



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 14 June 2012

Session 4

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

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

Thursday 14 June 2012

CONTENTS

	Col.
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION (PUBLIC SECTOR BOARDS)	10057
<i>Motion moved—[Jenny Marra].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Shona Robison].</i>	
Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)	10057
The Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport (Shona Robison)	10061
Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con)	10064
Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)	10066
John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	10067
Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)	10069
Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)	10070
Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)	10072
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)	10073
Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)	10075
Annabel Goldie	10077
Shona Robison	10078
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab)	10080
PIP SILICONE BREAST IMPLANTS	10084
<i>Motion moved—[Jackie Baillie].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Michael Matheson].</i>	
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	10084
The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson)	10088
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)	10091
Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)	10093
Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)	10094
Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South) (SNP)	10096
Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)	10097
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)	10098
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)	10100
Nanette Milne	10101
Michael Matheson	10103
Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	10105
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE QUESTION TIME	10109
GENERAL QUESTIONS	10109
Factoring (Buildings in Mixed Tenure)	10109
NHS Boards (Targets)	10110
Sheriffhall Roundabout	10111
Commonwealth Games (Benefits to North-east)	10112
Scottish Government (Off-payroll Employees)	10112
Ferry Routes (Tendering Process)	10113
Scottish Futures Trust (Hubs)	10114
Renewable Energy Investment Fund	10116
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	10118
Engagements	10118
Prime Minister (Meetings)	10122
Cabinet (Meetings)	10124
Suicide Rate	10126
Modern Apprentice Programme (New Jobs)	10127
Higher English Curriculum	10128
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE QUESTION TIME	10130
RURAL AFFAIRS AND THE ENVIRONMENT	10130
Proposed Water Framework and Industrial Emissions Directives	10130
Common Agricultural Policy	10131
Water Pollution	10133
Public Bodies Climate Change Duty	10134

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Promotion).....	10135
Canals (Environmental Improvements)	10137
Seafield Waste Water Treatment Works	10137
Water Framework Directive	10138
JUSTICE AND THE LAW OFFICERS	10138
Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary	10138
Scottish Court Service (Review)	10140
Knife Crime (Education Campaign)	10140
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (Legal Trainees)	10142
Antisocial Behaviour	10144
Fiscal Fines.....	10145
Police Officers.....	10146
COMMON FISHERIES POLICY	10148
Statement—[Richard Lochhead].	
The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead)	10148
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT	10160
Motion moved—[Angela Constance].	
Amendment moved—[Kezia Dugdale].	
Amendment moved—[Mary Scanlon].	
The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance)	10160
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab).....	10165
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	10168
Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP).....	10171
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)	10173
Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)	10175
Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)	10178
Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab)	10180
Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP)	10182
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	10184
Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP)	10187
John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab).....	10190
Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP).....	10192
Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab).....	10194
Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)	10196
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	10198
Kezia Dugdale	10200
Angela Constance	10202
POINT OF ORDER	10206
DECISION TIME	10207
ARDROY OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE	10220
Motion debated—[John Park].	
John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab).....	10220
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)	10222
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	10224
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	10225
The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell)	10226

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 14 June 2012

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 09:15*]

Women's Representation (Public Sector Boards)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The first item of business is a debate on motion S4M-03289, in the name of Jenny Marra, on women's representation.

09:15

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am delighted to be able to open a debate on equality in the Scottish Parliament in this, the United Nations year of empowering women. I note that this appears to be the first time that the Scottish Parliament has ever debated women's representation on boards, but I hope that it will not be the last time.

Throughout Europe and the rest of the world, the debate about gender quotas has come to the fore. Now, more than ever, European nations that the Scottish Government seeks to emulate are taking action to make boardroom equality a standard practice in their businesses, public bodies and Parliaments. It can be done.

It has been almost 10 years since the Norwegian male Conservative Minister of Trade and Industry, Ansgar Gabrielsen, completed Norway's transition from a state that operates a 40 per cent quota on public boards to one that includes the private sector in that quota system. It took just two years for Norway to reach its quota of 40 per cent female representation on its public limited company boards. Its boardrooms have equalised, both in the private sector and in its public bodies.

It took Finland six years, from 2005, to bring all of its public boardrooms from 30 per cent representation of women to up to 44 per cent. Iceland's target of 50 per cent was achieved in just one year.

Gender quotas for public boards are in place in Denmark, South Africa, Israel, Quebec, Berlin and—at a local level—Nuremberg, and have been proposed in Belgium, Canada and Italy. They are becoming a more and more attractive choice for nations where, as is the case in Scotland, diversity strategies, leaflets, DVDs and the mentors that the Scottish Government proposes are simply not working. The attraction of quotas has grown so much that, just last week, the majority right-wing

European Parliament backed a European Commission recommendation to bring gender quotas into the boardrooms of all of Europe's companies by 2020.

Angela Merkel has called the gender composition on Germany's boards scandalous, and even David Cameron has said he will not rule out quotas for gender representation. However, two days ago in committee, the Scottish Government rejected the amendments to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill that would have introduced quotas. In light of all the evidence and all the progress that is being made around us, I ask the chamber this: when did the Scottish Government become less progressive on equality than a Conservative Prime Minister in London?

Labour's motion suggests that Scotland would benefit by learning from progressive policies in other European countries that have successfully balanced their boards—a course of action that all sides of this chamber should agree upon.

At the heart of the matter is the fact that, as all sides of this chamber agree, gender should not matter, and board appointments should be made on merit and merit alone. However, what the Scottish National Party Government and the Tories fail to realise, but the Scottish Labour Party always has, is that no matter how much we will it to be irrelevant, the reality of the culture for those seeking positions at Scotland's boardroom level is that gender matters, and that the situation is usually to the detriment of women.

Humza Yousaf (Glasgow) (SNP): Why, in the 13 years when it was in power, did the Labour Government not bring in a 40 per cent quota for public sector bodies?

Jenny Marra: We have always supported equal representation in our party and it is something that we will look towards in the future. We have been out of power for quite a few years in Scotland, but we will certainly look at the matter for the future.

We understand that, at the heart of Scotland's public boards, there is a deep-rooted culture that ensures that the merit of a man is worth more than that of a woman. It is something that diversity strategies alone have not, and cannot, address.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Jenny Marra: No, thank you. No amount of application information to highly skilled and qualified women through Government DVDs, brochures and e-mailed vacancies are changing a culture where the statistics show us that women fight an uphill battle for board positions, because they know that they will lose out to men. Pretending otherwise is simply burying our heads

in the sand. Gender equality at boardroom level has not happened organically in the 13 years that the Parliament has existed, and the statistics tell us that it is unlikely to happen organically in the next 13 years either, unless we take bigger, bolder steps to make it happen.

As a solution, quotas offer us the ability to join other European nations to make a strong statement about our Government's commitment to the equal value of women's merit, as well as men's, and the 40 per cent model that we have proposed does so elegantly. Let me explain it. Boards would require 40 per cent women and 40 per cent men, with flexibility of 20 per cent for boards with an uneven number of members, or in cases where there was an insufficient number of either gender. The model is taken from the highly successful Finnish equality act and it has been proven to work. For as long as we agree that the merit of a man is equal to that of a woman, we should not object to each having an entitlement to a minority 40 per cent representation on the boards that govern all our public services.

I lodged two amendments to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill that would have introduced a 40 per cent quota on the boards of Scotland's new police and fire service. I lodged the amendments after learning about the shocking rate of representation of women on the scrutiny boards of our police forces. Those boards hold the police to account. Officers deal with gender-based issues such as domestic abuse and prostitution every day, but the boards that scrutinise the police comprise only 18 per cent women.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Can the member indicate how the appointments to the current police boards are made? My understanding is that the majority of the appointments come from local authorities, some of which are dominated by the Labour Party.

Jenny Marra: I think that the member will find, if he looks at gender representation among councillors in Scotland, that Labour has a much better record of electing women to local authorities and to this Parliament than the Scottish National Party. He only has to look to Dundee City Council, where 16 SNP councillors were returned and only two of them were women. I think that the same happened in Glasgow City Council, but perhaps the minister will correct me on that.

The boards of Scotland's police forces comprise only 18 per cent women. In Northern Constabulary, only two of 22 members were women. In Dumfries and Galloway, just one of 10 members was female and there were no women at all on the Central Scotland police board, which had 11 members. Where are the women's voices to scrutinise and hold our police services to account?

When we look at other boards across Scotland, we find that the situation does not improve.

Christine Grahame: The member is concerned about gender balance and interventions. However, does she agree that the Justice Committee took the view that it is quality on the board, be it a man or a woman, that counts, and not a gender balance?

Jenny Marra: If the member had been listening to my speech, she would have found that I have already made the case that a quota enforces the idea of a meritocracy and that we should not be scared of saying that women's merit is equal to that of men and that, as Alison McInnes MSP eloquently put it in committee a couple of weeks ago, equal representation is not happening organically so it needs a hand along.

In Shona Robison's portfolio, sportscotland's governing board has a gender balance of 78 per cent men to just 22 per cent women. The average percentage of women on Scotland's public limited company boards is a shocking 11 per cent. In fact, men comprise 80 per cent or more of board members on boards such as those of the Accounts Commission, Architecture and Design Scotland, Creative Scotland, the Scottish Legal Aid Board, VisitScotland, the Scottish Law Commission, Transport Scotland, Scottish Water and the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy's own NHS 24. Those are just a few examples. There is not a single board on the Scottish Government's register of public bodies in which the reverse trend can be seen.

It is therefore little wonder that the motion has gained support from the likes of Oxfam, Engender, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the National Union of Students Scotland and that it has been further welcomed today by the Electoral Reform Society. It is timely that gender quotas have been recommended to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell, in his commissioned review of higher education governance. Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski has recommended the 40-40-20 model because the balance in university governing bodies is 72 per cent men to 28 per cent women.

The rest of Europe has grown tired of inequality, and it is high time that Scotland balanced its boards.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that women and men play an equal role in Scotland's public sector; notes with concern that women continue to be underrepresented on the boards of Scotland's public sector organisations; understands that barriers continue to exist for women gaining a place on such boards; further understands that nations across Europe such as Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland have introduced a quota system that has been successful in promoting equality of representation on public

bodies and publicly owned company boards; notes that the European Parliament voted to recommend a 40% quota on company boards throughout Europe by 2020; further notes the recommendations of Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski in the Scottish Government's *Report of the Review of Higher Education Governance in Scotland* to introduce a 40% gender quota for Scottish university courts, and believes that such measures should be replicated throughout Scotland's public bodies to bring about equal representation.

09:26

The Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport (Shona Robison): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Scottish Government in this timely debate. I say that it is timely because, as every member will know, women are experiencing a disproportionate impact from the recession and, of course, as a result of the policies of the Westminster Government, particularly its welfare reform agenda.

We are focusing on areas in which women are disadvantaged. I welcome the chance to explore the barriers that women face and which prevent their maximising their representation in public life and in senior positions in employment across all sectors.

