, festivals and shows, and we should pay tribute to everyone who makes that happen.

Scotland is rich in heritage and one of the world's most dynamic and creative nations. This year, in particular, we celebrate that fact. The initiative is ambitious in scope as it involves the spectrum of the creative industries, and Creative Scotland is not shirking on its investment, having put £6.5 million into the creative Scotland 2012 programme—that is no small amount of money. I also agree with Patricia Ferguson that Creative Scotland working in tandem with VisitScotland, EventScotland and VOCAL is sensible.

I welcome all that in principle. However, this is a debate, so I would also welcome the response of the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism, Mr Ewing, if he is winding up, to concerns about the emphasis being on promoting what already exists. That emphasis has a place, but what about the anxieties of organisations that depend on Creative Scotland not for a one-off jamboree but for basic funding just to keep going? They need some certainty and reassurance about the shape of future funding. I hope that the minister will agree that while we look to Creative Scotland to co-ordinate and facilitate delivery of very exciting projects for the year, we do not want the staple diet of recurring and excellent creative activity falling off the radar screen. Nevertheless, I welcome the diversity of what is proposed and I am delighted to see the geographical spread of activity.

I am the first to hold up my hands to taking the cultural banquet that is regularly on offer from Edinburgh and Glasgow completely for granted. Those of us who live in the central belt are fortunate. The iconic locations and events with which Scotland is now indelibly associated—Edinburgh castle, Stirling castle, our museums in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Edinburgh international festival and fringe and Glasgow's Aye Write! festival—all have their proud place, which is entirely appropriate. I think that a particular

highlight this year will be the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, which will have a wealth of creative talent from four continents and will pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's diamond jubilee as well as the year of creative Scotland. That will be a special celebration and a crowd-puller, and a terrific advertisement for Scotland.

Among all the high-profile bells and whistles, I am delighted to see activity in some of our more remote communities being recognised and rewarded. I was pleased that the minister referred to that. I pay tribute to three towns that have won creative places awards in recognition of their status as Scotland's most creative places. Wigtown in Dumfries and Galloway received £50,000 for winning in the category of places with fewer than 2,500 residents. The town already hosts a successful book festival and the award will allow the book festival to be developed into a year-round programme. I know the area well and regard it with great affection, having holidayed there, so that is great news. It is precisely what a local community like that needs.

In my own west of Scotland region, West Kilbride was awarded £100,000—I hope that Wigtown will not come with a war cry to West Kilbride—in the category of places with fewer than 10,000 residents and is seeking to develop itself as craft town Scotland. West Kilbride has a special place in my heart. I have known it since childhood and it was probably my introduction to the seaside. Indeed, I have been known to take a dook in the chilly Firth of Clyde there, but before Mr Ewing collapses it was admittedly not recently and it is certainly not for the faint-hearted. West Kilbride has so much potential in such a beautiful setting and the award can only enhance its growing reputation. Ally that with a train service, good road connections, its proximity to Portencross castle and its historic connection with the ancient Scottish kings, a sandy beach, a golf course designed by old Tom Morris and local recreational facilities, and West Kilbride to me is a wee diamond and a must-visit destination.

If you cannot get there, St Andrews will have to do. St Andrews featured in the category of places with fewer than 100,000 residents and won £150,000, which was a significant achievement that will greatly enhance what it is trying to do. Again, on the local front, Creetown in Galloway and Huntly in the north-east have both impressed with their long-standing creative programmes involving the whole community, so the reach is indeed both local and broad. That localism matters, so I support Patricia Ferguson's amendment. It is very important that we give a physical assurance that all this is reaching out and beyond the two Mecca points of Glasgow and Edinburgh in the central belt.

As the minister said, the year will proudly feature a host of cultural delights that are too numerous to mention, some familiar names and some less so—I wish them all well. However, as well as celebrating all that, we should keep our heads screwed on. It is important that we do not view all this in isolation. I think that Patricia Ferguson alluded to that aspect slightly. We need to ensure that there is a legacy from the activity and the disbursement of public money and that we build on and develop our cultural infrastructure. As we enjoy the events of the year in Scotland and in the UK and look forward to the Glasgow Commonwealth games and the 2014 homecoming, I have two ambitions. First, for the homecoming, can we aim to exceed the proportion of overseas visitors that we achieved in 2009? Secondly, if we are repeating the gathering, can we have the most stringent financial safeguards to protect creditors?

I am confident that 2012 will be an exciting year and I wish all those involved every success. I support the motion and the amendment.

15:40

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

The cabinet secretary mentioned the incredible wealth of creativity in Scotland. In mulling over my speech, I was concerned that I should do justice to Scotland's culture and cultural heritage in this year of creative Scotland. How could I do justice to such a wealth of talent? Yesterday, I decided to look at the year of creative Scotland events calendar on the partnership VisitScotland website.

The cabinet secretary has encouraged many organisations to register their creative events and, by using the calendar, to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the year of creative Scotland. I found my inspiration in Alasdair Gray—novelist, artist, playwright, academic, teacher and polymath. On 31 January, the gallery of modern art in Glasgow was hosting the "City Recorder" exhibition of Gray's work. The exhibition includes city scenes captured by Gray in the 1970s, defining Glasgow's life then, and capturing its famous inhabitants and characters. The diary for yesterday also included many Celtic Connections events—and one of the venues for Celtic Connections is Òran Mór, with its iconic Alasdair Gray mural. I am delighted that Scotland's largest traditional music festival will head to Chicago in September 2014 as one of the events supported by the year of creative Scotland.

The 30th anniversary of Gray's masterpiece, "Lanark", was in 2011. On its publication, Anthony Burgess hailed Gray as

"the most important Scottish writer since Walter Scott".

When thinking about “Lanark”, I noted that an event took place in the town of Lanark yesterday—the “Saving New Lanark” exhibition, showing images from before and after the restoration of New Lanark and documenting the work of the conservation trust over the past 25 years. New Lanark is one of the digital imaging projects featured on the Scottish ten website, where there is a modern, hi-tech, 3-D image mapping of the town. The town is also beautifully captured by Alasdair Gray in his spectacular mural of the falls of Clyde, which he painted in 1969, and which was recently beautifully restored.

A tour through some of the events on one single day of the year of creative Scotland calendar leads me to remark that Alasdair Gray—in relation to whom one single day of the year of creative Scotland weaves together music, 3-D imaging, venues, restaurants, historic landmarks and artistic and writing talent—has made a contribution that, alone, merits Scotland a place as a world-class cultural tourism destination.

Many members in the chamber will have read the beautifully crafted essay by Pat Kane in this week’s *Sunday Herald*. A judge in Creative Scotland’s creative places awards—which are a key element of this year’s celebrations—Pat Kane examines the concept of creative places in the context of his home town of Coatbridge. So it should be for us all: the creative places awards, and the major events and festivals featured in this year’s programme, should inspire all Scotland’s places, communities and festivals to take part in the celebrations.

Pat’s article mentions Mark Millar and the superhero archway in Coatbridge. I was lucky enough to see Mark in a question-and-answer session in Coatbridge library last October, as part of North Lanarkshire’s book festival. To a young audience, Mark imparted a tale of the self-belief, dedication and work ethic that have enabled him to achieve his ambitions in the creative industries and to become one of the greatest writers of comic books of all time and an A-list Hollywood producer. It was truly inspiring to everyone in the audience. Mark urged them to work hard on their craft, whether as writers or graphic artists, and to become the best they could be.

Last week, I returned to Coatbridge, this time to the Summerlee museum to attend North Lanarkshire Council’s creative residency exhibition, which features talented youngsters from the area. Every year, creative pupils from North Lanarkshire are taken to Kilbowie outdoor centre for a week’s residency, during which they are given master-classes in the visual arts, jewellery making, digital photography, film making, textiles and printmaking. At the event, those who feature in the exhibition were honoured with

another inspirational speech, this time from Sandra Gunn, the curriculum director of City of Glasgow College. A graduate in fine art with a masters degree in architecture and design, Miss Gunn urged the pupils to work hard and to embrace the creative industries and not to be put off by naysayers, but to trust their ambitions and talents.

After all, our creative industries are worth more than £5 billion a year to Scotland and support more than 60,000 jobs. There are new modern apprenticeships and opportunities for young people in the industry. I was delighted when, last year, the cabinet secretary announced the creative edge partnership, which will be worth more than £1.4 million over three years to Scottish talent and creative businesses. Working with partners Channel 4, Creative Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and TRC Media, the initiative aims to strengthen our talent and business base in Scotland in what is obviously a priority area for the Government.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): I regret that I must ask you to close, please.

Clare Adamson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

15:46

Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab): I, too, am grateful for the opportunity to speak about the year of creative Scotland and the practical importance of Scottish culture. Earlier this week, I read that the Hollywood film industry and numerous other productions for TV and cinema had boosted the Glasgow economy by £20 million in 2011, led by the shooting of the Brad Pitt movie “World War Z” last summer. When I was growing up in the Gorbals, it would have been pure fantasy to imagine Hollywood stars filming in our city, but it is now a reality and, I believe, a sign of things to come for Glasgow and Scotland.

The Scottish Government’s economic strategy identifies the creative industries as a key growth sector. Scottish Enterprise has indicated that the sector contributed £5.4 billion to the economy in 2010. In the past decade, the number of businesses that are involved in culture and the creative industries grew by 27 per cent compared with an average growth of just 4 per cent in all other sectors. That is a positive trend that shows how resilient the sector can be.

I welcome the drive to make 2012 the year of creative Scotland, which is a chance to showcase our arts, skills and culture to visitors from Scotland and from throughout the world. To do that, we must make the connection between Scottish culture, the creative industries and another key growth sector—Scottish tourism. Tourism accounts for almost 9 per cent of employment in Scotland and is worth £11 billion per annum to the

Scottish economy, which is the equivalent of 10 per cent of gross domestic product, so it is an important sector.

We have heard a bit about what Scotland can offer, from concerts and festivals to arts and crafts and from the Edinburgh festival to events in Glasgow, which is a UNESCO city of music and a European city of culture. Our museums and galleries welcome 25 million visitors per annum and are worth £800 million to the economy. A quarter of tourists to Scotland choose to visit museums and galleries such as the national museum of rural life in East Kilbride. A growing number of visitors to Scotland come to find locations that are mentioned in film or literature. Rosslyn chapel has become one of the better-known examples, following the success of “The Da Vinci Code”, but there are others, such as the Rebus tours in Edinburgh.