The tone of the debate is important. Jenny Marra and the Labour Party have had the opportunity to set the right tone for the debate and to reach out to the rest of the Parliament to help to build a consensus around this very important issue. Jenny Marra cited a number of organisations that have supported her motion, but I am not sure that they would support her tone. They want to see action and progress being made on the issue, and it is disappointing that, with Jenny Marra's rather unfortunate party-political attack on the SNP and others, an opportunity has perhaps been missed to build that consensus.

Jenny Marra talked about Labour's record. Its record not only in eight years in the Scottish Parliament, but in 13 years in Westminster has been pointed out in interventions. There was nothing about quotas in Labour's manifesto last year for the Scottish Parliament elections, and there was nothing about them in its manifesto for the local government elections this year. I would like to move the debate on to where we can agree, and I hope that we will get action around the issue after the debate. I think that there is a lot of agreement across the chamber and across the parties, but consensus has to be built, and it will not be built by taking the tone and approach that Jenny Marra has taken, which is unfortunate.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I find it very sad that the minister cannot recognise that we have passion for equality. I wish that her party could show the same passion for the issue.

Shona Robison: A person can be passionate about an issue without having to resort to the petty party-political attacks that we saw Jenny Marra making. If Jenny Marra and the Labour Party are serious about the issue, they should be reaching across the chamber to build consensus, not making party-political attacks that set the tone for the debate.

I want to move the debate on to more positive aspects. Women make up 52 per cent of the population, but we are nowhere near being represented at that level in a range of key institutions. When we look at the boards of businesses that do not have a gender balance and, more important, at those that do, we find that the latter businesses do better. That is an important point. There is also a case in relation to Government, councils, health boards, police forces and so on.

It can be suggested that talent will rise naturally and that the best person should always be selected for a position, regardless of gender. It can also be suggested that it is patronising to provide support to enable women to achieve positions. However, I think that it is patronising to assume that there are not equal numbers of equally suitable male and female candidates, and it is worse than patronising to assume that the best candidate just happened to be male on so many occasions.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Shona Robison: In a minute.

There has been good progress in relation to public appointments over the years, but it is not enough. Our public bodies need board members who reflect Scottish society, including not just women, but people from all walks of life, who can bring their unique skills and experience to help us to deliver for the people of Scotland. The diversity delivers strategy was launched in September 2008. In 2011-12 just over 30 per cent of applications came from women, against a target of 40 per cent, and women accounted for 34 per cent of appointments. We should recognise that progress is being made, but I am the first to acknowledge that more needs to be done.

Neil Findlay: The minister's party regularly points to Scandinavia and to the Norwegian and Finnish Governments. Are those Governments patronising, too?

Shona Robison: I did not say that. Perhaps the member should have listened. It is refreshing that the Labour Party has stopped denigrating small independent countries and has started to acknowledge some of the things that such countries are doing. That is positive—long may it continue.

Let us look at what we have done so far. We are building capacity, through the establishment of the public appointments and diversity centre of expertise, which advises on and administers the public appointments process across the Scottish Government. We are raising awareness, engaging with stakeholders and undertaking a range of outreach activity to promote awareness of public appointments opportunities. That work is bearing fruit, because we are attracting significant numbers of women applicants for public appointments. However, we must do more.

I have sympathy for the call for quotas and have done so throughout my political career, but we must acknowledge that there is no consensus on the issue. There is no consensus in the Parliament and there is certainly no consensus outside it. Consensus has to be built, and I for one am prepared to work with anyone in the Parliament who wants to consider what more we can do.

People must be aware of the potential restrictions in relation to the Equality Act 2010, which very much focuses on positive action but appears restrictive with regard to action beyond that. We must be clear about what can be achieved under the currently reserved legislation. If the matter was devolved, we would of course have much wider scope to act. I want to ensure that all that is clear by the time we get to the open event that I propose to hold later this year, to take the matter forward.

Jenny Marra: Does the minister acknowledge that this is perhaps the first time that a quota has been proposed in this context? She says that there is no consensus out there. That is because we have not started to talk about the issue; perhaps now we have the opportunity to start building consensus.

Shona Robison: I could not agree more with the member. That is the tone that she should have taken from the start of the debate, because I am happy to work with her and others to do that. The initial way forward that I suggest is to have an open event, at which we can consider what has been done and where the barriers are. For example, although more women are coming forward and being appointed to boards, there are few women chairs of boards. There is much more to be done, even within the existing legislative framework. We need to be clear about what can be achieved in the current framework and what needs to change. The open event will give us the opportunity to get that clarity.

I hope that the debate can begin to build a consensus about where we might go from here to take things forward and ensure that women absolutely are equally represented throughout public life, private life and the business sector.

That would be good for Scotland and good for society.

I move amendment S4M-03289.1, to leave out from "further understands" to end and insert:

"welcomes the steps that the Scottish Government has taken to address this imbalance through the Diversity Delivers strategy, including the establishment of the public appointments and diversity centre of expertise to advise on and administer the public appointments process across the Scottish Government; recognises the work that has been undertaken to increase the application and appointment rates for underrepresented groups, including women in public appointments, resulting in 34% of public appointments in 2011-12 being held by women; recognises that, while there has been progress on some strands of diversity, further work is required, and therefore agrees that there should be an open event hosted by the Scottish Government and supported by the Public Appointments Commissioner to review the progress of the Diversity Delivers strategy in relation to gender equality and to consider further actions to make sure that there is further progress toward improved women's representation in public life."

09:34

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): I shall try not to be provocative or patronising and I shall do my level best to be passionate. I thank Jenny Marra for bringing this important issue to the chamber for debate, because that is the point—there is an issue and we should try to construct a consensus around it. If we can unite in that purpose, we will do a great deal to address the concerns that Jenny Marra, absolutely rightly, is highlighting.

Women are resilient, capable, adept and determined. They are excelling in educational attainment and they are making headway—particularly in careers that were once the preserve of men. That is certainly happening in the House of Commons—perhaps not at the pace that we would like, but there is a direction of travel. Indeed, at the Scottish Parliament, 40 per cent of my party's MSPs are women. That compares well with the other parties.

However, there are still significant issues and Jenny Marra indicated quite rightly where they lie. In particular, she highlighted the position of public boards in Scotland. I looked at the comparable situation for company boards. I noticed that in 2010, women made up only 12.5 per cent of the members of corporate boards of the FTSE 100 companies. That was up from 9.4 per cent in 2004. However, the figure for all FTSE-listed companies was only 9.6 per cent in 2010. That is why I say that there is an issue. It is not just peculiar to the corporate world. It is—as Jenny Marra indicated—also to be found in the public sector. I am interested in exploring the reasons behind that. Is there a ceiling that women cannot break through, or is it down to other factors, such

as the lifestyle or career choices that women make?

In 2010, a Department for Business, Innovation and Skills report recommended that the chairmen of FTSE 350 companies should set out the percentage of women that they aim to have on their boards in 2013 and 2015. That is a way of getting the issue on the radar screen, which is where I want it to be. That approach is the best way to get this issue looked at sensibly and effectively. I say to Jenny Marra that the report went further—it also recommended that FTSE 100 boards should aim for a minimum of 25 per cent female representation by 2015. However, it is interesting that the report did not recommend the introduction of legal quotas and apparently only 11 per cent of the responses received recommended the introduction of quotas.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Annabel Goldie: I am very tight for time. Will the member forgive me if I try to use my five minutes as best I can?

Although I certainly broadly sympathise with the thrust of what Jenny Marra is seeking to do, my experience suggests that both men and women can provide the necessary skills for any job and sex does not somehow or other eliminate that. In my experience, where women emerge in fora that have been traditionally male dominated—whether a university court, a board of directors, a body of trustees, or even leading a political party, all of which I have done—they bring their own unique characteristics to bear.

I say to Jenny Marra that in my experience in dealing with David Cameron, I could not have found a more enthusiastic advocate for promoting the cause of women in politics. I accept that I was perhaps the first political auntie he had ever acquired and that that might have been a reason for his kind treatment.

Jenny Marra mentioned Norway. Although it has made progress, that success—and I accept that it has been a success to some extent—has not altered the fundamentals of how women progress through organisations. Non-executive director appointments account for most of the increase in representation. Quotas have not tackled the issue of women coming through their own organisation's pipeline, because apparently in Norway women still make up only 2 per cent of chief executive officers and 10 per cent of executive committee members. It seems that the increase in the number of women board members was partly achieved by an increase in board size, rather than replacing significant numbers of existing members. That leaves me uneasy.

I want—as I think every woman in the Parliament wants—Scotland to be a place where women and men can succeed, but that has to be on the basis of skill and talent. I want that to happen in a positive, organic and incremental fashion. From my experience, I think that it can happen. That is why I am unable to support quotas, which Jenny Marra seeks to impose. However, I thank her for bringing the debate, which I welcome. What matters is that the issue does not now come off the radar screen.

The Presiding Officer: We now move to open debate. Time is extremely tight and the Presiding Officers will struggle to get into the debate everybody who wants to speak, so we will be cutting speeches very short at four minutes.

09:40

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the debate and agree that the lack of women's representation at the highest level of public life—and in private industry—is a concern that everyone in the chamber should have and that all our society should share.

Our demographic profile in Scotland is such that women live longer on average than men. If our women pensioners have been less well paid throughout their careers and unable to progress as easily as their male counterparts for whatever reason—and I am sure that many of those barriers will be examined today—our society is storing a problem of pensioner poverty for women.

I am a member of the British Computer Society and I had a 20-year career in information technology before entering politics full time in 2007. I realise that that makes me one of the women who have chosen to leave that profession. However, I remain passionate about encouraging young women into rewarding careers in IT and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics—STEM subjects.

IT is a relatively new industry, and one might expect that the problems that exist in older, more traditional sectors, public bodies, and industries such as medicine, engineering and banking might not be so prevalent in IT. However, in 2008 the British Computer Society published a report, "Women in IT Scorecard", which mapped gender imbalance in the IT workforce. It had some startling findings. Although women represent 45 per cent of the United Kingdom working population, in the IT sector women represent only 19 per cent. The representation of women in the IT sector in the UK is only two thirds that of Italy or Ireland. The report also shows that women coming into the profession outperform their male counterparts academically—as alluded to by

Annabel Goldie—yet their career paths do not reflect that starting base.

Most significantly, the BCS report showed that the pay gap in IT answers many of the questions about why women leave or fail to seek advancement. The pay gap for 16 to 29-year-olds was a staggering 14 per cent, and it was shown that that gap starts from virtually day one of employment. However, by the time people get to ages 40 to 49—a point at which the board room is perhaps a natural progression for people in the profession—the pay gap between men and women is 30 per cent.

That is why I have much sympathy with the concerns and serious issues that the Labour motion raises. However, I do not believe that the problem can be tackled from the boardroom down. It is far more fundamental and must involve us all embracing a cultural change in our society. That has been identified in the Royal Society of Edinburgh report, “Tapping all our talents”, which is an investigation into women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics that looks for a strategy for Scotland. The report shows that the loss of talent of women in STEM subjects is mainly due to cultural factors. In paragraph 6 it states that change will

“require a major cultural change in attitude and approach.”

That is why I do not believe that quotas will be the answer. We need to achieve a much more fundamental change in our society.

Jenny Marra: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member does not have time.

Clare Adamson: I am in my last few minutes.

A European Commission report, “Women in economic decision-making in the EU”, looks at improved company performance evidenced by women in the boardroom. I suggest that that improvement is because women have achieved the boardroom in those companies and that their culture reflects that success.

I commend the progress that is being made by the Scottish Government.

09:44

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. We have had several interesting speeches, particularly from Jenny Marra, who mentioned the international aspects, which we all agree are important. For me, the issue is about more than gender equality, as there is a clear business case for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in Scotland, not just in the public sector, but in boardrooms in the private sector.

The debate is also about how we create the conditions for women to have the skills and experience that Annabel Goldie spoke about so that they can take those into decision-making positions. That is one of the issues that we need to address. We have to think not only about quotas, but about how we support women in the workplace in non-traditional industries to gather skills and experience and then make a difference.

That highlights the real issue. The debate is not just about the glass ceiling that people talk about a lot; it is about the sticky floor that affects many women. Women have to face issues to do with bringing up a family. Many expectations are placed on them and they face a lot of challenges in life, in the workplace and elsewhere, which they have to balance. Frankly, men do not have to face those issues. As well as considering quotas, we need to address those issues.

Work by the Fawcett Society has produced some key figures that show that the case for more women in senior positions in the boardroom in the public and private sectors is undeniable. Women are estimated to be responsible for about 70 per cent of household purchasing power; they make up 46 per cent of the economically active workforce; and they provide more than half of university graduates. Companies with more women on their boards have been found to outperform their rivals, with a 42 per cent higher return in sales, a 66 per cent higher return on invested capital and a 53 per cent higher return on equity. The facts and figures exist to back up the proposal. It is the right thing to do not only to ensure that we have equality, but to ensure that we have better business practice in the boardroom.

I appreciate the warm words in the Scottish Government’s amendment. There is nothing in it with which we in the Labour Party can disagree, but a consensus is building, particularly outside the Parliament, that we need to take more radical steps and action to address the issues. The world is changing and people are asking questions about the orthodoxies that have been in the workplace and industry for many years. In this debate, we are asking serious questions about what we have always accepted as the norm.

John Wilson made a point about political representation. If it was not for the fact that the Labour Party took direct action in 1999, including through our selection processes for the regional list, it is unlikely that Jenny Marra and Kezia Dugdale would be sitting on our front bench today talking about the issue. Regardless of members’ political persuasion, that shows that such decisions can work.

09:48

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I agreed with much of what John Park said, but Kezia Dugdale and Jenny Marra have quality—they are here not because they are women, but because they are good politicians. That is not patronising; it is an observation from an old hand.

John Park: May I clarify my point?

Christine Grahame: Yes.

John Park: They are good politicians, but if we had not taken decisions to ensure effective gender representation through our selection processes, it is highly unlikely that they would be here.

Christine Grahame: I am afraid that that does not help the member, so he should not dig any further.

Just last week, I attended a Penicuik high school ceremony in which 5th and 6th year pupils received awards for academic excellence. The balance on the platform was tipped in favour of the girls. That was before I started to think about what I would say in this debate, but I wondered how many of those girls would continue to outperform the boys who were receiving awards on the same day. I am pretty clear that they will not continue to do so.

For many of the reasons that Annabel Goldie and, to some extent, John Park outlined, some of them will not even reach, let alone attempt to break that glass ceiling. The fact is that certain practicalities lie in the way of women's progress—indeed, I myself came across those very practicalities many years ago. In my time, I have been a teacher, a lawyer and a politician, but at the time I had my children I had to leave work for six years. That made a huge difference to my career progression as a teacher—although I should add that that is not why I left the profession. The same practicalities remain; indeed, men who parent children now face some of them. I do not mean this in a bad way, but the fact is that children and even elderly parents get in the way and prohibit progression.

As Jenny Marra will know, because she raised the issue at the Justice Committee, I very much sympathise with her ideas but cannot support the notion of quotas. Instead, I support the provision of support to all kinds of people who cannot progress because of certain practicalities in their lives. Let me examine the logic of the argument that Jenny Marra advanced at the Justice Committee. She argued that women should comprise 40 per cent of the membership of the Scottish police authority because they make up 50 per cent of the population and understand and deal better with “women's issues” with regard to, for example,

domestic violence, sexual assault and so on. Notwithstanding the fact that domestic violence can happen across generations, between women, between men and, indeed, in all kinds of situations, Ms Marra took the view that women as members of the Scottish police authority would be better at dealing with resource and policy issues in relation to these matters. I simply do not accept the logic of that argument. I think that there are men who can be extremely sensitive to what one might call women's issues and women who can be extremely sensitive to what one might call men's issues—and both can be sensitive to children's issues. I look at the quality of the individual. At this point—and with regret to Annabel Goldie—I am going to have to say two bad words: “Margaret Thatcher”. She became Prime Minister, but I can think of no one who was less sensitive to what one might call women's issues.

I also highlighted certain practicalities at the Justice Committee. For a start, if 40 per cent of the women coming forward were not of the same quality as 40 per cent of the men—and vice versa—we would not be picking the best people.

Jenny Marra rose—

Christine Grahame: I am sorry—I have only 20 seconds left of my four minutes.

I am concerned that we would not be picking people on the basis of quality. As I said before, Jenny Marra and Kezia Dugdale are sitting on the front bench because they have been chosen on their merits, not because they are women.

09:52

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):

As someone who has campaigned for equality for decades, I have a great deal of sympathy with Jenny Marra's frustration at the lack of progress in women's representation in public life in Scotland. Although, as the only female Liberal Democrat MSP, I am particularly conscious that some might argue that if we cannot get our own house in order we should not try to engineer what happens elsewhere, I have to wonder when it will ever be the right time to tackle the issue. The older I get, the more impatient I am—not for myself, but for the next generation of women. The pace of change is glacial.

No one who takes even a cursory look at our Parliament, our council chambers, our boardrooms and our public bodies will be able to argue that Scotland has got it right. Although Scotland is a really diverse country, that diversity is not reflected in those institutions. We are short-changing everyone, not just those who are underrepresented. Our public bodies guide a range of very important services and if we are to properly meet the needs of our diverse population

we should be able to draw on the full potential of all our citizens and value their individuality. Board membership should be broadly representative of our wider society.

For many years, I have reluctantly accepted the argument that soft measures such as mentoring, education, awareness, improved access to child care and so on are the way forward. The diversity delivers strategy, which was drawn up in 2008, seemed to be a reasonable attempt at improving equality in public appointments and I welcomed the Government's commitment to tackle the matter. The vision had three strands: first, a pool of applicants as diverse as the people of Scotland; secondly, an appointments system that inspired confidence; and, thirdly, a programme of support for our future leaders. Has it worked? The latest annual report from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland says:

"The outcomes by equality group offer a mixed picture. It is encouraging to see increases in the percentage of female applicants, ... demonstrating that the awareness-raising activity undertaken as part of Diversity Delivers has made an impact. However, it is frustrating to see the decrease in the percentage of women and applicants declaring a disability who are shortlisted and to note the decline in the appointment figures."

Indeed, back in 2008, the "Diversity Delivers" document, while arguing against the need for targets, warned that

"a strategy that results in more diversity at the application stage—but sees no change on the boards themselves—will not have succeeded."

By its own measurement, the strategy is not delivering on the vision.

As I said, our boards perform important functions and in no way do I undervalue the commitment and service of those who currently serve on them. I am not criticising any individual male on any board, but it is time to scotch, once and for all, the old argument that keeps getting trotted out: that positive discrimination leads to mediocrity.

More women are applying but men keep getting the jobs. Do we really believe that that is because men are always the outstanding candidates? Are our boards around Scotland just fizzing with innovation, enterprise and erudition, or is it the case that perfectly acceptable, well-qualified men are displacing equally acceptable, well-qualified women? Maybe it is even worse than that—what if it is the case that perfectly acceptable men are displacing some very bright women?

Are all MSPs happy that their daughters and granddaughters should continue to be at such a disadvantage? Are they happy to accept that 52 per cent of Scots do not deserve proper representation? Are they happy to continue to give a special advantage to men and to be blind to the

fact that ability comes wrapped in many guises? Is it not time that we made a step change? Is it not time to face up to the fact that some extremely difficult-to-conquer biases are operating under the radar?

Around Europe, there is a growing realisation that soft measures are not working, and here in Scotland we need to be open-minded enough to consider introducing the measures that are working elsewhere. Jenny Marra argues that it is time to take positive action. Instead, the Government's response is to offer yet another meeting. If not quotas, what? If not now, when?

09:56

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): It is with a little trepidation that I rise to speak in the debate from my somewhat limited male perspective on such matters. I am glad that, as John Park has already spoken, I am not the first male speaker in the debate. I admit—also with some trepidation—that I had not been aware that this year is the UN year of empowering women. It is therefore apt that we are having the debate and, on that basis, I congratulate Jenny Marra on securing it. It is right that the Parliament considers such matters.

That said—I say this as gently as I can, not because I want to be patronising, but because I think that it is important that the debate has the right tone—I think that the manner in which Jenny Marra set out the case for more equal representation on boards was unfortunate. I do not think that the case is well served by partisan point scoring. *[Interruption.]* Jenny Marra suggests that I am often the first to engage in that sport, but perhaps we need to reflect on how we can best pursue the legitimate concerns that exist about the underrepresentation of women in public life. Is more equal representation best secured by suggesting that some parties have a better record than others on the representation of women in local government? The extent to which one party's record is better than another's is perhaps a moot point. We must consider how best we can make progress on the issue and how best we can come together and find some common ground. After all, this is an issue on which there must surely be some common ground.

I mentioned my limited male perspective. I will say a bit more about that and will explain why I wanted to speak in the debate. Alison McInnes touched on the issue. I am the father of a young daughter—she is two and a half years of age. My wife will give birth to her second child this summer. It is possible that I will be the father of two young daughters. I do not want the life chances of my daughter to be limited because of her gender, as the evidence suggests happens.

I accept entirely that it is possible for women to reach the top of their chosen profession. There are many examples of that in the Parliament—my esteemed colleague in the Presiding Officer's chair is one such example. We have heard about other examples. In recent times, we have had a female Lord Advocate and we now have a female Solicitor General for Scotland. However, to use such examples to prove the rule would not be to tell the true story.

Jenny Marra: Does the member accept that the issue is not just about women getting to the top? It is not about their careers; it is about the people they represent and the issues that should be addressed. It is critical for our boards of public bodies in Scotland and the way in which we govern our services that that happens.