As I represent Lanarkshire and Falkirk, I remind members that Scotland’s attractions stretch beyond the areas that are traditionally thought of as tourist hubs or cultural centres. According to VisitScotland, four of the top five tourist attractions in the Glasgow and Clyde valley area are located in Lanarkshire. Top destinations include Lanarkshire’s great country parks of Drumpellier, Calderglen, Chatelherault and Strathclyde, which attracted more than 6.3 million visitors in 2009 alone.

The Falkirk wheel, which is also in my region, attracts half a million visitors every year and has quickly become one of Scotland’s most recognised landmarks. Such places are great assets for Scotland and great venues for events and exhibitions, where we can showcase our creativity and promote our cultural tourism, at every level.

VisitLanarkshire is involved with local people’s activities as part of this year’s focus. There is the exhibition at the Scottish museum of industrial life at Summerlee, which the previous speaker mentioned, and entries to South Lanarkshire Council’s annual photography competition are on display at Chatelherault in Hamilton—a building that is a testament to the skill and creativity of its architect, William Adam.

The Labour amendment stresses the importance of community involvement in this year’s activities, and Lanarkshire is setting a good example. I ask the Scottish Government to consider people’s opportunities to participate and volunteer. For example, there are young people who might have a talent or interest that relates to Scottish culture, older people who have experience and want to stay active and give something back, and young and not-so-young people who are out of work and in need of positive, useful work experience. Throughout society there are people who could benefit from

getting involved in this year’s events and the events that follow as we build up to 2014. I am a former training consultant, so I can assure members that good work experience and placements can lead to good jobs.

I have talked about the economic benefits of cultural tourism. The creative industries show promise. Tourism has felt the effects of the recession but remains a major industry with huge potential for growth in the years ahead. If we are to keep Scotland competitive and ensure that we become the world-class destination that I know that we can be, we must ensure that the workforce in our cultural attractions and key parts of the service sector is properly skilled.

The Government understands the importance of repeat tourism and I hope that it is working on our main cultural attractions to ensure that staff who deal with the public have the skills and the aptitude for customer service that visitors rightly expect. It is not just in museums, galleries and visitor centres that we need those skills; we need to know that proper training is taking place in the hospitality sector, in public transport and in the airports, so that Scotland maintains its reputation as a welcoming place for all who come here.

In 2012 we should not just celebrate creativity but actively show creativity in how we promote ourselves as a nation to the rest of Scotland and the rest of the world.

15:53

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):

I direct members to my declaration of interests in respect of my membership of Aberdeen City Council—that might pop up during my speech. My colleagues from the north-east, Kevin Stewart and Dennis Robertson, will speak later in the debate, so I will do what I can do to highlight positive examples from the north-east without engaging in thunder stealing.

With that in mind, I briefly mention Huntly, which is in Mr Robertson’s constituency. I welcome the cabinet secretary’s comments about the town, which is an exemplar in its use of the arts to rebrand itself and become an internationally recognised creative community. Other small communities should emulate the approach. There are plans to use the funding award for a number of exciting projects, including a creative food project. We might hear more about that later. There is a lot to be excited about in Huntly.

During the year of creative Scotland a number of projects will run in Aberdeen. Aberdeen international youth festival is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The event has become a leading youth arts festival and one of the most popular festivals in Scotland. About 1,000 talented

young people from performing arts companies and music groups across the globe will arrive in Aberdeen to perform at venues large and small, from Aberdeen music hall to the church hall at Queen's Cross. The festival will include some outreach events in Aberdeenshire. Indeed, such events have become a festival favourite and recognise not only the city's hosting of the festival but the city region's role in the area's cultural fabric. They are all about reaching out to certain communities who might not find it as easy to get into Aberdeen and enjoy the festival.

Aberdeen's hosting of the British science festival, which promotes the best of knowledge and learning in science, technology and the arts, will play a fundamental part in its contribution to the 2012 year of creative Scotland. The impact of the Olympics has already been mentioned and an Olympic torch relay event in Aberdeenshire will involve a mixture of dance, music and the arts and include a performance by the chart-topping Aberdeenshire artist Emeli Sandé and a participatory dance event. Aberdeen's own public Olympic art commission will also be playing a firm role in that.

Another event called "The Port" is a multi-arts collaboration that seeks to connect young people and their wider communities with the changing landscape of Aberdeen city and harbour and will use street performances, large sculptural pieces, dance and music opportunities to develop high-quality local experiences. Although such events are not on the grand scale of some that have been mentioned, they nevertheless play a very important role.

In an example of the kind of shameless parochiality that I engage in from time to time in the chamber, I want to talk about certain things that might not be directly linked to the year of creative Scotland but which tie in with the sort of community involvement issues that Patricia Ferguson mentioned. A number of play areas in the village of Dyce where I live and which I represent on Aberdeen City Council had fallen into a bad way, but they have since been reinvigorated partly through the installation of art pieces. For example, kids' sculptures were placed in Central park to give it a more cultural feel. A Sluie Drive park that had fallen into a very bad state of repair was reinvigorated with artworks developed with some of the young children at Dyce play group, who were, as a result, given a real sense of ownership. Moreover, play areas off Princess Drive that had fallen into serious disrepair are now home to some fantastic ground-level street art that has really enhanced interest in the area.

It is worth mentioning such projects, because they have a role to play in community regeneration and in meeting the year of creative Scotland's aim

of exploring Scotland's culture. This is not just about art in the community; all the projects that I have highlighted involved young people in the community, giving them a sense of ownership and helping communities to feel that the project was theirs and not just something that was imposed on them.

I was extremely enthused by a recent project involving a collaboration between the National Theatre of Scotland and my old school Dyce academy that resulted in a piece called "The Cabaret of Impossible Dreams", which was performed at the Forum in Aberdeen. It brought in puppetry, music, mime and dance but the best thing about it was not only that it was created in collaboration with more than 120 school students, but that it brought in the local community to work alongside them and helped to create links that will continue beyond that performance.

That kind of community-based art should really be promoted. Although it might not attract the kind of headlines that the Edinburgh military tattoo or major festivals such as the Edinburgh fringe attract, that does not make it any less of a vital part of Scotland's cultural fabric. It can act as a stepping stone for young people and communities that might not engage in cultural activity to feel a part of it and perhaps to move on and discover other things.

15:59

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands (SNP): Edward de Bono articulated what I feel when he said:

"There is no doubt that creativity is the most important human resource of all. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would be ... repeating the same patterns."

Recognition of, support for and investment in our creative people, whether they are visual artists, writers, architects, industrial designers or scientists, are prerequisites for a confident nation and for—as we say these days—going forward.

Only a generation or two ago, Scotland might not have been quite so prepared to support this special year. Historically, our frustrating reluctance to endorse for fear of showing off was often to deny recognition of a special talent or creative skill in young people for fear of making them different or big-headed.

Praise—far less celebration—was rarely the reaction of ordinary folk on discovering achievement or a special talent in family or community members. Glasgow was city of culture as recently as 1990, but although it absolutely deserved the title for many genuine and solidly good reasons, there were many who doubted that.

Sadly, some were unaware of the rich seam of creativity in the city at the time. A new generation of writers and artists were having their work recognised in London and further afield, and yet they were not acknowledged at home and were not part of the city of culture. I suspect that that would never happen now, more than 20 years on. Alasdair Gray's "Lanark" was hailed as the masterpiece that it is and was being printed in translation, while most people in Scotland had yet to know of its existence. I mention those examples not to make us feel bad, but to acknowledge the distance that we have come in 20 years.

To go back further in time, the Clyde Unity Players in the 1930s and 1940s were performing plays in the recognised genre of kitchen sink drama. Those were plays written by ordinary working folk about the hardship of their lives: socialist realism. More than a generation later, John Osborne had his play "Look Back in Anger" staged in London, and theatre-goers were shocked at seeing an ironing board on the stage. That signalled the declaration and recognition of kitchen sink drama, but in Scotland a generation before we had been leading in so many of those different creative art forms, and yet never recognising enough ourselves.

In the early 1970s, there was "The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil", John McGrath's play recounting the economic change that was brought about by the discovery of oil in the North Sea. Much further back, we had Sir David Lindsay's "Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis", which was first performed during the midsummer holiday in Cupar in Fife, in 1552. That was probably the original musical, but Scotland is not often credited with that. It featured a cast of hundreds representing church, state and crown—the three estates—but in essence it is the story of the common weal.

More recently, there was the National Theatre of Scotland's production of "Black Watch", which portrayed the history of the regiment and the realism of present-day life for its soldiers.

Shakespeare referred in "Hamlet" to

"the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

I mention that because creative Scotland has a fantastic cultural history that we can be so proud of. We can try to show how dependent we are on the work of not only our previous but our contemporary creative minds.

Artists are not always—or even often—the friends of politicians. They are often critical—surly, even—and they can be difficult. However, in every part of Scotland, often against all the odds, there

are writers, poets, painters and musicians who are endlessly reaffirming and defining our nation. Protest songs, folk songs, slow laments and whirling jigs; public art, photography, film and so on; and the widening of culture by people of different nationalities who make Scotland their home: all of that is Scotland's rich, creative scene.

Our artists often play a bigger part than we recognise. If we are asked to close our eyes and imagine Robert Burns, I would bet that it is the painting by Naismith that readily comes to mind. When we are asked to promote our country abroad, it is our artists who are in the front line. I believe that this year of heightened awareness, and of keen and ubiquitous promotion and dedicated involvement through the various strands of funding that are being made available, could prove to be a life-changing experience not only for our own people in Scotland, but for visitors, too.

I worked in the tourism industry for many years and I know the difference that it makes to a holiday if people get the chance to hear some of our music or attend a performance of actors, strolling players or whomever, whether contemporary or traditional. That is so important, and only now are we beginning to recognise the true worth of that in our everyday life.

I believe that this year should be the start of the new enlightenment—absolutely fresh thinking. We must be alert to new thinking, receptive to new music, informed about the creative minds in our midst and aware of the economic case—made regularly—regarding the importance of inventiveness and the encouragement that it needs to flourish.