Jamie Hepburn: Yes, I accept that entirely, and I will come on to that point. However, it is important to ensure that women can rise to the top of their chosen profession. I was making the point that that can happen, but that, equally, that does not tell the entire story.

Despite women having so many advantages—they form a slight majority of the population and are better educated than their male counterparts—I entirely accept that they are underrepresented in both the corporate world and public life. Figures from the Commission for Ethical Standards in Public Life that show that 37.1 per cent of those appointed to public bodies in 2011 were female. That is close to the 40 per cent target, but I readily question whether it is good enough.

It is incumbent on us to consider initiatives to advance women's representation, which should include consideration of whether the use of quotas or a fixed mechanism is a proper way to do that. Some people have spoken of their opposition to the proposal. I am not instinctively opposed to it. I am quite willing to hear the case, and I think that the minister said that she is equally willing to hear it. On that basis, I will support her amendment, and I look forward to the discussion continuing.

The Presiding Officer: I call Malcolm Chisholm, to be followed by Graeme Dey. I apologise to Alison Johnstone, as I simply will not have time to allow her into the debate.

10:00

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): We will not get far in this debate unless we face up to two facts—first, that there is a serious problem, and, secondly, that the action that we have taken so far to deal with it has failed. I could read out the long list of boards on which there are either no women, just one woman, or just two women, but as I have only four minutes I will not do that. I say in summary, however, that in

the case of executive NDPBs, which are important public bodies in Scotland, there are 261 men and 89 women, and in the case of police boards, in which context the issue was originally raised by Jenny Marra, the figures are 119 men and 27 women.

I would take seriously Christine Grahame's argument about appointment on merit if it was true, but in the face of those figures, she cannot possibly believe that appointments are being made on merit. The fact of the matter is that the merit of a man is being regarded as of more worth than the merit of a woman.

Christine Grahame: Will the member give way?

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Malcolm Chisholm: I will give way if I have time towards the end of my speech, but I must make my four or five points first.

As I said, we have to face up to the fact that what we have tried so far has not worked. I take Humza Yousaf's point. I was the minister with responsibility for equalities, and we did a lot in those days in relation to gender equality, but we did not do what is proposed in the motion. We have to face the fact that we have tried certain things and they have not worked. We should pay tribute to the wonderful new members around me, who are coming up with lots of new ideas. In the context of this morning's debate, I pay particular tribute to Jenny Marra, who has run with the idea.

It seems to me that Karen Carlton is coming to a similar conclusion. She is the Public Appointments Commissioner for Scotland who for several years has headed up the work around "Diversity Delivers"—unfortunately, that is a bit of a misnomer, because we know that the strategy does not deliver. Nevertheless, she has headed up that work, which has been based on increasing the number of women who apply for positions on boards. In her latest annual update on "Diversity Delivers", she states:

"despite an increase of nearly 4% to the application rate there has been no significant change in the percentage of women being appointed, and an actual reduction at the point of shortlisting."

That actually refers to the figure that the minister quotes positively in her amendment. Karen Carlton is criticising the figure that Shona Robison has highlighted.

In the same report, in response to Scottish Government proposals to conduct more research into applications, Karen Carlton states:

"the research necessary now is into the barriers to women when they do apply—that is, the barriers women face in the Scottish Government's process."

Christine Grahame: Will the member give way?

Malcolm Chisholm: If I have time, but I do not think that I will have.

People must be prepared to change their minds in the face of the facts. The minister talks about building consensus, but she should look at the people who are already supporting the position that we are putting forward. The report on universities has been referred to, as has support from Oxfam, Scottish Women's Aid and the STUC.

Europe is also crucial in this area, and, to answer the point that Shona Robison made with reference to the Equality Act 2010 and positive action, Labour's positive action in relation to candidates was tested and was found to be consistent with the act. More fundamentally, it is obvious from the European examples—it is not just Finland; I was going to talk about Norway and Denmark, but I do not have time—that the 40 per cent process is consistent with the European Union equality legislation that underpins the 2010 act.

Christine Grahame: I advise Malcolm Chisholm that it was an all-woman panel that considered the applications for the Scottish Information Commissioner, it was a woman who was appointed, and it was all done on merit.

Malcolm Chisholm: I am sure that that happens, but I am talking about the generality of the issue. Christine Grahame has to face facts. She cannot argue with the figures that I have presented.

We have tried to make progress through encouraging more applications and so on, but that has not worked. It is time to take a bold step, although it is not that bold, because it is already done throughout Europe.

10:04

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I, too, commend the Labour Party for bringing the debate, because the issue of female representation in all aspects of public life is hugely important and should transcend party politics.

I must confess that gender balance has not always been at the forefront of my consciousness. As a journalist I worked on a fairly well-balanced mixed-sex, editorial floor and, rightly or wrongly, I tended to view workmates as colleagues rather than as men or women. However, I recall now that only a small handful of women held positions of authority. Now, working in Parliament and sitting in the chamber, how much of an issue gender balance is hits home. Indeed, as I sat in the chamber a little less than a week ago, how underrepresented women are within Scottish

public and business life smacked me between the eyes.

Last Thursday and Friday, a number of MSPs from all parties participated in a highly successful business in the Parliament event. I am sure that I speak for many when I say that it was a hugely informative and thought-provoking gathering. For me, the most thought-provoking moment came in the midst of the question-and-answer session towards the end, when I suddenly realised how few women were there. A quick headcount revealed that in a chamber that hosted around 140 people at the time, only 31 women were present, MSPs included. I do not doubt that a number of female participants who perhaps attended Thursday night's dinner could not make it on Friday or left early. Nevertheless, that snapshot is indicative of the fact that we have a problem.

However, I remain to be convinced of the merits of quotas. I accept that, as a man, I can probably never fully understand the challenges and barriers that women have to overcome to forge successful careers in business or politics, or on public bodies, but I want to gain a greater understanding of what those challenges and barriers are in order to play a part in removing them. I believe that, right across Scottish society, our aspiration should be to ensure that by 2020 we are looking to go beyond 40 per cent female representation. That may be a big ask, but surely the way to go is to identify the reasons why the current imbalance exists, actively take steps to make it easier for women to come forward in greater numbers and then sustain better gender balance.

I want—we all want—even more women in our councils, Parliament and boardrooms, but not by virtue of their being favoured by their gender. I feel that that is the inherent danger of quotas. We must not only aspire to but succeed in increasing the number of women coming forward. They can then be judged on their ability as they go head-to-head with their male counterparts. Once that has carried the day, we will have in place an environment that guarantees that we have not taken two steps forward only to take one step back.

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

Graeme Dey: I am sorry, but I have only a limited amount of time.

Jenny Marra mentioned the make-up of the ruling administration on Dundee City Council. I draw her attention to Angus Council's new 15-strong Scottish National Party administration and to the fact that it comprises eight men and seven women—not full equality, but almost. That was achieved naturally, by selection and election, with no quotas. The only positive discrimination shown was in selecting the people who were deemed,

regardless of gender, to be the most able. I do not downplay the fact that there are challenges for women in politics, but I think that that sets a good example. Further, four of the seven first-time councillors are female.

I recognise that not every council is in as strong a position in that regard. Indeed, within Angus Council we need only look across the floor to the opposition benches to see that there is only one female councillor among 14. That is not a political point but a statement of fact and a further acknowledgement that there is a problem that all of us need to commit to tackle. We can bandy statistics back and forth—for example, five of the 23 United Kingdom Cabinet members are women, whereas six of the 20 ministers in Scotland's Government are women, so we could claim to be doing better than Westminster. However, the fact is that nowhere in Scottish society can we say that we really have fair representation of women. All of us in this chamber—MSPs of both sexes—have a responsibility to address that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): We now move to the winding-up speeches. I call Annabel Goldie, who has four minutes.

10:08

Annabel Goldie: The debate has had currents of tension and passion. In some respects, that has been unfortunate, but I feel that the debate has been useful. I pay tribute to Jenny Marra for gripping an issue that has to be addressed. She has undoubtedly, to use a phrase that I used earlier, got it on to the radar screen.

Having listened to the debate, I am encouraged, because I think that there is a genuine desire across the chamber to recognise that there is an issue and to build a consensus around how we address it. To anyone who is in any doubt that there is an issue, I say that I think that the matter is self-evident. Jenny Marra, John Park, Alison McInnes, Christine Grahame and other members spoke eloquently about that.

Jenny Marra was absolutely right to focus her attention on public bodies in Scotland. I, too, looked at that area. I remind members that Quality Meat Scotland seems to have a female-free board—it has a 12-person board with not a woman on it. Who, may I ask, is likely to cook most of the meat? The Lands Tribunal for Scotland has four blokes on its board. The Water Industry Commission for Scotland has a Gordon, a David and a Charles. Jenny Marra mentioned the Scottish Police Services Authority—there is only one woman on its seven-member board.

Some of the other quangos that are low on female representation with one female board member are the Crofters Commission,

VisitScotland, David MacBrayne Ltd, the Scottish Law Commission, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd, Children's Hearings Scotland—that is particularly worrying—and the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee.

The tale does not get much better. By any assessment, there are other public bodies that are, in my opinion, in a similarly deficient state of composition—in fact, one might be tempted to say decomposition. Frankly, that is a gloomy catalogue of female exclusion.

It would be tempting, in looking at the issue, to call for a cure by quota. However, I have to say to Jenny Marra that I am not convinced by that approach. There are legitimate concerns, which Christine Grahame and Graeme Dey eloquently alluded to. Although it is tempting to call for a cure by quota, getting more women is not synonymous with getting better talent. Getting more women on to a board may look good in numerical terms, but the test must always be how best representation on that board can serve the public interest.

There is no doubt that there is an issue, and there is no disagreement whatsoever that that issue must be addressed. When it comes to the boards of public bodies in Scotland, it seems to me that there is a ray of sunshine: an appointments structure over which we have collective control and input. The minister's contribution in that regard was extremely helpful.

The most important feature of the debate is that Jenny Marra has brought the issue into the public domain. Whether we agree or disagree with her proposed solution, the issue will not now go away, and the most important consequence of the debate is the united will to do something about it.

10:13

Shona Robison: I thank all the members who spoke in the debate. Unusually, there was increasing consensus as the debate went on, but that is no bad thing.

Clare Adamson made a thoughtful speech, in which she talked about IT, which is a challenging sector for women, with only 19 per cent female representation in it. Her point was that quotas alone will not tackle the problem—women must put themselves forward. What women have achieved in the boardroom is very important because other women see them as role models, inspiring others within that company. That was an important point.

John Park made a constructive contribution. The business case for gender balance is a strong one—I agreed with much that he had to say—

especially in non-traditional industries. A real challenge is to ensure that women are able to come into those industries, never mind make their way up to the top of the organisation—the boardroom, for example. Importantly, he addressed the wider issues, such as childcare, that affect women's ability to carry on with their career. Although we know about the legal position, there is no doubt that when women take time out, for example to have children—Christine Grahame illustrated the point well—they generally start at a different point in their career when they go back, and that is a problem.

Christine Grahame highlighted many barriers and is clearly against quotas. She made the important point that gender balance is not about having more women so that they can deal with women's issues. Gender balance is about having more women because that is the right thing to do. Whatever walk of life they are from, or whatever board or institution they are involved in, women will be as involved in the day-to-day issues of that institution as men. They will not deal with only certain issues. It is important to be clear about that.

Alison McInnes made a good speech, a lot of which I agreed with. I thought that she was a little bit unfair about the diversity delivers strategy, because some progress has been made. We must acknowledge the fact that more women have been coming through the appointments process. I have spoken to women who, for the first time in many years, were encouraged to put themselves forward, which did not happen in the past. That is a good thing. I disagree with Alison McInnes on our ability to make progress on the issue with an open event. I thought that she dismissed that idea rather out of hand, which is unfortunate.

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): The minister is quite right about equality and diversity. Annabel Goldie made a good point about gender and how one's sex should not really matter when it comes to equality and equal opportunities. Does the minister recognise the fact that visible minorities are in the same position?

Shona Robison: That is an important point. The position of people who have disabilities or those from ethnic minority communities has not really come through in the debate. In many ways, the same principle is involved. When we open up boardrooms and boards, we encourage people from a variety of backgrounds to put themselves forward.

Malcolm Chisholm, as always, gave a very good critique of many of the issues. However, he must realise that the Equality Act 2010 permits political parties to have mechanisms that it does not expressly permit other sectors to use. We cannot

dismiss that issue; we must look into it in some detail.

How long do I have left, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have another minute and a half.

Shona Robison: I will finish on a constructive note. In her summing up, Annabel Goldie opened the door to dialogue across the parties and outwith the chamber. She laid out the extent of the problem clearly and in strong terms, but she remains to be convinced of the solution. We should take from today the starting point that there is a huge reservoir of goodwill, while recognising that what we have done so far has not delivered what women expected in terms of being in public sector boardrooms, and that we have far more to do.

I hope that the event that I have suggested will give members across the chamber the opportunity to engage with outside organisations to work out what we can do—that should include a discussion on quotas—and what should be done, with recommendations going back to the Scottish Government. I hope that that suggestion will be taken in the spirit in which it is intended and that we can end today's debate on the consensual note that it should have had right from the start.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Kezia Dugdale to close the debate.

10:19

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Presiding Officer, I am slightly sorry that it is you in the chair today and not Tricia Marwick. Today's debate has not covered the problems that working-class women face, particularly in political and civic life. We have a strong working-class woman at the top in our Parliament, and I would have liked to have been able to say that to her today. *[Applause.]*

I also pay tribute to my colleague and friend, Jenny Marra, who put the issue at the centre of our political discourse, to all the women who came before me, and to the women's movement that lies at the heart of our party. This is a Labour debate—it is not just Jenny Marra's debate—because it speaks to our values and what we stand for.

Dennis Robertson: Will the member take an intervention?

Kezia Dugdale: I would like to make a bit more progress, please.

Quotas would be good for women's issues. I say to Christine Grahame that I agree that they would be good for women and men—and for addressing apathy in the political process. That is at the heart of building a more progressive and equal society. I hope to go into that in some depth as I go on.

I am also pleased that Graeme Dey brought up the issue of journalism. In my view, we need to talk about not just political and civic life, but how that is reported. The number of female faces in the lobby in this building has been tiny during the five years that I have worked here, and that shows in the reporting. The news is of divisions and splits or barnstorming speeches; it rarely sees an issue in the round. I refer to what I have heard Lesley Riddoch describe as civic health. Child poverty is a good example: all aspects of it should be looked at and then reported on in the round. There is an age-old feminist adage that the personal is the political, and we need more of that in our politics if we are to turn around declining turnout figures.

Members might question the link, but I repeatedly hear two things when I am out on the doorsteps: first, that politicians are all corrupt and, secondly, that people are not very interested in politics. Part of the battle to overturn apathy is in reaffirming the relevance of the political process to people, and we can do that by making it personal. Instead of abstract fights about splits, we need more actual stories about how people live their lives and pay their bills—human voices that articulate the political ills of the day. If we change the way in which we talk about politics, we can change the audience, building one that listens. Breaking down the establishment and the political elite is crucial to achieving equality.

Lesley Riddoch has a lot to say about that issue. In fact, an article that she wrote back in 2000 has stuck with me over the years. In the article, which was entitled “In the land of cynics and numpties, let’s hear it for the Holyrood women”, she poses the question:

“What’s the point of electing women to parliament if they have to act like men to survive?”

The article points to the early trials and tribulations that leading women such as Wendy Alexander and Susan Deacon had to face in order to do things differently and, therefore, well. The article describes the bold steps that Susan Deacon took to tackle the health inequalities that women faced—to address smoking rates among young women, abortion rates and access to contraception—and how she was harangued for them. Johann Lamont, Margaret Curran and Wendy Alexander are all women who inspired and continue to inspire me. So, too, did Nicola Sturgeon, who is a fantastic role model for young women in politics, operating at the highest level of Scottish politics for more than a decade. It is important that we demonstrate solidarity with one another, as women, across political lines, in the name of progressing the case for gender equality together.

Dennis Robertson: Will the member give way?

Kezia Dugdale: I am sorry, but I have a lot to cover and there are a few points that I want to rebut along the way.

The most powerful person in the room can be a woman, but that does not achieve a gender perspective across all decision making. It is true that things have changed for the better and that women can rise to the top, but the critical mass remains absent. I say to Clare Adamson that we need critical mass to drive cultural change, and that is what quotas are all about.

Annabel Goldie raised the issue of the glass ceiling. Yes, there is a glass ceiling. In the American presidential elections, Sarah Palin—of all people—talked about that. She said that Hillary Clinton had created 18 million cracks in it because she spoke to women Republican voters, trying to bring people together.

John Park is right to say that there is a sticky floor as well. There are things that hold women back, and we must create a critical mass to address that. We need to hear women’s voices in order to identify the problems, so that those problems are heard by the majority, which can act in response to them.

All those issues are detailed in the “Sex and Power” report that was produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The report also talks about the dangers of an opt-out revolution of women who get so far—who hit that marzipan layer—and then do not go any further because they choose not to make sacrifices. They believe that they can do things differently and leave the highest levels of politics to make a life elsewhere—one that does not have the problems that they have faced every day—in which they can still be successful. We need to ensure that we do not just give up on that point.

We understand that there is a deep-rooted culture at the heart of Scotland’s public bodies that ensures that the merit of a man is worth more than that of a woman. That is something that diversity strategies have not and cannot address alone. I ask Christine Grahame whether she seriously believes that we have the best possible people serving in every one of our public bodies.

Christine Grahame: No, certainly not. I agree with everything that Kezia Dugdale says about critical mass. She heard what I said about the pupils at Penicuik high school. My personal approach would be not to have quotas, as that would be counterproductive. However, women certainly need more support in getting through, creating that critical mass and reaching—if not breaking through—the glass ceiling. There are practical things that we can do, but which are not quotas.

Kezia Dugdale: I thank Christine Grahame for that response. I am sure that it is a conversation that we will continue.

There is more to do on appointments to public bodies than bring in quotas alone. There is a culture around public appointments that we need to address. Even if we deliver quotas, we could still be creating jobs for the same boys and the same girls. We need to address that along the way.

I will deal briefly with Humza Yousaf's point, to which I am afraid I took offence. Labour did not deal with the issue when we were in power because there were so many other gender equality issues that we had to address first—discrimination laws, access to maternity leave, the Equality Act 2010 and rights at work. A lot was done but there was a lot more to do. Humza Yousaf's point was misplaced.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

Kezia Dugdale: No. I am sorry, but I do not have time.

I appeal to Annabel Goldie to change her mind. The woman I put before her is Christine Lagarde, who supports quotas. She was asked, "How can someone who believes in the free market possibly support gender quotas?" Her response was that if 1 per cent of the board of directors of major enterprises around the world are women, that is market abuse. When there is abuse in the market, we regulate it. When we have regulated that, we can continue as we were before. We are seeking to address the abuse in the market. I appeal to Annabel Goldie to consider that a bit further.

Annabel Goldie: I am not instinctively a regulator. I am sorry.

Kezia Dugdale: The member says that she is not instinctively a regulator; I do not believe that Christine Lagarde is either, which is why I put her voice to the member. We are trying to regulate the market so that barriers can be broken down and we can build a more equal and progressive society together. That is at the heart of Labour's motion.

The SNP Government says that it is progressive, but to make progress we have to do something, and we believe that quotas are the answer.

PIP Silicone Breast Implants

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-03294, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on women's health.

10:27

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to debate the PIP breast implant scandal.

I welcome some of the women who have been caught up in the scandal, who are here today campaigning for a public inquiry. The reason for a public inquiry is to ensure that something like this can never happen again. In the words of Trisha Devine, one of the leaders of the campaign:

"We've taken the battle to the floor of the Parliament and we look forward to giving our MSPs as much information and support as possible so we can make some real political progress in our quest for answers.

Our main goal is to ensure this awful situation can never happen again, and today's public discussion gets the ball rolling.

We'll build on this momentum and won't stop until we have justice and a healthcare system we can trust in."

Today's debate in Parliament is the culmination of a tremendous effort on the campaigners' part to have their voices heard by Parliament and Government. The debate is not about the rights or wrongs of plastic surgery. It is about how we act to improve care and support for patients, particularly when things go so spectacularly wrong.

These women have had their lives turned upside down by the scandal, but have rallied together to articulate a convincing case for a public inquiry to take place in Scotland. This is a serious public health issue, and the PIP implant victims deserve answers.

Today, Scottish Labour has published a seven-point action plan, which I hope that the Scottish Government will embrace. Covering everything from the need for a Scottish register of implants to the scope for a public inquiry, it forms the basis of ensuring that we avoid a scandal of this nature happening again.

Let me deal first with the need for a public inquiry. As the Scottish Government's amendment suggests, a number of reviews are under way. All of them are internal reviews, conducted by the United Kingdom Government, and none of them is independent. One of those reviews, conducted by Earl Howe into the actions of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, has now reported. There is a strong view from the campaigners that that fails to address some of their fundamental questions and concerns.

Although the report concludes that the MHRA acted appropriately, it notes that it was trying to reach evidence-based conclusions without the necessary data to do so. It is the case that, for some years before their use was curtailed, a number of clinicians complained in the strongest possible terms to the MHRA about the efficacy of the implants, and that includes Scottish clinicians. I do not believe, therefore, that the Howe report can serve as a substitute for a full public inquiry; I think that it will helpfully inform any public inquiry that might be taken forward.

I look forward to the review that is being undertaken by Sir Bruce Keogh about the need for an implant register and whether better regulation of the cosmetic industry is required. However, given the scope of his review, there will still be questions to be answered at the conclusion of the process.