A number of years ago, I was involved with the Scottish Arts Council and visited what it considered to be an exemplar of a headmistress who had tried to encourage education through the arts. We went to Barlanark primary school and met some five-year-old children who had been looking at the architecture of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. I asked who Charles Rennie Mackintosh was, at which a five-year-old pulled himself up to his full height, with hands on hips, and was appalled that I had never heard of Mackintosh—I had, of course. He said, "And no only have we did Mackintosh—we've done Greek Tamson an a'." I have never forgotten that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): I must ask you to close.

Jean Urquhart: That is the age that the year of creative Scotland should attack; if it does, we will have adults who are very fine indeed.

16:06

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the year of creative Scotland in 2012 and the chance to participate in the debate. Creative industries are an important driver in the economic growth of Scotland, and we should use them to encourage inward investment. In particular, we should do more to support our film industry. I hope that the Scottish Government will resist the temptation to follow the UK Government's example of cutting funds to the film industry.

The motion talks about Scotland being

"a world-class cultural tourism destination."

That is true. We have more than 150 diverse communities, and our museums and galleries—including the Riverside museum and the Kelvingrove art gallery and museum in Glasgow—are great assets in attracting visitors. The museums are free, thanks to Glasgow City Council, as are many similar museums and galleries around Scotland. What assurances can the cabinet secretary give in her summing up that she will work with councils to ensure that museums maintain a free admission policy?

The recent success of Scottish artists—in particular, Glasgow artists—in the Turner prize competition presents an opportunity. The Turner prize exhibition is now held outside London every odd year and attracts 15,000 visitors. I hope that the Scottish Government will join me in backing Glasgow as a preferred location for the 2015 exhibition, cementing Glasgow's reputation as a vibrant centre for the arts and boosting our economy.

Many people around the world recognise the bagpipes and tartan as symbols of Scotland. However, visitors to our country and our shops—for example, those in the Royal Mile, not far from here—find it easy to buy bagpipes and kilts that are made overseas. We must do more to protect quality and locate manufacturing; more could also be done on labelling the products to ensure that visitors can tell the difference between quality, hand-crafted Scottish products and mass-produced imitations that are made—usually with cheap labour—thousands of miles away.

I will stay with the theme of products. I am keen for visitors to the Commonwealth games to be encouraged to see as much of Scotland as possible. Could each city have its own range of official memorabilia that was available only in that city, to promote visits to those destinations?

The three-year cultural plan offers a fantastic opportunity to showcase Scotland to the world. Work must be done to secure major events beyond 2014, which I hope will include the 2015

Turner prize exhibition in my own great city of Glasgow.

We have an opportunity. We all talk about culture and many events, but a lot of historical facts are attached to our cultural diversity. My colleague Drew Smith jokingly talked about the Olympic rings coming to Glasgow, but he made an important point. Our Glasgow youngsters know only one type of ring, and getting another type of ring to Glasgow would be important. He talked about George Square and the squinty bridge as locations. They are wonderful sites—the squinty bridge is near the television studios, which could use it as a backdrop. The rings could be outside Central station, where a lot of travellers from all over will arrive. Those small details make a difference.

Glasgow is the heart of Scotland; it is the steam engine. A lot of good things happen there and come from there. Glasgow represents people throughout Scotland. That is not an Edinburgh or Glasgow issue—it is just reality.

I want to concentrate on our young, who still do not have the diverse opportunities that they should have. For example, Glasgow has two bagpipe manufacturers. The bagpipes are a Scottish instrument and they are played mostly in Scotland, yet Pakistan makes more bagpipes than us. Why is that? We need to encourage our industry by supporting it to continue to create high-quality goods. We must ensure that, on the high street, people recognise the difference between quality and what is second best.

I am keen to know whether the Government can help our industries. As I said, Glasgow has two companies that manufacture bagpipes and other items that go with them. We must ensure that such companies are geared up to take on the opportunity of the Commonwealth games and that they build on that.

16:13

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): It is a privilege to speak in the debate. I have never heard Huntly mentioned so much in the chamber, and shortbread has not even been mentioned yet. It was a great privilege for me to be with the cabinet secretary at the fantastic creative places awards ceremony last week and for Huntly to receive a special award of £40,000. I also felt quite special that day—although it was not quite as much of a privilege—to meet Dougie Vipond for the first time, which took me back to my Deacon Blue days. That is enough of him.

Huntly and Deveron Arts are a beacon of light—I am sure that we have heard that somewhere before—that is taking Scotland forward. Huntly is a small community and a market town. Deveron Arts

is embracing that community, and the whole community is involved in that project. Aspects of its artwork and its creativity can be found throughout the village. Some artwork is even in the cleaner's cupboard in the Deveron Arts building.

My colleague Mark McDonald mentioned the menu in Huntly. It is actually going to be a new signature menu. Again, that is something that is going to be extremely creative, and it will bring people back to Huntly to see what it is all about. I look forward to enjoying some of that cuisine. I sincerely hope that the cabinet secretary and the minister can find time to visit Huntly to take part in that as well. They might meet Dougie Vipond, who has said that he is going to be there, too. Enough of him, though.

My constituency, Aberdeenshire West, has a level of talent that is probably second to none in the whole of Scotland. We have even adopted Scotland's most creative and talented comedian, Billy Connolly, who resides in Strathdon most summers. We are proud to have him there. He usually leads the Lonach games, which are a fantastic success. We have our own home-grown talent as well. In Huntly, we have Shona Donaldson, the Huntly quine. She is a fantastic singer—one of Scotland's finest—and her husband, Paul Anderson, is one of Scotland's most renowned fiddlers. We have an association with Shakespeare, through Macbeth and Lumphanan. We have royal Deeside, where the Queen resides at Balmoral. I know that there is some controversy about the extent of the castle's architectural beauty. Not everyone thinks that it is beautiful, but I do. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and I agree with that, as far as Balmoral is concerned.

We have an opportunity, as we are the gateway to tourism within Scotland. In royal Deeside today, the first lines were cast. I sincerely hope that a salmon was caught on this extremely cold day. It is frustrating for an angler when they cast and contemplate and nothing happens. I sincerely hope that it was a successful day.

I would like to commend to the cabinet secretary and the minister the activities at Braemar. I hope that they will find time to visit the village and see the wonderful activities that are going on there. That community, which has fewer than 600 people, is bringing that wonderful castle back to life and back to its former glory. As part of the curriculum for excellence, schools are going to the castle to find out about the history and the culture of the area.

We are even keeping the language alive, with Alford primary school bringing out a book called "B is for Foggiebummer"—as we know, in the Doric, a foggiebummer is a bumble bee.

There you go—creativity, art and culture are all there in Aberdeenshire West.

I commend Hanzala Malik for saying that Scottish produce is the best in many ways. I also commend his diplomacy in using the phrase "second best" when he meant "tat".

I am thrilled to be the MSP for Aberdeenshire West, because I believe that we have the talent and opportunity to welcome visitors from all over—not just Scotland and the Commonwealth but the world. I sincerely hope that people will take the opportunity to come to Aberdeenshire West and see what we have to offer.

16:19

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I refer the chamber to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a member of Aberdeen City Council. I am glad that Mark McDonald did not steal all of my thunder.

I welcome this debate, and I particularly welcome the announcement of the extra £1.1 million of consequential for infrastructure. I hope that the cabinet secretary will think about providing Aberdeen art gallery with some of that money, as it is in need of some roof repairs—I will probably talk to her about that later. At the moment, the gallery has a wonderful exhibition called "From Van Gogh to Vettriano", which features paintings from private collections that do not normally see the light of day. I urge folk to go and have a look at that.

As Mr McDonald said, Aberdeen will celebrate 40 years of the Aberdeen international youth festival this year. Over that time, that festival has brought people from around the world to perform in Aberdeen. It has brought thousands of visitors to the city. I am looking forward to it, particularly to the events in communities. I agree with Ms Ferguson that they are what we need.

I am particularly interested in creating the artists of tomorrow and particularly proud of the reading bus in my patch. That initiative teaches kids to read in a fun manner and gets their parents involved. Beyond that, it gets kids involved in Doric culture and teaches them animation. Apple and TAQA Bratani have helped to sponsor it, which is amazing. Radio DJs and presenters of the future are being created. In combination with the reading bus, Station House Media Unit in Aberdeen is teaching kids those skills at a young age. I agree with Ms Urquhart that it is best to catch them early. If we get a five-year-old interested in something, it is likely that they will be interested in it for the rest of their life.

Sometimes we do not marry up tourism and culture very well, although I am not blaming the

cabinet secretary or the minister for that. We spend huge amounts of money on marketing Scotland throughout the world, including in the United States.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Does the member agree that, in seeking to promote Scotland's culture in the US market in particular, we should actively highlight the significant historic links between our countries? Does he agree that we should specifically encourage American visitors to celebrate the link between our declaration of Arbroath and their declaration of independence, perhaps by visiting Arbroath abbey?

Kevin Stewart: I agree with Mr Dey. I am sure that anybody who has been to Arbroath abbey would agree that a visit there is a great day out. We should celebrate our links with the United States and try to persuade folk from there to come here.

However, it is not just about Arbroath. We miss opportunities. I wrote to the cabinet secretary recently about a constituent of mine who has written a huge number of musicals over the years and has found it difficult to access funding from the usual bodies, including Creative Scotland and the National Theatre of Scotland. There is sometimes a certain amount of snobbery in the allocation of funds, which needs to be done away with. My constituent, Mike Gibb, recently musically adapted the "Outlander" books by Diana Gabaldon, who is an American author. All of the "Outlander" books, the first of which was called "Cross Stitch" in the United Kingdom, are entirely based in Scotland. I have to be honest and say that I have not read the books, as they are described as romantic drama, which is not quite my bag. However, the series of books has a huge fan base and has sold 20 million copies worldwide, and the musical has been staged in Dundee. Visitors from the United States managed to catch it on a Facebook site.