It is undoubtedly the case that the regulation of medical products is reserved to the UK Parliament, and I hope that it will consider much more robust action so that we can have better confidence in the efficacy of medical products and the means by which they are regulated and tested. Like most members, I am conscious that we have stringent levels of testing for drugs—it is right that we do—but the standard of testing for medical products appears to be substantially lower. That has to change.

However, in itself, that is not the whole story. There are questions that fall to the Scottish Parliament. I have always believed that the Scottish Government has an overarching responsibility for the nation's health. The Scottish Government should instruct a public inquiry because we could include consideration of issues such as the extent of the use of PIP implants in Scotland and the rupture rate, because we are not clear that Sir Bruce Keogh's review will deliver that information in a Scottish context. The inquiry could also consider establishing minimum standards for private clinics that operate in Scotland, which would include issues such as insurance coverage, disclosure to patients of the risks and safety of procedures, regulation of third-party providers—those companies that use hospitals and clinics in Scotland—and regulation of providers that consult in Scotland but perform the surgery elsewhere, usually in England.

Early notification is an issue. The issue was first highlighted as a problem by the MHRA in March 2010. However, I was surprised to see that it took until December 2011 before some women became aware of the problem through press reports. That is a 21-month difference. I know that Health Facilities Scotland, an agency of the Scottish Government, should have been told in March 2010. I am not sure whether it was told or, if it

was, what action was taken by it or by the Scottish Government to ensure that people knew about the issue. It would be useful for a public inquiry to reflect on communication as one strand of critical work.

We could also use NHS National Procurement, which is a very efficient organisation that I had the privilege of visiting just a few weeks ago. It already purchases medical equipment and devices for the NHS, and uses clinicians as part of the team to inform that purchasing. Building on the expertise of an existing organisation would have provided quite an effective safety net. I have suggested that approach to the cabinet secretary, during a meeting with the campaigners. I hope that she will respond positively to the suggestion, as that is something that we can do now.

Of the 4,000 women who are thought to have received implants, the cabinet secretary told us that there was only one case of the NHS in Scotland using a PIP breast implant. That is great. For some reason, the NHS in Scotland used other products. Whatever the reason, the cabinet secretary was of the clear view that that was more a matter of chance than anything else. We really should not be leaving that to chance in the future.

Our action plan explores a range of other issues and I commend it to the chamber. Immediate issues can be tackled. For example, many victims told us about a postcode lottery of care when they approached the national health service. Some doctors turned women away and other women were not referred on to consultants. I want the Government to ensure that there is a consistent response.

Let me tell members about Emma, who lives in Scotland. Her implants were inserted in Birmingham by the Hospital Group. She went to Monklands hospital breast clinic in Lanarkshire and said that she had a problem on 21 September 2011. She was refused a scan. Her general practitioner sent an emergency referral letter on 19 January 2012, but it took until 16 April 2012 for that emergency letter to be acknowledged and for her to receive an appointment. The consultant whom Emma saw relied on incorrect information. He refused to offer a scan and refused to perform an extraction of the implant. Despite the Government's best efforts, that is the kind of experience that women in Scotland are having. We want a consistent response to happen quickly.

Another initiative would be to call a summit of the private providers to ensure that they adopt a consistent approach to the aftercare of the women affected. Some providers have been very good, but others have been awful. Some providers asked women to pay £2,500 to have the implant removed and replaced, some initially charged for scans and the Hospital Group asked women to

sign away their legal rights in return for treatment. That must stop and the Government must bring pressure to bear.

We need to regulate private healthcare better. Healthcare Improvement Scotland's remit includes the regulation of private hospitals, private psychiatric hospitals, private clinics, private medical agencies and private ambulance services, but its regulations cover only private hospitals, psychiatric facilities and voluntary hospitals. The rest are not covered. We must close that loophole urgently and regulate private healthcare clinics and third-party providers in Scotland. In fairness to the Government, it has been consulting on the matter since July 2010, but I say to the minister, as gently as I can, that we cannot afford to wait much longer. In the spirit of consensus, let me offer to work with the minister to introduce regulations much more urgently.

The current regulatory regime does not include a minimum standard for what patients can expect if things go wrong. I urge the Government to consider setting out some of those standards in the national care standards. Our action plan calls on the Government to develop a better framework relationship with the MHRA to ensure that there is, on the one hand, proper retention and testing of implants and, on the other hand, a formal structure of regular communication. If such arrangements had been in place, the numerous and substantive concerns that clinicians expressed might have been picked up sooner and acted on more quickly.

I have two final points. Let us re-establish a Scottish implant register. I know that there were problems with the last one, but it is not beyond us to sort those out. On a practical level, let us allow the NHS to carry out both removal and replacement of PIP implants in the same operation, as it is safer for the women to go through one procedure rather than two. That should be done on the basis that the woman assigns her right to recovery of the cost to the NHS. In other words, the NHS reclaims the money from the private provider. That would be cost neutral to the NHS and clinically better for the women concerned.

What happened is a scandal. We must do our utmost to ensure that no one is placed in this position again. There needs to be confidence in the system of testing medical devices and implants. We need improved regulation, we need to improve care and support for patients when things go wrong and we need a public inquiry, which will help us to understand how we can prevent such a situation from happening again. I commend to the chamber Labour's action plan and my motion.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that an estimated 4,000 women in Scotland are believed to have received breast implants manufactured by Poly Implant Prothèse (PiP); supports the ongoing criminal investigation in France into the former owner of PiP, Jean Claude Mas, for his role in the manufacture and distribution of the substandard implants containing industrial grade silicone; further notes with concern that PiP's activities remained undetected by regulators for a considerable period of time and the lack of information provided to the victims of the scandal, a number of whom only became aware of the potential dangers through news reports in December 2011, over a year after the medical device alert was issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency in March 2010; regrets the lottery of aftercare offered by the private clinics that carried out breast augmentation operations with PiP implants for women in Scotland, particularly the charging for replacement operations and attaching conditions to treatment such as the waiving of legal rights; further notes the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy's assertion that it is only by chance that the NHS in Scotland did not use the potentially dangerous implants and that the true scale of the scandal in Scotland may never be known, and calls on the Scottish Government to do everything possible to address the suffering of the Scottish victims of the PiP implants scandal and ensure that lessons are learned for the future, including holding a public inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005.

10:39

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): I welcome the opportunity to have the debate. I also welcome those from the Scottish campaign group who have joined us for the debate. They have been at the forefront in calling for a variety of actions to be taken following this incident.

The Scottish Government takes the issue very seriously. We fully recognise the concerns that have been expressed by people who have had PIP silicone breast implants. Members may be aware that the Deputy First Minister has met representatives of the PIP implant Scotland campaign on two separate occasions; the most recent meeting took place just last week.

At the outset, it should be stressed that the alleged fraudulent activity of a company that produced breast implants is at the very heart of the issue, and it is extremely difficult and challenging for any regulatory regime to deal with such fraudulent behaviour. Members will be aware that the regulation of medical devices is reserved to the Westminster Government, and the competent authority for that within the UK is the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, which has lead responsibility for considering products that are to be used as medical devices.

It may be helpful if I outline some of the actions that have been taken since the issue came to light. As a Government, we have worked closely with the MHRA, the Department of Health and the other devolved Administrations in addressing the

concerns that have arisen, and three reviews have been established. The first of those—to which Jackie Baillie referred—reviewed the actions that the MHRA took, and the report was published on 14 May this year. That report found that the MHRA had acted appropriately based on information that was made available to it and that it had been proactive in seeking further information on PIP. The report, which was by Earl Howe, sets out a number of recommendations for the MHRA to take forward; that work is on-going.

A further review was commissioned to look specifically at data around rupture rates and toxicology issues relating to the particular implants. That expert review is currently taking place, and we expect its findings to be published later this month.

The third, longer-term review, also led by Sir Bruce Keogh, will look at the regulation of cosmetic surgery across the UK. In addition, it will review a number of the issues that were highlighted in the Howe report to see whether further action is required.

The intention of the three reviews is to ensure that a similar situation does not occur again. We should allow the review process to take place so that we can ensure that we have the right system in place to prevent such an incident from being repeated.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife (Lab)): One of our concerns is that the second Bruce Keogh review—not the toxicology review—is on cosmetic procedures only. There are many other procedures, such as laser eye treatment, that are real treatments and are not just cosmetic. The problems may be much broader than what the second Keogh review will cover.

Michael Matheson: The review is dealing specifically with the issues that arise from the PIP implant matter, and we should give the review group the opportunity to consider that matter in detail. As a result of that review, other areas of cosmetic surgery and other aspects of healthcare may be identified that have to be addressed, but we must allow the review to take place so that we can see what its findings are and consider whether any further action is required.

I have set out the context of regulation in the UK, in which we operate. I also want to consider NHS Scotland's response and address the request for a Scottish public inquiry. Although the initial indications were that NHS Scotland had not used PIP silicone implants, NHS Lothian subsequently identified one patient who had been given PIP implants. That patient was offered and received from the board an appropriate clinical care package to address her concerns.

As a Government, we have been very clear that we expect private healthcare providers to offer their patients clinically appropriate packages of care, and we believe that they have an ethical responsibility to do so. NHS Scotland is committed to supporting all women whose private healthcare provider is unable or unwilling to provide appropriate care or who places unreasonable conditions on women in providing care.

The approach that NHS Scotland has taken is appropriate and is in line with the longstanding mechanism in our NHS on the provision of cosmetic surgery. Members will be aware that NHS Scotland does not provide cosmetic surgery on a routine basis. That is well established in the NHS's published criteria.

When the Deputy First Minister met the PIP implant Scotland campaign last week, she made clear her view that, on the basis of the information that was available to her at that point, she was not convinced that a case has been made for a Scottish public inquiry. She made clear that other options are open that would help to reassure women in Scotland. That includes continuing to work with the campaign group here in Scotland.

I hope that members are assured that the Scottish Government takes the matter seriously and is working with the appropriate bodies to ensure that provisions are in place to prevent this type of thing from happening again. We continue to be committed to working with the PIP implant Scotland campaign and to addressing concerns and issues that the group raises, which we will pursue with the Department of Health and the MHRA, as appropriate.

We are also committed to ensuring that we consider the recommendations that come from the two further reviews and their implications for the NHS here in Scotland. We will consider where it is appropriate to take action in Scotland to address the concerns that are raised.

I move amendment S4M-03294.1, to leave out from first "further notes" to end and insert:

"notes that the Scottish Government is working with the UK Government on the three UK-wide reviews; welcomes the findings of the report, Poly Implant Prothèse (PIP) silicone breast implants: Review of the actions of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Department of Health, which found that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority took appropriate action based on the information made available to it; looks forward to the outcome of the expert group looking at the rupture rate data and toxicology testing led by Sir Bruce Keogh, which is due to report later this month, and the review looking at the regulation of the cosmetic industry also being led by Sir Bruce Keogh, which will report by March 2013, and commends NHSScotland for the action taken by it to ensure that it responded appropriately by making information and advice available to women and ensuring that, where the private healthcare sector was unable or unwilling to provide a clinically

appropriate package of care, NHSScotland provided appropriate care.”