If our cultural and tourism organisations got together to create linkages and provide initial funding that could get returns, we could sell Scotland even more culturally and in other ways throughout the world. We need to consider carefully how we dole out funding. Far too often, it is doled out to the same things, which is not right. I hope that the cabinet secretary will agree to meet me to discuss that topic so that we can perhaps thrash it out and see whether we can link tourism with culture in making cultural grants.

This has been a brilliant debate in which there has been no disagreement across the chamber. I hope that we do brilliantly in 2012.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members who have participated in the debate that

they should be in the chamber for closing speeches.

16:25

Annabel Goldie: I echo Kevin Stewart in saying that this has been an extremely interesting debate in which, predictably, there has been little dissent. Its most obvious feature is what has emerged about the diversity of Scotland's creativity. The minister set the scene with her reference to diverse events such as the cultural olympiad, with the 2012 festival including the marvellous concert in Stirling featuring the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra. Her reference to peripatetic ballet alarmed me a little, but as long as I am not involved, I am right behind it. She indicated a breadth of activity about which we can feel excited and proud. Clare Adamson paid a deserved tribute to the role played by Alasdair Gray. I was struck by Mark McDonald's reference to youth art in Aberdeen and by the references to fishing in Deeside and admiring Balmoral, which seemed to be Dennis Robertson's very worthwhile pastimes.

The whole issue of localism was reflected in Patricia Ferguson's amendment, about which I spoke in my own contribution. I detect support for the need to ensure that we do not disregard localism and get carried away in a huge froth of excitement about the big, glitzy events but are also right down there in our communities. Several contributors made important points about that. Margaret McCulloch talked about Lanarkshire and the Kitchside museum, which I have visited. I recommend it to anyone; it is a fabulous experience. Several members gave impressive descriptions of what is available in their parts of Scotland.

Some powerful points were made about the economy. The minister alluded to that, and Margaret McCulloch made some important observations, too. I had not realised the extent, according to Scottish Enterprise, of the contribution that is made by the sector—£5.4 billion, which is a whacking big amount of money. That makes it clear how culture can drive tourism and how the concept of cultural tourism is so important to us. I was struck by her observations on the role of skills and work experience in cultural tourism; she hits the nail on the head in that regard. There is an important benefit to be derived from that.

Kevin Stewart was very candid. I enjoyed the part of his speech where he said, if I understood him correctly, that we do not always quite tie up the marketing of culture and tourism. That is a point well made. Perhaps we need to look at what we market, to whom we are trying to market it and what we are saying to those people.

Kevin Stewart: I completely agree. One of our frequent failures is to spend lots of money on advertising when some things advertise themselves—or they could if they were done properly.

Annabel Goldie: That is a helpful observation, and I am sure that the minister will take it to heart.

On the fundamental question of skills and the creative industries, Margaret McCulloch said that we need to ensure that training is in place, and she mentioned the hospitality trade. I think that we are all aware that first impressions are all-important. When visitors come to Scotland, we want to ensure that they have a very positive experience at whatever level their engagement is taking place. Perhaps the message is that we all need to be more proactive. I must confess that I am pretty passive; if I am in an eatery somewhere and do not think that the service is all that great, I tend to just grin and bear it and disappear. Perhaps we need to be slightly more vigilant, and, if we think that something is not quite up to scratch, we should think to ourselves, “This isn’t just about the service I’m getting—it’s an advertisement for our country.” We may need to make people more aware of that.

Jean Urquhart made a fascinating speech about the historic legacy. She may be surprised to hear me say that, but she should not be too alarmed by my paean of praise. I enjoyed her speech very much. She referred to the whole spectrum of historic cultural contribution, whether Sir David Lindsay’s “Thrie Estatis” or the Unity Players—yes, I knew what she was talking about—and the exciting concept of a new enlightenment. That illustrated the minister’s observation, quoting Einstein, that

“Creativity is contagious. Pass it on.”

The quotation from the schoolchild about Mackintosh and Greek Thomson was entertaining and encouraging.

My love of the historic legacy probably tends more towards books. It occurs to me that we have writers such as Guy McCrone, Neil Munro and A J Cronin who were all novelists in their day but who now perform the role of social commentators on conditions in Scotland in their time. We should be careful, in our quest for new talent and new contributions to the creative field, that we do not forget that there is some valuable stuff in the background as well.

It has been a pleasure to take part in the debate, which has been positive. I make a serious point to the minister: let us have an ambition for the year of homecoming in 2014 to improve the number of overseas visitors. The gathering was a bit of bad press. We do not want to repeat that bad press so, if the gathering is to happen again, we

must be extremely vigilant and careful about the financial constraints that surround it.

16:31

Patricia Ferguson: As other colleagues said, the debate has been interesting and informative.

I was particularly taken with the point that Annabel Goldie made in her opening speech about—if I describe her comments correctly—what might have been sacrificed to allow the year of creative Scotland to take place. To judge by the speeches that we have heard, that is a concern for all of us. My take is that, if there is a legacy from the spend, perhaps we do not have to worry too much about any displacement.

Miss Goldie was also correct to refer to the importance of the Edinburgh tattoo. This year, as always, it will be an important part of what Edinburgh offers to Scotland and the world. My only worry about it now including references to the diamond jubilee and the Olympics is that the tickets are likely to sell out even more quickly than they normally do. Perhaps we need to be more creative and consider ways in which we can expand that element of the Edinburgh festivals.

I was also taken by Clare Adamson’s comments about the calendar of events. I, too, have had a look at the calendar. I must admit that I always find such calendars quite difficult to read. There always seems to be so much in them that I have to have a second and, sometimes, third read before I can get my head round what I want to go to, hear, see or experience.

Clare Adamson was also correct to refer to Alasdair Gray, who, over the years, has played a highly significant role in the culture of Scotland and in promoting the natural culture that comes from deep inside.

If it is not too much of a plug, thinking of that reminded me that, this evening, somebody who operated in a similar ilk and whom we have lost all too soon—Gerry Rafferty—will be remembered in a recording of the excellent concert that was on at Celtic Connections a week or two back. It is good watching for anyone who has a spare hour this evening.

My colleague Margaret McCulloch mentioned the Hollywood stars who came to Glasgow with Brad Pitt to make “World War Z”. Anyone who walked through Glasgow when that film was being made would have recognised that something special was going on. Meetings in Glasgow city chambers and many of the other buildings around George Square seemed to be distracted inordinately by the need to go to windows, open them and comment on the way back about who had happened to pass by. The serious point is that

the film brought a huge amount of money to our country and put us on the world stage. It does not really matter that Glasgow will be portrayed as, if I remember rightly, Philadelphia. What matters is getting the work to come here and being recognised as the kind of country that can cope with such an experience.

I was also taken by Margaret McCulloch's reference to Rosslyn chapel, which I remember visiting around the time at which the popularity of "The Da Vinci Code" was at its height. We have talked about how we need to be more proactive about advertising. When I visited the chapel, a neighbouring farmer had a sign on his gate that said, "Da Vinci potatoes available here", which was perhaps taking entrepreneurship a bit too far.

Mark McDonald made some interesting points about using art to regenerate communities, and I strongly agree with his comments. You will come across such art in communities in the area of Glasgow where I live and which I represent. Members will all be familiar with the work of Andy Scott, who works in my constituency, who built the Clydesdale that we see on the M8 and who is responsible for many of the other wonderful sculptures that we see around.

The arts can be used to stimulate regeneration. For example, a couple of schools in my constituency that have—I need to be careful how I say this—a slightly boring exterior are, I hope, to be enhanced through the use of colour on the outside of the building. As small an element as the introduction of colour can make a huge difference in a community. It is valid to emphasise the role of art in regenerating communities.

Mark McDonald: Does the member agree that art can also deter youth crime? I cite the example of Northfield in Aberdeen, where young people painted the shutters of shops. That has reduced the amount of graffiti and other forms of vandalism in the area quite dramatically.

Patricia Ferguson: Absolutely. If we involve young people in their community, whether through arts projects or other activities, that is the result that we will get—they will have respect for and pride in their community. That is what we want to instil in all our young people.

In an extremely interesting and informed speech, Jean Urquhart mentioned the Unity Players. I do not recall them, but I had a great uncle who was a member. The Unity Players produced many of those actors and actresses who were household names in my early childhood, whom I still think of with a great deal of affection. Many of them were leading lights in organisations such as Mayfest, which helped to promote the idea of Glasgow as a city of culture, which came to fruition in 1990. Jean Urquhart was quite right to

say that there were those who doubted that Glasgow deserved its status as city of culture. Time has shown them to be wrong in taking that point of view, and it is to be hoped that fewer people will hold such an attitude in the future.

Jean Urquhart's speech reminded me of the Maryhill Integration Network in my constituency, which works with asylum seekers and refugees to make them feel at home in their new community. It does that largely through the use of social and artistic activity. Some of the most enjoyable artistic events that I have been to in recent years have been organised by that organisation. It is wonderful to experience the different cultures that are on offer; we all learn so much from them.

Dennis Robertson said that he had never heard Huntly mentioned so often. After his speech, it is fair to say that never has Dougie Vipond been mentioned so often. Joking apart, I congratulate Huntly and all the other creative places—those that are recognised formally and those that are not—on the contribution that they make to Scotland.

Kevin Stewart mentioned the Aberdeen international youth festival, which I have attended in previous years, at the invitation of Nanette Milne. I have found it to be a joyous occasion, on which young people from Aberdeen and other places around the world work together to celebrate their shared enjoyment of music and the arts. That is always to be welcomed.

I am conscious that the Presiding Officer will want me to draw to a close very shortly, so I apologise to those colleagues whose excellent speeches I have not been able to mention. I will just say that the speeches of members of all parties have demonstrated that it is not just 2012 that is the year of creative Scotland; it is every year.

16:39

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): This has been an excellent, wide-ranging and informative debate. As well as the many things that we have learned from many of the speeches, we have seen the emergence of potential professional tour guides in many parts of the country. If Dennis Robertson gets his way, what with the requests to visit Huntly, Braemar and here, there and everywhere, we will spend the whole summer in his constituency—which would be a fate devoutly to be wished, I am sure.

Margaret McCulloch waxed lyrical about the various parks in Lanarkshire and the excellent attractions that it has to offer. She is perfectly right. Indeed, I spent Monday visiting Lanarkshire. I visited a hotel in Abington, the visitor centre in

Lanark and the Biggar museum, so I have seen many of those attractions for myself. My visit brought to mind—I am not sure how relevant this is, but I will struggle on manfully—one of the first examples of the staycation, which was when Robert Burns visited this great city. This might be known to those members who have read James Mackay's biography of Robert Burns.

Of course, there was no internal combustion engine in those days, so the mode of travel was horse. He stopped over near Biggar—in Symington, I believe. He was a famous man even then, and a wee boy stood on top of a haystack and said, "He's coming! He's coming!" They had a great party, at which Robert Burns was the honoured guest. They sampled the food and, indeed, the drink, well and deeply, and the next day, the national bard got on his horse and made the second leg of the journey, from Lanarkshire to Edinburgh. When he got to Edinburgh, the first two days of his first staycation were taken up recovering from a pretty severe hangover. So there we are—that was an early example of the staycation.

The speeches that we heard from all members who contributed to the debate illustrated the huge range of creative activity in Scotland. We learned about the different types of art and culture in different parts of the country. That was welcome. Jean Urquhart made the thoughtful speech that we would expect her to make, given that—at least in my mind, and I hope that she will forgive me for this—she will forever be associated with the Ceilidh Place and the many great times that many people have spent there, including me. She said that artists are the most precious people in the world. They will be remembered long after my speeches are well forgotten—which might not be that long, actually. *[Laughter.]* That sentiment seems to have attracted a measure of unanimity, if you can have a measure of unanimity.

Seriously, Presiding Officer, artists are remembered long after most other human beings, who spend a brief time on this planet, are forgotten. Artists are remembered because they leave a legacy of beauty behind them, as we heard from many members.

Scotland is proud to have had some of the most distinguished and outstanding artists in the world, some of whom are not as well known as they deserve to be. I am delighted that we have seen the Scottish national portrait gallery reopen and that we are bidding for the Turner prize award ceremony in 2015 or 2016, as Hanzala Malik rightly highlighted. I think of the Scottish colourists—of Peploe, Cadell and Fergusson. They were marvellous artists, in my humble opinion, but even though their paintings are hugely

valued and cherished, they are perhaps not as well known as they should be.

Kevin Stewart: I did not realise that the minister was such a fan of Peploe. He can see some Peploes at the Van Gogh to, er—*[Interruption.]*—Vettriano exhibition at the Aberdeen art gallery. *[Laughter.]* I got too excited by Peploe there. I have a vision of the picture in my head now.

Fergus Ewing: I think that Mr Stewart is just trying to make up for his admission that he does not read romantic drama. *[Laughter.]* He is trying to rehabilitate his new man credentials with some other confessions of his leisure time pursuits.

Scotland has distinguished artists in all spheres. I enjoy listening to jazz, including musicians such as the guitarist Martin Taylor, Tommy Smith on the saxophone, and the distinguished vocalist Annie Ross, who has achieved world fame. Not only are they brilliant exponents of their art, they give their time freely and at length to help young people in Scotland with things like the National Youth Jazz Orchestra of Scotland and festivals all round the country, including, I understand from the provost of Stirling, one in Callander—who would have thought it—and in Ayrshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Nairn and other places throughout the country. Every area of culture and every world will be represented this year. Every type of art and culture will have its champions, events and celebrations, and will be promoted throughout the country. That is all greatly to be welcomed.

Many members have rightly highlighted the necessity of learning from past difficulties, and of spending money wisely. It is quite reasonable for Annabel Goldie, Patricia Ferguson and Kevin Stewart to have made that point—in Kevin Stewart's case, before he got on to the confession-time part of his speech. That is absolutely proper. It is a key responsibility of any minister.

We want and are determined to leave a lasting legacy. This year will not be a one-off. The purpose is not just to hold a series of new events. It is to promote and celebrate, to provoke new activity, and to encourage young people to take part in art and culture, such as they do in the big noise orchestra in Stirling, so that they can continue to experience, to enjoy, to broaden their minds, and to learn from some of the world's greatest artistic experts. No matter how difficult those experts are—I know that they can be difficult—they always try to help young people. They might not like every politician, but everyone likes children. We are determined to leave a legacy for the generations yet to come.

Of course, we are also determined to celebrate events in Scotland that are about the London Olympics. The torch relay events will visit all 32

local authorities in Scotland between 8 and 14 June before returning to Dumfries and Galloway on 21 June. Although I will probably adopt Fiona Hyslop's body-swerve manoeuvre on the issue of the Olympic rings, I know that the famous chamber group that was established in the 1970s, the Kronos Quartet, will be the high point of an open-air festival in Glasgow. There will be many ways of celebrating the London Olympics in addition to the Scottish Government's support for that event and the benefit that Scottish companies have had therefrom.

I will move towards a conclusion, Presiding Officer. Members such as Margaret McCulloch, Hanzala Malik and Annabel Goldie talked about tourism and its importance to the country. Kevin Stewart rightly made the point that when we promote our culture, we take cognisance of its importance for tourism. I am here and making this speech because we entirely recognise that that point is very well made. Such activity might be partly Government-inspired, but the purpose is to move way beyond Government and the bodies that are involved and to promote interest and excitement among Scotland's communities, as the Labour amendment rightly emphasises. It is more important in that than in any other area of Government activity that the relevant ministers—the cabinet secretary who is responsible for culture and I, who have portfolio responsibility for tourism—work together.

We have a truly marvellous country that has had a most successful year of tourism, and despite the recession, the gloom, the woe and the depression, we have seen tourism grow pretty successfully. That is because we, as a nation, are getting better at it, with higher-quality visitor attractions, food and drink, and some of the best scenery in the world.

Hanzala Malik: One of the things that I tried to highlight in my speech was that Scottish produce is an important element in all this. Is there any mileage in trying to ensure that all our museums sell only products that are produced and manufactured in Scotland? Could we ensure that shops in high streets in Scotland—for example, the Royal Mile, and Argyle Street in Glasgow—have special labels that tell tourists that every product sold in that particular outlet is manufactured in Scotland?

Fergus Ewing: I certainly support the aim of promoting quality Scottish produce in every way possible. Indeed, when I make purchases by way of gifts and presents for my immediate loved ones—as of course I frequently do, at great expense to myself—I tend to see what I can do to do my bit for Scotland. I think that this debate has shown that we all have that attitude in this chamber, and a good thing it is, too.

Information Commissioner

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-01865, in the name of Christine Grahame, on behalf of the selection panel on the appointment of the Scottish Information Commissioner.

16:51

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): The motion that I will move is in my name, on behalf of the selection panel that was established under our standing orders. It invites members to nominate Rosemary Agnew to Her Majesty as the new Scottish Information Commissioner.

The selection panel was chaired by the Presiding Officer. The other members of the Scottish Parliament on the panel were Margaret Burgess, Helen Eadie, Alison McInnes, Mary Scanlon and Maureen Watt—all women, who incidentally selected a woman, but members should read no more into it than that.

The Parliament is not subject to the code of practice on ministerial appointments to public bodies, but we follow the guidelines to ensure that best practice is observed and that the process is fair. On behalf of the panel, I thank Louise Rose, the independent assessor, who oversaw the process and has provided the Parliament with a validation certificate confirming that the process complied with good practice and that the nomination of the commissioner is made on merit after a fair, open and transparent process.

Our nominee, Rosemary Agnew, was the panel's choice from a strong field of candidates. We received 33 applications and shortlisted six candidates for interview. Rosemary Agnew is currently the chief executive of the Scottish Legal Complaints Commission. Previously, she held posts as an assistant local government ombudsman and as the head of the economics and business faculty at the Northern Consortium of universities in England.

The commissioner's role is important. The commissioner is responsible for enforcing and promoting Scotland's freedom of information laws, which give people anywhere in the world access to information that is held by more than 10,000 public authorities in Scotland. Rosemary Agnew will bring to the post a range of skills and experience, including an understanding of the challenges that freedom of information presents to those seeking and providing information.

I believe that Rosemary Agnew will prove to be an effective and fair commissioner who will bring

to the role enthusiasm and a determination to continue to ensure that the freedom of information regime in Scotland remains highly regarded throughout the world. I am sure that the Parliament will want to wish her every success for the future in her new role.

I think that the Parliament will wish to record its thanks to Kevin Dunion, the first Scottish Information Commissioner—incidentally, I nominated him on behalf of the panel the first time round—who was appointed in 2003 and has successfully helped to establish a strong and internationally respected freedom of information regime in Scotland, and to wish him well for the future.

I move,

That the Parliament nominates Rosemary Agnew to Her Majesty The Queen, for appointment as the Scottish Information Commissioner.

16:54

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):

As a member of the selection panel, I am delighted to speak in support of the motion. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the passing of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The Scottish Information Commissioner must enforce and promote that law, which we know has been beneficial in so many ways to individuals around Scotland. The financial problems facing public authorities make it all the more important that transparency and accountability are watchwords as we go forward. It is a key time to take over the role of commissioner.

Rosemary Agnew is committed to the principles of transparency and accountability that are enshrined in freedom of information law and I believe that she has a deep personal commitment to contributing to a culture of openness in the way in which public services are delivered in Scotland. Through her experience and personal interest, she is aware of the issues and challenges that freedom of information presents to those who seek and provide information and of the scope of the application. I believe that she will carry out her role with the utmost fairness and diligence and I commend the nomination to the Parliament.

Business Motions

16:55

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-01883, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme. Mr Crawford has obviously been detained, so I call on Paul Martin to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 8 February 2012

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Budget (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 9 February 2012

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Ministerial Statement: Review of Teacher Employment

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012 [draft]

11.40 am General Question Time

12.00 pm First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Justice and the Law Officers;
Rural Affairs and the Environment

2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate: Youth Employment Strategy

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 22 February 2012

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.35 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

2.50 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 23 February 2012

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
 11.40 am General Question Time
 12.00 pm First Minister's Question Time
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time
 Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy
 2.55 pm Scottish Government Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business—[*Paul Martin.*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S4M-01884 to S4M-01886, which set out stage 1 timetables for various bills. I note that Mr Crawford is no longer detained, so I ask him to move the motions on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau. If he could do so slowly, that would be most appreciated.