10:46

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank Jackie Baillie for bringing forward the debate, because although we do not agree with her conclusions on the issue we think that it is important that the matter is discussed openly in the Parliament and that appropriate reassurance is given to the public.

I echo the sentiments of previous speakers in noting that the PIP implant fiasco undoubtedly caused grave concern among many women in Scotland, and I commend the cabinet secretary, NHS Scotland and the UK regulators for their good work in allaying some of the women’s fears. The amendment in the name of Michael Matheson recognises the full extent of that action, and I welcome that.

There has been a considerable and robust response from all levels of government, in Scotland, across the UK and within the European Union. We should remember that the 4,000 women who are potentially affected in Scotland are part of a much wider picture of 40,000 women in the UK and 400,000 women across 65 countries. The PIP incident was truly international and merited co-operative action, which I think is happening.

Jackie Baillie: In recognising the scale of the problem, does the member support a public inquiry being held at UK level?

Nanette Milne: I will give the member my reasons for not doing so later.

We must remember that silicone implants carry an inherent risk to an individual’s health. No such implants are completely safe and the use of medical-grade silicone is just one way of reducing the risk and the potential harm to women. As the UK expert group concluded, there is no clear evidence of a materially greater risk to health being presented by PIP implants. Both Governments have accepted that there is no justification for routine replacement of implants on the NHS, and that conclusion is backed up by scientific and medical evidence.

That is not to say that we have heard the last word on the issue—of course not. The matter is still being extensively reviewed by Sir Bruce Keogh. Meanwhile, Earl Howe’s review, which was conducted through the UK Department of Health, made a number of recommendations to ensure that our processes are as strong as they can be. No system of regulation can guarantee absolute safety of medical products, but there are lessons to be learned and we await Sir Bruce’s conclusions, which will add to the body of

information that we have on how best to move forward.

I accept Earl Howe’s conclusion that the MHRA’s communication to the German regulatory body that certified the implants for use was entirely reasonable and that the agency’s actions were based on a proper examination of the data available to it—data that have continued to be analysed.

I am aware of and understand the strength of opinion of campaigners in Scotland on the issue, particularly those who have been personally affected and whose health has been placed at risk by the actions of PIP and, potentially, a number of individuals in that organisation. That is why Sir Bruce Keogh’s review will take a rounded view of the situation, including the reported experiences of patients.

I understand that the PIP implant Scotland campaign called its recent discussions with the cabinet secretary productive. I am confident that the cabinet secretary will do all that she can to work with NHS Scotland in bringing forward any modification of its internal practices, which may need to be examined in light of changes brought about by the UK reviews.

In all that, the role of the Scottish Government will be to ensure that there is a robust framework of reporting and of implementing guidance between clinicians and the regulatory bodies. Primarily, however, we must note that if blame is to be attributed, it lies entirely and unequivocally with the manufacturer, which failed to show any regard whatsoever for the victims of its actions. It was an appalling, but thankfully rare, act.

That is fundamentally why we on the Scottish Conservative benches believe that a public inquiry in Scotland is not the correct way forward. Although we should review our practices, the most important investigation to be carried out will properly be a criminal one. To operate effectively, a regulatory regime must at some stage rely on a degree of good faith, and will sometimes need to operate on the assumption that that exists. That is reinforced by the threat of criminal prosecution and the penalties that exist when fraudulent practices are evident.

In the meantime, we can do little better than to repeat the clear advice that has come from the NHS, the MHRA and the Government—people who received PIP implants and who have any clinical questions or problems should contact their implanting surgeon.

The clear statement from the First Minister that NHS Scotland will step in and provide appropriate care if private provision fails—either by refusing care or by no longer being in existence—is of course welcome. However, it should be

remembered that healthcare providers—as with all businesses that are involved in the supply of goods—are obliged by law to replace unsatisfactory goods that they have provided.

I will leave it at that just now and deal a little more with the on-going reviews in my closing speech.

10:52

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): We are in a serious and worrying situation, so I am glad that we are having this debate. We should take the opportunity to reassure the many women out there on just what the situation is in terms of the evidence. Rupture rates for the PIP implants are running at about 1 per cent with a possible maximum of 5 per cent. It is important that we put on the record that there is no evidence of genotoxicity should there be a rupture and that 1.7 per cent of the ruptures may lead to an inflammatory reaction. Those statistics are worrying, but it is important as a measure of reassurance that we have them on the record.

In the motion and in Ms Baillie's speech there was mention of 4,000 women in Scotland possibly being affected by this—I am not sure about that, because it was made clear at the Health and Sport Committee meeting on 28 February that the maximum number was probably 1,300. Again, I think that reassurance is needed.

Jackie Baillie: I was quoting the cabinet secretary, who has consistently said that we would perhaps be safer using the upper limit, which is 4,000 women.

Fiona McLeod: Thank you, Ms Baillie. I confess that I was not at the Health and Sport Committee meeting that day—I was in hospital getting my gallbladder removed. However, on reading the evidence it looked as though the figure of 1,300 women was perhaps more robust.

How, under a regulatory regime that crosses Europe and the UK, could we come to the position that we have been in for the past year? There are three European directives that cover medical devices. Those directives have been implemented into UK legislation by the Medical Devices Regulations 2002. They are there to regulate safety and performance and to include provision for mandatory CE markings. Under that EU framework, we have REACH—the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals. Under that architecture, we have the European Chemicals Agency, which is responsible for the CE marking. Parallel to that, we have the competent authorities in each member state; in the UK, the competent authority is hosted by the Health and Safety Executive. Under the competent authority are the notified bodies, which are

appointed and accredited by the member states. In the UK, the notified body is the UK Accreditation Service—UKAS—whose role is to ensure that the design and manufacture of products make them safe and compliant.

Given that extensive regulatory framework, how was the fraud possible? I turn to the Howe report, which has already been quoted. Earl Howe said that the review found that the MHRA fulfilled its obligations regarding incidents that involved the implants, and that the MHRA's work was hindered by a lack of complete or reliable evidence. Much of the information came from a manufacturer that has been found to have been working fraudulently.

Given all that, Howe concludes that there is nothing to suggest that the system for regulating medical devices is unsound and that the responsibility lies squarely with the fraudulent manufacturer. I must ask a further question: is the regulatory regime flawed? When I look to see what the REACH regulation was founded on, I find that it states that it

“places greater responsibility on industry to manage the risks from chemicals and to provide safety information on the substances.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Come to a conclusion, please.

Fiona McLeod: I contend that the EU and the UK have swung too far towards self-regulation and self-policing. Given that Scotland has no voice in Europe and only a small voice in the UK, I hope that an independent Scotland would ensure that it got health and safety right for workers, consumers and everyone involved.

10:56

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): When I first heard about the PIP silicone scandal, I was shocked. I still cannot comprehend the feelings of anguish and worry that must have been—and still are—going through the affected women's minds. They would have been asking themselves whether they had received faulty PIP implants, and, if so, whether the implants would rupture, when they would rupture and whether they would cause lasting damage to their health; they would have been asking when their implants could safely be removed.

The conflicting views of the French and UK Governments, as well the inaction of the Scottish Government, have not helped those women. A public inquiry is long overdue. It is vital that any public inquiry is conducted by an independent member of the judiciary, as happened with the Penrose inquiry and the inquiry into C diff at the Vale of Leven hospital. So far, official investigations into the PIP scandal have been

concerned only with maintaining public confidence in the Government.

Labour's seven-point plan, which was introduced this morning by my colleague, Jackie Baillie, is the best and only way to help PIP victims and to avoid this happening again. The Scottish Government argues that the matter is reserved and therefore that it cannot hold a public inquiry. However, the Government has a duty of care to the Scottish people and it has a primary responsibility for the nation's public health issues.

Earl Howe's report does not adequately answer all the questions that are posed by campaigners. They deserve answers. Critical questions remain, such as the extent of the scandal in Scotland and what can be done to avoid something like this happening in the future. That is why Earl Howe's report cannot be a substitute for a public inquiry. Statistical evidence needs to be gathered to discover the extent of the scandal in Scotland. A public inquiry would help to determine a minimum standard of care that private health clinics must provide to operate in Scotland. It would also determine whether more could and should have been done by the Scottish Government and Scottish health service in this matter, irrespective of the restrictions imposed on the Scottish Government. It would give clear and unequivocal regulations, going forward.

I agree with the view that a thorough public inquiry could determine the practicality of forming a Scottish procurement body for all medical products that are brought into Scotland. As many of my colleagues will highlight today, such a body would consider clinical issues specifically for Scotland.

As the amount of reconstructive and cosmetic surgery continues to rise in Scotland, with thousands of procedures conducted, it is imperative that we introduce uniform regulation of private health providers and that they are held to the highest of standards.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy must put herself into the shoes of the 4,000 women in Scotland who received faulty implants, including Jenny Brown and Emma Hardie, who are in the public gallery today. Their health has been put at risk and they are still suffering today. That group of women are asking why this happened in the first place and what their Government is doing to ensure that it does not happen again.

The Scottish Government has a duty of care for the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland. Currently it is letting down those 4,000 women. There is a dire need for an independent, transparent and comprehensive public inquiry so that the best justice is given to one and all.

11:00

Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South)

(SNP): I can only imagine the stress and anxiety that are felt by women who have PIP breast implants. For some time, they have lived with that worry day and daily. Although the expert advice suggests that there is no evidence to support routine removal of PIP implants, I absolutely understand why some women who have them want them to be removed and replaced. Those women know that they have in their bodies implants that are made of a material that is not approved for medical purposes, and they fear that those implants might rupture at any time. In such circumstances, I would be angry and worried and possibly a bit frightened, so I understand the sentiments of the action group.

I am sure that all members support the on-going criminal investigation in France into Jean-Claude Mas, the former owner of PIP. We must not forget that that fraudulent manufacturer has the ultimate responsibility for the distress that has been caused to so many women throughout the world, including, as I understand it, about 1,300 in Scotland. As stated in Lord Howe's review, the company covered up its deceit and showed complete disregard for the welfare of its customers, which is absolutely shocking. The people who are responsible must be brought to justice.

I welcome the Scottish Government's actions in responding quickly and giving a commitment that the NHS will provide help and support—including removal of implants, if that is clinically appropriate—for women whose private surgery provider refuses to do so or has gone out of business. Private providers of the procedure throughout the sector have a duty of care to all their patients. Women should not be charged for replacement and removal of PIP implants. People who are affected by the scandal have enough on their plate without having to worry about how they will get the money to put things right.

I hope that any clinical assessment of whether to remove and replace implants will include an assessment of the mental health impact on the individual if the implants are not replaced. As many members have said, lessons need to be learned in order to prevent such an incident from happening again. I therefore welcome the Scottish Government's involvement in the existing UK-wide inquiries, which are covering a range of issues, including health issues surrounding the implants; improving adverse incident reporting; better communication methods on issues that cause public concern; regulation of the cosmetic surgery industry; and a register of implants, for which there is a strong case.