16:56

The Cabinet Secretary for Parliamentary Business and Government Strategy (Bruce Crawford): I thank Mr Martin for graciously moving the earlier motion, S4M-01883, which was in my name. It was well moved—Paul made a great job of doing it while I was not around. I am grateful for his involvement in that process.

We have several motions to consider this afternoon. The three that you have asked me to move, Presiding Officer, are of significant importance to the people of Scotland. The first is with regard to the Land Registration etc (Scotland) Bill, stage 1 of which is to be extended to 17 March 2012. I assure members that the Parliamentary Bureau discussed that at great length and agreed that we should proceed as outlined in the motion.

Another piece of business that came before the bureau was with regard to stage 1 of the Long Leases (Scotland) Bill. The bill is of significant importance in many parts of Scotland, particularly in Blairgowrie, as Mr Swinney knows—although Mr Swinney is talking to somebody else and he is not listening to a word that I am saying. We also discussed the motion on the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill, stage 1 of which is to be completed by 4 May 2012.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the deadline for consideration of the Land Registration etc. (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be extended to 17 March 2012.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the

Long Leases (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 27 April 2012.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 4 May 2012.

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of eight Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move, in normal time, motion S4M-01880, on the referral to the Parliament of the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012; motion S4M-01882, on the suspension of standing orders; motions S4M-01887 to S4M-01889, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments; motions S4M-01890 and S4M-01891, on substitution on committees; and motion S4M-01892, on parliamentary recess dates.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012 [draft] be considered by the Parliament.

That the Parliament agrees that, for the purpose of allowing up to 1 hour and 40 minutes to debate motion S4M-01880, Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012 [draft], on Thursday 9 February 2012, the final sentence of Rule 10.7.1 of Standing Orders be suspended.

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Electoral Administration (Scotland) Act 2011 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2012 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Marine Licensing (Exempted Activities) (Scottish Inshore and Offshore Regions) Amendment Order 2012 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Prohibited Procedures on Protected Animals (Exemptions) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Mary Scanlon be appointed to replace Ruth Davidson as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Education and Culture Committee;

Gavin Brown be appointed to replace Alex Fergusson as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the European and External Relations Committee;

Jackson Carlaw be appointed to replace David McLetchie as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Finance Committee;

Alex Fergusson be appointed to replace Jamie McGrigor as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee; and

John Lamont be appointed to replace Murdo Fraser as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Scotland Bill Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Annabel Goldie be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

Alex Johnstone be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Equal Opportunities Committee;

John Scott be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee;

Jamie McGrigor be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Local Government and Regeneration Committee;

Alex Johnstone be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee;

David McLetchie be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee; and

John Lamont be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 6 to 21 October 2012 (inclusive), 22 December 2012 to 6 January 2013 (inclusive).—[Bruce Crawford.]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Point of Order

16:59

Paul Martin (Glasgow Provan) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Today the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell, made a statement to the Parliament on higher and further education governance reports. I draw your attention to an article in the most recent edition of the *Sunday Herald*, which contained a large number of specific proposals that the cabinet secretary announced today. I seek your assistance in ensuring that we condemn such unacceptable practice and discourtesy to the Parliament, and I would be grateful for an assurance from the cabinet secretary that the proposals were not leaked prior to today's statement being made.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I thank Mr Martin for giving notice of his point of order and refer him to the good practice guide on announcements by the Scottish Government.

I examined the article that he mentioned and the cabinet secretary's statement. As far as I could see, a number of important issues in the statement were not covered in the article and I was content to allow the cabinet secretary to make his statement to the Parliament.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are nine questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-01870.1, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, which seeks to amend motion S4M-01870, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on the year of creative Scotland 2012, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01870, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on the year of creative Scotland 2012, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes that the Year of Creative Scotland is the third in a series of focus years leading to Homecoming 2014; recognises the role it will play in celebrating and promoting Scotland's creativity, innovation and culture; welcomes the Year as the start of a three-year cultural plan of creative and cultural activity embracing the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 through to the Commonwealth Games in 2014, and acknowledges the economic and cultural benefits that can be realised by taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Year of Creative Scotland to raise the profile of Scotland both nationally and internationally as a world-class cultural tourism destination but recognises that the Year of Creative Scotland must provide opportunities for people around Scotland to experience cultural events and activities in their communities.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01865, in the name of Christine Grahame, on the appointment of the Scottish Information Commissioner, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament nominates Rosemary Agnew to Her Majesty The Queen, for appointment as the Scottish Information Commissioner.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01880, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the draft Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012 [draft] be considered by the Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01882, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the suspension of standing orders, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that, for the purpose of allowing up to 1 hour and 40 minutes to debate motion S4M-01880, Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2012 [draft], on Thursday 9 February 2012, the final

sentence of Rule 10.7.1 of Standing Orders be suspended.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on motions S4M-01887 to S4M-01889. If any member objects to my doing so, please say so now.

The question is, that motions S4M-01887 to S4M-01889, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Electoral Administration (Scotland) Act 2011 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2012 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Marine Licensing (Exempted Activities) (Scottish Inshore and Offshore Regions) Amendment Order 2012 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Prohibited Procedures on Protected Animals (Exemptions) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01890, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Mary Scanlon be appointed to replace Ruth Davidson as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Education and Culture Committee;

Gavin Brown be appointed to replace Alex Fergusson as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the European and External Relations Committee;

Jackson Carlaw be appointed to replace David McLetchie as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Finance Committee;

Alex Fergusson be appointed to replace Jamie McGrigor as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee; and

John Lamont be appointed to replace Murdo Fraser as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Scotland Bill Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01891, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Annabel Goldie be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

Alex Johnstone be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Equal Opportunities Committee;

John Scott be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee;

Jamie McGrigor be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Local Government and Regeneration Committee;

Alex Johnstone be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee;

David McLetchie be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee; and

John Lamont be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-01892, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on parliamentary recess dates, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 6 to 21 October 2012 (inclusive), 22 December 2012 to 6 January 2013 (inclusive).

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Drumbrae Library and Community Hub

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-01644, in the name of Colin Keir, on Drumbrae library and community hub project. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the construction of the Drum Brae Library and Community Hub project, which was successfully completed on time in November 2011 and which will be open to the public in early 2012; notes that the three-storey community-purpose building, which will include a long-awaited new library, a day-care centre for older people and office facilities, is the first project to be developed as part of the hub South East Scotland programme; believes that the hub, which is planned to be easily accessible via regular bus services, will be a real focal point for the Drum Brae, Clermiston, Clerwood, East Craigs and Parkgrove communities; further notes that the project aims to offer a wide range of services, including an adult learning facility, community information and access points and a health information point; commends the City of Edinburgh Council's ambition to encourage community involvement, community-based activity and the building of social capital, and believes that the joint initiative of public and private sectors supported local economic growth and boosted construction industry employment.

17:04

Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP):

Yesterday was a fantastic day: it was the culmination of 40 years of campaigning in Drumbrae, Clermiston and Parkgrove. During that time, the people in those areas were promised a library; it had been in a number of manifestos, but for whatever reason the plan had never come to fruition. It is a community project that so many people have fought for, and some did not live to see the day when the library opened.

The building was opened as a hub, not just a library. The council officers who were in attendance tell me that on the opening day, from when the hub opened at 10 o'clock to when it closed, more than 1,000 people visited it. When I was there between 10 o'clock and 12 o'clock, there were children, mums and dads with prams, and pensioners, all going into the building that they had been promised.

The building represents a fantastic achievement by many people who have campaigned for a number of years, and I will mention a few of them. There have been few campaigners more vociferous in their actions than Reg Kingman, the chair of Drumbrae community council. I should mention with regard to my entry in the register of interests that I am still a member of the City of Edinburgh Council. My Liberal Democrat

colleague on the council, Councillor Robert Aldridge, is a long-term campaigner for the project, and a number of other people—there are too many to mention—have also been involved.

The Drumbrae library hub cost £5.7 million. It is the first hub to be delivered by the Scottish Futures Trust hub scheme, and we are delighted that, in opening to the public yesterday, it came in on time and on budget.

The hub was commissioned following a discussion between the administration partners on the City of Edinburgh Council in 2007. Since then, the planning took place and the parties agreed on where they wanted to go. I was delighted to see that, because of all the interest, so many people came on board through the consultation and eventually got the project off the ground.

More than 700 members of the public took part in the consultation on the hub, which is a superb advertisement for community engagement. After looking at the faces of the children yesterday, I can tell you that it was a huge success, and there is a fantastic opportunity for those who use the library to make it work.

The hub is designed as a one-stop shop: it offers a variety of services under the same roof. Having council services available in the community will ensure that they become more efficient. It is not just a library: on going through the building, we find the children's section at the bottom, the cafeteria and the community rooms. Moving upstairs, there are more community rooms and the computer workshops, and on the top floor there are the City of Edinburgh Council offices that hold the west neighbourhood management team, which is led by Natalie Hoy. I commend her for leading her team through the process of commissioning and getting the library and hub ready for use yesterday.

Not only will the council officers be there to provide a full range of council services, but the police will be in attendance, too. The local community safety team has been a fantastic success in the area for a number of years, and moving the team from Chesser House to the hub office at Drumbrae has enabled it to work more efficiently in the area to which it is committed.

A community care centre, which is part of the hub, will bring better facilities to those who are presently in Clermiston House and the Tower nursing homes. The facilities will mean that those people are not kept apart from the rest of the community. There are large window screens so that people can safely see how things are progressing outside without fearing for their safety. They might be a little bit nervous about mixing with youngsters, but they can see what is happening and they will have a wonderful garden outside too.

The on-going communication project has been first rate—it has been fantastic. The community has been involved from start to finish and, as I said earlier, 700 local residents took the time to make the consultation work. Information has been distributed through the community council, and local children drew a mural depicting the services that the hub will provide. It is a fantastic building and a fantastic achievement. Even local colleges that are looking to undertake outreach programmes have been in contact to use the hub. It will be a major success.

Back in the dark days of the 1970s, when I was but a 10-year-old—people out there may remember that—

David McLetchie (Lothian) (Con): Only 10?

Colin Keir: I was 10 once and I even had some hair, like Mr McLetchie.

I remember running across the road from Drum Brae Terrace, where I grew up, running 300yd down the road, across the park and then across the street to the mobile library, where I put my book down. The man behind the counter said, “You won’t have to do that for much longer, son, because they’re talking about building a library.” I blame the Tories, who were in power at the time. I look forward to Mr McLetchie answering that.

I will not go into the details of the finance—I am sure that the minister will be able to enlighten us on that—or into the technicalities. All that I will say is that there is real partnership working between the council, the Scottish Futures Trust and other partners. We have made a huge success with £5.7 million in difficult economic circumstances, and we now have what is probably the best hub or centre in the city of Edinburgh.

I would have liked to address a number of other issues, but the best thing for me to do at this point is sit down with a smile on my face and thank members for attending and taking part in the debate.

17:12

Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Colin Keir on securing the debate. Although I live in the Borders and am happy to do so, I grew up in an area very close to Drumbrae—East Craigs, which will also benefit from the library. Many of my friends, my family and their neighbours have, up to now, had to visit places such as Blackhall to use a lending library, so the new library will be a huge benefit to the community.

On the scope of the project, it is great that it contains a wide diversity of elements including the library, the adult learning facilities, the day-care centre that will cater for older people and the

offices that Colin Keir specified. It will be a genuine focal point for the community of Drumbrae, Parkgrove and East Craigs, which is very much to be welcomed. I defer the constituency matters to Colin Keir; I will talk about the principle of the SFT and why this is a positive development for Scotland, not just for Edinburgh.

This is the first project to be delivered by the Scottish Futures Trust. It is part of the south-east hub that covers five local authorities and is due to connect up to £300 million of projects over its life. In the South Scotland region, there are two relevant projects: the Gullane surgery and day-care centre, which will open shortly, and the Haddington joint campus primary school project, which is well under way and is due to be completed in October. That will be the first hub primary school to be developed by the Scottish Futures Trust, which is also extremely positive. Alex Neil has visited the site and the project has been warmly welcomed in East Lothian.

The SFT has the capacity to unlock other sources of finance—crucially, at a much lower cost and a more cost-effective rate in comparison with the public-private partnerships and private finance initiatives that went before. I have met the procurement professionals who are involved with the Scottish Futures Trust not only at a briefing session for MSPs, at which Malcolm Chisholm was also present, but in the course of the Finance Committee’s inquiries. We have heard from Barry White and Angus Grossart about their proposals and the benefits that they are bringing to capital investment in Scotland.

The project is doing much to pump-prime a struggling construction sector in Scotland. In last week’s stage 1 debate on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, we heard that the SFT and the non-profit-distributing model are supplementing an otherwise declining capital budget and allowing the Scottish Government to maintain its capital spend, which is providing great sustenance to the construction sector.

The SFT’s procurement expertise is delivering substantial savings in commissioning projects. By last June, an estimated £129 million of savings had been identified. Of course, we are aware of the significant savings that are being generated on the Forth crossing budget, which have enabled the Scottish Government to unlock additional funds for matters as diverse as early years services and the digital futures fund.

The SFT is helping to generate substantial savings. As Colin Keir said, it delivered the project on time and under budget, which is very much to be welcomed. The procurement expertise is bearing fruit in the delivery of projects and in keeping them within their budget, which has been

a constant concern in past public procurement projects.

I am conscious of the time, so I will just commend the Drumbrae project and express my hope that it will bring great benefit to the people of Drumbrae, East Craigs, Parkgrove and Edinburgh as a whole.

17:16

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I congratulate Colin Keir on bringing the motion to the Parliament for debate. Clearly, his area is not in my constituency, but I can share vicariously in the obvious pleasure that he took from the hub's opening a few days ago. When he was talking, my mind went back to two weeks ago, when the rebuilt Royston Wardieburn community centre in my constituency was opened. That great occasion brought enormous pleasure to the whole local community.

I pay tribute to the City of Edinburgh Council for the community hub. I know that we spend a lot of time on criticising the council—I flag up concerns about the library service in Edinburgh more generally—but we must pay tribute to it when good achievements are realised. It is clear that the Drumbrae hub is one such example and the Royston Wardieburn community centre is another.

The hub concept is not new, although the funding is different and is worth remarking on. In the past few years, people have tried to emulate the idea of having more services in the local community and having different services in the same location. I remember—it seems quite a long time ago now—that I visited more than one such hub when I was a minister. The one in Dalmellington—which is not far from your constituency, Presiding Officer—is a fine example. We should all support the idea of co-locating as many services as possible in local communities, but the hub model involves a different way of financing that.

Colin Keir focused on the hub that has been built, but he shares with me an interest in the proposed north-west Edinburgh partnership centre, which would be on the edge of his constituency and would serve my constituency. The plans for that throw up two problems with the hub model. I am certainly not against that model in principle and I will be pleased if it can deliver, but the time that some such projects are taking to come to fruition seems to be a problem. People in Pilton in my constituency and in Muirhouse in Colin Keir's constituency are frustrated and keep saying, "And what about this centre?" because we have talked about it for a long time. Having talked this week to Peter Gabbittas, who is now heading the project as the City of Edinburgh Council's

director of health and social care, I know that movement is afoot. I hope that we will have a report on good progress soon. It is frustrating that some such projects take so long to get together.

Without getting too political, I will say that people should be honest about the hub. It is a variant of private finance. It is a little bit different from PPP, but it is not as different as some people think. The principle is the same—private money will be used and will be paid back annually. We all accept that model, but we should be up front and honest about what is involved.

My main interest is to keep arguing for the north-west partnership centre, which will have a much bigger health service presence than the Drumbrae centre has. Council services, the health service and, I hope, other services will all be co-located in the community, which is consistent with the general direction of health policy as well as other policies. We need to get as many services as possible in local communities and, ideally, in new buildings that people will take pleasure in using, which will mean that they are more likely to access the services. That is particularly necessary in north-west Edinburgh because of the increasing population at the waterfront. I am sure that Colin Keir and I will both continue to campaign for that.

Of course, today is Drumbrae's day, and I acknowledge what the council has achieved there. I pay tribute to it and once again thank Colin Keir for securing this debate.

I apologise to the minister as I am hosting an event in the Parliament and will probably have to leave at half past 5.

17:20

David McLetchie (Lothian) (Con): I welcome the debate and thank Colin Keir for bringing it to the chamber. I am not sure that I welcome this growing Scottish National Party trend to refer to my baldness and antiquity, but I will try to put up with it with good humour, as I am sure that you would, Presiding Officer, were it directed at you.

I would like to start by joining with other members who have welcomed the opening of the facility. It is an important project, not only because it provides a new public library for people in that part of Edinburgh but because it is representative of broader changes in how we provide public services. As we have heard, Drumbrae library is at the core of a community hub, a number of which are presently either in construction or awaiting funding. Like the recently opened Bathgate partnership centre, it brings together a range of services from various council departments and other public service providers in the one location.

Of course, the hubs and proposed hubs vary in their make-up, with one alternative example being the collaboration that is pending between NHS Lothian and the City of Edinburgh Council to bring general practitioner and social care services together in the new Wester Hailes healthy living centre, a concept with which I have had some familiarity over the years.

Notwithstanding the differences between hubs, the overall aim of providing a one-stop shop for communities is laudable. Bringing together a library, a day-care centre and the council and police neighbourhood teams in the one building in Drumbrae makes sense. Moreover, that multifunctionality is important not only in terms of convenience to the public but because it will encourage greater co-ordination and partnership working between agencies, which should mean the delivery of a better service all round. Even in this age of information technology and remote access, there are still considerable and tangible benefits to be derived from having people physically working together in the one centre.

We should not forget that, at the heart of this project, is a new library for Drumbrae, which has been sought by the local community for a long time—more than 40 years, as Colin Keir indicated in his opening speech.

There has been an important change in libraries—I say that although I fear that it might be a tacit acknowledgment of one's own advancing years to recall an age when libraries were for borrowing books. Along with the more than 23,000 books that are to be found in the new Drumbrae library, there will be a large bank of personal computers and other digital equipment that will facilitate everything from music production to basic animation. It is truly a brave new world for our libraries, which have adapted enthusiastically to changing times and tastes and new technology.

However, it is not all about IT, and nor should it be. Libraries are not playstations. They are about reading for pleasure and learning. I loved going to the library when I was growing up, and that is one of the reasons why, as an MSP, I have always been keen to support and promote the summer reading programmes that were run by staff at Wester Hailes and Currie libraries, and at others throughout the city.

It was the great American news anchorman Walter Cronkite who said:

"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."

How true. That is why we should welcome the opening of the new Drumbrae library and community hub, which will ensure that present and future generations have the opportunity and the encouragement to learn.

17:24

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands)

(SNP): I thank Colin Keir for securing the debate and I, too, welcome the Drumbrae library hub, which opened yesterday. As my colleague Paul Wheelhouse stated, it was the first community project to get under way since the south-east hub—a partnership between the health board and the council—was formed in August 2010. The hub initiative, which is supported by the Scottish Futures Trust, promotes and encourages public bodies to work together to deliver better public buildings and enhanced public services for communities throughout Scotland. Those new buildings can provide a focal point for the community, give it a sense of ownership, and save the public purse money through the use of modern materials and shared services.

The Wester Hailes healthy living centre, which is in my constituency, is another hub project. It is the first hub development in the Edinburgh area that has the aim of providing long-term improvements in healthcare to the local community. The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy, Nicola Sturgeon, and I recently attended the Wester Hailes healthy living centre turf-cutting event, where I met constituents and local healthcare staff who have campaigned over many years for new health facilities to be built in the area. There was an obvious sense of achievement among the residents who turned out to witness the occasion.

The new three-storey facility is being built on the site of the high-rise flats that were demolished in the early 1990s. The land had lain derelict ever since then. The long-overdue project is therefore welcome, and it will help to kick-start the regeneration of a forgotten corner of the Harvesters Way area. The new centre, which will cover 5,000m² at a cost of around £9.5 million and is due for completion in August 2013, will provide a one-stop shop of health and social care services, and will deliver high-quality services in a more co-ordinated and efficient manner to the people of Wester Hailes. The range of services will include the general practitioner practice, district nurse and health visitor services, health and social care staff services, a children and families practice team, and the Wester Hailes health agency. The project is the first major investment in community facilities in Wester Hailes for a number of years, and they are eagerly awaited by the local population.

Another of the initial hub projects that are due to be built by the south-east hub is the Firrhill partnership centre, which will include the Craiglockhart and Firrhill medical practices and community nursing, podiatry, older people's mental health, learning disabilities, community

mental health and paediatric services. The new centre will address some of the anxiety among residents that they are being bypassed in the provision of modern local services. I therefore look forward to 2013, when my constituents and I can welcome the opening of the Wester Hailes healthy living centre and, I hope, witness the sod cutting at the new Firrhill partnership centre.

17:28

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Colin Keir on securing the debate. On the welcome that we should give the facility, there can be no better explanation of its importance than his comment that 1,000 people were there when it opened.

People in the local community have wanted the facility for a long time so I, too, congratulate that community on running such a long and successful campaign. In the end, we have a fantastic set of facilities in the same building, which is definitely to be welcomed. I know that the community campaigned for many years and that it had concerns about some of the details. It is important that it was involved in the design of the facility so that it meets people's needs. That is an important principle in local planning.

The west of the city has grown substantially over the past 20 to 40 years. I was brought up in the west of the city, but went away for a few years. When I came back, a large chunk of city had appeared in my absence and the whole area needed new facilities. The library facilities and the sports facilities that have been provided recently in particular were needed in an area in which there was huge development through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

I very much welcome the project—particularly for the range of facilities that are being provided together. I echo David McLetchie's comments; we should welcome the joined-up nature of the project. We want that in other parts of the country. It is very much worth celebrating. The inclusion of adult learning, community information, access projects, the health information point and the day-care centre is significant in terms of providing joined-up facilities for the local community. The day-care centre is particularly important, given the changing demographics—which would probably come up in a debate about health—and the growing number of people who are living well into their 70s, 80s and 90s.

I welcome the opportunity of a day-care centre that can be shaped locally and which can meet people's social needs by giving them a chance to get together and socialise at a time of life when many will be living on their own, living much longer than would have been the case in the past, and

not living near their families. The location of the day-care facility beside the library is great, because people who go to the day-care facility as local residents or as people who are brought by their families will also want to use the library on the same trip.

The fact that there is a cafe in the library is particularly good. In some ways, it is surprising that we do not have cafes in libraries, but I suppose that it goes back to the whole ethos at the time when they were set up and were intended for books, for studying and for thinking. The ability to socialise once one has visited the library, but not necessarily in among the books, is an interesting development that is worth supporting.

In a time of recession, libraries come into their own. The ability to read and learn for free is something hugely important that we should fight for. The range of 23,000 new books is fantastic, but that local stock is not all that will be accessible to people in Drumbrae library, because they will be able to call up books from within the whole Edinburgh library network. They will also be able to access expensive books about art, science and technology that cost £40, £50 or £60.

On multimedia, David McLetchie hinted at DVDs, CDs and the capacity to use the internet. The ability to use all those things for free is important at a time when people do not have a lot of money. Also, I do not underestimate the importance of free access to newspapers and magazines. I can see that the magazines and newspapers are also used in my local library in Stockbridge. With magazines costing £4 or £5, it all adds up to a lot of money for people on restricted incomes. Access to IT facilities enables people to use the internet to draft a curriculum vitae and to see what jobs are available. If people can go online, they can easily access websites such as Goodmoves, which is opening up a world of opportunities to the people who live in Drumbrae.

The fact that the library is on bus routes is vital. Anyone who knows Drumbrae will know that a bus service is absolutely fundamental for someone who wants to get there and is not particularly mobile or lives slightly further away. I praise the wisdom of finding a site that is on a decent bus route.

I am glad that local kids were consulted. Getting kids into libraries is absolutely crucial in getting them to enjoy books and to see libraries as places they can go for information, for pleasure, or for doing school projects. For me, as for Colin Keir some time ago, access to a library—in my case, in Blackhall—was hugely important. I loved being able to go every week, when there was always a new set of books that I could borrow. Kids love the fact that the choice is unlimited because there are

more books than they can ever read and they get to pick which ones they want. Libraries are hugely important for children in getting them into the culture of thinking, reading books and—now—using the internet.

This is a great project that is integrated with local services such as housing and environmental services and the police. A good, strong local community needs strong local services, and the fact that they are accessible to people is something to be celebrated.

17:34

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I would like to draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests as a member of the City of Edinburgh Council.

I thank Colin Keir for bringing this debate to the chamber. I, too, thank all the community volunteers and council officers who have brought this multifaceted project to fruition. It has been a real partnership project that has involved local people from the start. It is fitting that we highlight the good work that has gone on at Drumbrae and it is important that we proudly welcome the refurbishment, renewal and new provision of libraries. The wonderful transformation of the traditional old library in Edinburgh's Morningside has also delighted many dedicated users of what was a much-loved but very tired library.

Our libraries provide so many opportunities to so many people that it is essential that we maintain and enhance what they offer, and I am sure that Drumbrae and its one-stop shop approach will be used as an inspirational model for future projects. The cafe is a welcome addition. Commercial booksellers have offered such facilities for some time, and now we have one to rival them.

The current funding pressures mean that local authorities across the board are considering what kind of library service they can offer, as well as what kind of library service increased IT literacy and IT usage demand. I am sure that Colin Keir and other Lothian colleagues are aware that the City of Edinburgh Council's consultation on a strategy to inform the next three years of library usage has just concluded.

It is important that we hear and listen to current views. I have already been contacted by constituents who are concerned by proposals that would close libraries across Edinburgh on Sundays and would end late-night Thursday opening. They are concerned that an effort to standardise opening hours will result not in standardisation, but in reduction.

I am sure that there is agreement across the parties that, with household budgets being squeezed ever tighter and with increased unemployment, the opportunity that our libraries provide to access knowledge and increase learning has never been so important. Libraries have an important part to play in reducing inequality.

Increasing digital access to our libraries is welcome. The way that people access information is changing, but we must bear in mind the fact that many homes do not yet have internet access for a variety of reasons—low income being one of them.

Many students—young and old—do not have access to a quiet and appropriate place to study and work without interruption. Therefore, although Edinburgh's proposed strategy focuses on use of technology and the internet, it is important that we ensure that people across Lothian—and, indeed, throughout Scotland—have the kind of library access that Drumbrae provides. We must ensure that they are able to access services outwith standard workplace and learning hours in order to optimise the potential benefits that our libraries provide.

Our libraries are an essential part of all our communities, and I am pleased to contribute to a debate that celebrates their value to us all.

17:37

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): This has been an informative debate on a specific project and on the importance of libraries in the modern world. I congratulate Colin Keir on bringing the topic to the Parliament and sharing his enthusiasm for the project. I also congratulate members on all the speeches in the debate.

Colin Keir claims to have been 10 years old in the 1970s. I am a wee bit younger and was probably just a glint in my father's eye then, so I am not aware of the intricacies of the campaign, but I am well versed in the time that projects take to reach fruition and completion, such is their nature. Therefore, I commend and congratulate everyone who was involved in the Drumbrae library hub project. It is a good model and a good example of the public sector working together to realise a project that had popular support.

It is timely that Saturday is national libraries day. I wonder whether the opening event was targeted to be close to that day.

As members commented, libraries are far more than places to borrow books. The Drumbrae library and community hub is also far more than a library, as important as that is. It is testimony to its popularity that, as Sarah Boyack mentioned, more

than 1,000 people attended the opening. That is a clear indicator of support.

It is also encouraging that 700 local residents participated in the consultation on the design of the project. It is important to note that, if local people are involved in designing their own future, the end product should be far better for that.

The Drumbrae library and community hub was a £5.7 million project, which has been delivered through the Scottish Futures Trust hub scheme. There is much more to follow. Reassuringly, it was on time and on budget. The hub is a one-stop shop that brings together the public sector to provide services in a particular area. With its emphasis on place, it is delivering in a very physical way the policy and direction of the Government around the agenda on place and integration of public services. We often hear politicians talk about how we should move towards co-location; the hub represents the physical embodiment of the integration of services, and it will ensure that different parts of the public sector work together right across the sector.

David McLetchie mentioned the evolving nature of public facilities and how libraries have adapted over time. That is true. Paul Wheelhouse covered PFI and PPP, which Malcolm Chisholm would not necessarily agree with him on, but there is a difference between the hub model and PPP as regards how the profit is distributed, how the projects are run and where ownership ultimately lies.

Sarah Boyack and others commented on the fact that having a cafe in the library was a result of the adoption of best practice in the private sector. It is no surprise that some book shops were popular because, as well as having a welcoming atmosphere, they had some of the services that we are now seeing in public facilities.

Alison Johnstone mentioned the impetus for using libraries in new ways, the inclusion of IT and the need to consider the equality impact of facilities in different parts of Scotland.

Gordon MacDonald spoke about integration and told us a bit more about the other projects that are working their way through the hub model, which are welcome, particularly from the point of view of the further integration of health and social care, and practitioners working together.

Community planning is an area in which I am leading the community plan review. We want to bind the public sector together to focus on outcomes. I am very reassured by the extent to which the Drumbrae project emphasises that agenda. I understand that the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment and my predecessor visited the site during construction, so perhaps I will be invited to see the finished

product, which I have heard so much about this evening.

Over the next 10 years, £1.4 billion will be channelled through the Scottish Futures Trust to deliver projects such as the Drumbrae hub. Such hub initiatives are certainly the way forward in ensuring that there are synergies and that we maximise the benefits of working together.

At today's meeting of the national economic forum, there was a discussion about youth employment and the need to ensure that all elements are working together and accessing the public sector procurement contracts. On the issue of how the hubs are working, the way in which the contract for the Drumbrae project was designed meant that contractors and subcontractors in many parts of Scotland benefited. Subcontractors from Edinburgh, East Kilbride, West Lothian, Glasgow, Stirling, Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and other places were pulled together to provide the necessary trades to complete the construction.

The Drumbrae project is an example of meeting community need, involving local people and using public funds efficiently to deliver a product that is heavily focused on outcomes and which has created employment and economic growth. It seems like a model and approach that we should all celebrate, and I again commend Colin Keir for securing the debate.

Meeting closed at 17:44.

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