There is also a European inquiry that is considering better information sharing between EU countries, increasing the scope for EU countries to work together, increased product traceability, and a European database to bring together information about medical devices, economic operations, market surveillance and clinical investigations. Those inquiries and the recommendations that will flow from them should ensure that a similar situation does not arise again.

I understand the sentiments of those who call for a Scottish public inquiry but, as we have heard, the regulation of medical devices is a reserved matter and the licensing of the products is an EU matter. Therefore, a Scottish public inquiry could not properly investigate all the issues. I have no doubt that the Scottish Government and the Parliament will continue to do all that we can to ensure that people in Scotland who are affected by the scandal get the answers that they deserve.

11:04

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): I, too, welcome members of the campaign to the chamber. However, although I have a great deal of sympathy for their situation, I am not sure that a public inquiry would be of benefit to them. This issue has certainly highlighted that women who seek breast implants need stronger guidance and information; indeed, it appears that many women have not been getting the information that they deserve prior to surgery.

My understanding is that breast implants require to be replaced anyway after 10 years or so, but I must point out that the 4,000 figure that Labour keeps highlighting appears to be based on figures from the UK Government about the purchase of implants. Evidence to the Health and Sport Committee suggested that the figure for Scotland is more in the region of 1,300.

Jackie Baillie: I did not invent the 4,000 figure; it actually came from the member's own Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy. Nevertheless, the point is that we do not know the exact figure, and a Scottish public inquiry would help us to address that lack of knowledge.

Dennis Robertson: As I said, the 4,000 figure came from the UK Government and relates to the purchase of implants. The cabinet secretary was quite right to highlight the upper limit, while pointing out that it relates to the purchase of implants and not to procedures. As I have made clear, we need stringent guidance; after all, everyone who puts themselves forward for that kind of surgical procedure should know the risks involved.

The Health and Sport Committee considered a petition—PE1378, I believe—that called for a ban

on all procedures involving silicone implants because of fears about rupture. I believe that there is a need for implants for cosmetic or other purposes and therefore do not think that a total ban on implants is absolutely necessary; however, the silicone that is used must be of the quality that is prescribed in EU regulations.

I noted Fiona McLeod's speech, which was very precise and based very much on evidence. Indeed, I sometimes think that every speech that is made in this chamber is based on evidence from Fiona McLeod.

The Scottish Government has done, and will continue to do, everything that it can to provide information and support to people who have concerns, and the minister has said that dialogue will continue. He also made it clear at last week's meeting that the petitioners and people in the campaign had indicated their satisfaction with the cabinet secretary's response to date.

Sir Bruce Keogh's report will make recommendations, so we should wait until that work has been completed. I hope that, as a result of that, a register will be established in Scotland, because I believe that such a move will reassure people in the future. We certainly need that, as well as robust guidance. After all, one of the problems that we face is that a lot of the information that we need is not available because of poor recording—mainly in the private sector, and not in the NHS.

11:09

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I first became very concerned about the issue a few weeks ago when a constituent came to one of my surgeries and showed me photographs of two breast implants that had been removed from her—one intact, the other ruptured. The contents of the ruptured implant had spread into her lymph nodes and she was experiencing great pain from lumps in that part of her body. I am pleased to report that she said that the NHS care that she received in the Western general hospital in Edinburgh was very good, but it is clear that there are inconsistencies in the NHS response throughout Scotland, to which Jackie Baillie referred.

My constituent also explained to me the shocking response that she got from the private clinic when she went to see it about the problems that had arisen. That shocking response has now become an absence of response, because the e-mail that she sent to the clinic three months ago, in which she summed up her concerns, has still received no reply, although I have recently followed up on that for her. I hope that we will hear something from the clinic soon.

My constituent also has many issues with the MHRA, the most urgent of which relates to testing of implants. I have written several letters to the MHRA and have asked for a meeting with it, because it is not willing to test the implants. Members will understand the anxiety of my constituent, given that the contents of one of those implants are still, to some extent, in her body and were in it to an even greater extent until recently. I ask the Scottish Government to continue to raise that issue with the MHRA. If the MHRA will not test the implants, I ask the Scottish Government to arrange testing.

There are two massive historical issues to do with the MHRA. First, why was it so slow to react when many clinicians pointed out problems, for which there was statistical evidence? Secondly, why did it not make more effort—indeed, it made no effort at all—to inform women once information about the use of industrial silicone became clear in March 2010? That question could also be put to the UK Government and the Scottish Government.

The Government's amendment offers uncritical support for the UK Government's Howe report, which I have read. I have never seen so many SNP members competing with each other to praise a UK Government report. I am sometimes more disposed to be more sympathetic to the UK Government—although not the present one—and I was highly critical of the Howe report. My views were shared by the Health Select Committee at Westminster and by its widely regarded chair, the Conservative Stephen Dorrell, who was the Secretary of State for Health when I was a Westminster MP in the 1990s. They are certainly not happy with what one might call an internal whitewash of the MHRA, and my constituent and the other women campaigners are not happy with it, either. I empathise with them and sympathise with their request for an independent look to be taken at the issue. I am sure that Michael Matheson must also have some empathy with them, as he took that view in relation to hepatitis C several years ago when I was the Minister for Health and Community Care. I am happy to admit that he was right about the need for an independent inquiry on hep C and that I was wrong.

An inquiry into breast implants would not just be about the past, as was the case with the hep C inquiry; it would also be about the future. An inquiry needs to look at regulation of private health care. The whole area, including private healthcare clinics, is a devolved responsibility of the Scottish Government. The way in which medical products are regulated and licensed also needs to be looked at. There is a procurement dimension to that, which is also a devolved responsibility. An inquiry could also consider the numbers issue that has come up.

The basic message is this: let us stand in the shoes of the women who have been affected, empathise with them and realise that they want the issue to be looked at independently.

11:13

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): There has been much debate about exactly how many women in Scotland, the UK and across Europe might be affected. Those numbers remain unclear, but we can be sure that, for those who are affected, it is a very serious matter indeed; they are going through a time of great anxiety.

Although we can be somewhat relieved that no link has been established between the implants and an increased risk of cancer, it is a cause for concern that PIP implants appear to be more prone to rupturing and can be toxic. As my colleague Fiona McLeod pointed out, the rupture rates are estimated to be between 1 per cent and 5 per cent, but the women concerned do not know whether they will fall into that category.

It is welcome news that the NHS and the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy have reassured the people of Scotland that there is only one known case of PIP implants being used by the NHS. However, I am a little puzzled by that. Does that mean that single purchases of implants are made, or does the patient bring the implants with them? Perhaps the minister could enlighten us.

The NHS is to be commended for offering to remove PIP implants from anyone who has been affected following either NHS or private surgery. We can only hope that the private clinics will choose to offer the same treatment. I echo the call from the Scottish Government and from various members during this morning's debate that private practices provide the care that their patients expect, and offer surgery to rectify the problem.

Like Margaret Burgess, I agree that we should look again at resurrecting the register of implants. Clinics and hospitals must know the source of their implants and there must be batch numbers, so we should be able to do that. Some women might not even know whether they have PIP implants, and although NHS and private clinics are making efforts to contact those who do, the advice for anyone who is still concerned is to contact their GP or clinic in the first instance.

Reassuringly, it appears that the rigorous MHRA processes were not at fault. The manufacturers fraudulently, and with callous disregard for their customers, altered the make-up of their products. I reiterate my hope that the continuing UK-wide inquiries into the issue will provide both answers

and peace of mind for those who have been affected.

It should be borne in mind, however, that no breast implant surgery or cosmetic procedure is entirely without risk. I know that there are often good medical reasons for having breast implants, but I am not alone in being concerned by the ever-increasing numbers of women who feel that they have to put their bodies through this ordeal for cosmetic reasons. The PIP case highlights the real dangers that are involved in cosmetic surgery. The unrealistic image of women that pervades much of our society, most worryingly among our young people, continues to drive women to measures such as cosmetic surgery at great expense and danger to themselves, all in the name of someone else's idea of beauty.

Carol Craig of the Centre for Confidence and Well-Being is extremely concerned about the amount of money that is spent—by people who can ill afford it—on such treatments. The health impact of the practices is well documented and it is becoming increasingly apparent that the situation threatens to undermine the equality and emancipation of women in our society. We can all agree that the manufacturers and practitioners in question have a duty of care to their customers, but we should not forget the duty of care that we all owe each other in society, and to ourselves as women.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We turn to the closing speeches. I call Nanette Milne. You have up to five minutes.

11:17

Nanette Milne: This has been a worthwhile, interesting and considered debate with good speeches from members in all parts of the chamber. As I said previously, it is important that the debate has been held. It has provided an opportunity at least to try to reassure the thousands of women in Scotland who are affected by the issue.

We heard a considerable amount about the response to date of the various bodies that are involved, whose conclusions have been supported by fully fledged expert reviews. Of course, the matter is by no means closed, and information will continue to accrue. The longer-term review into the regulation of cosmetic medical devices is predicted to run until March next year. I note what Richard Simpson said in his intervention, but I agree with the minister that we should look at the PIP issue first and perhaps go on to other matters after that. Considerable scientific data on PIP implants is also being gathered by the EU's Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks.

The various reviews have already identified some of the weaknesses of adverse incident reporting as a mechanism for analysing safety. It relies entirely on the people who provide care to appreciate the seriousness of the data that they can provide and their role in protecting patient safety. It does, however, form a genuine statistical link between reported patient experience and the regulators. The European investigation will go further and take evidence from across the member states in order to draw further conclusions on PIP implants and the possibilities for change in EU medical device legislation.

In calling for a public inquiry, Jackie Baillie has come to the conclusion that there are reasonable grounds to assume that there is a gap in our knowledge, or that there is some failure that has been caused by people other than the perpetrators of this fraud, and that that can be determined only by a public inquiry. However, I am afraid that I cannot come to the same conclusion.

Jackie Baillie: This is not about apportioning blame, but about learning lessons of responsibility for the after-care of the women so that the same mistakes do not happen in the future.

Nanette Milne: I appreciate that, but I still think that the on-going work and its conclusions will satisfy.

It is certainly true that we can continue to improve regulation of our healthcare system. Fiona McLeod raised some interesting points in that regard and I agree with Jackie Baillie and others that the suggestion that we re-open the implants register is worthy of consideration. I would welcome the minister's opinion on that.

I am in no doubt that it is extremely important that we continue to review all regulation for its effectiveness. Areas for improvement have already been identified at UK level, and I continue to be confident that NHS Scotland is capable of co-operating effectively on the issue in the near future, and of considering what further changes may be required when the more general review concludes next year.

Many of the issues concern simple communication. For example, concerns were identified about the communication of medical alerts between the MHRA and private medical providers. Recommendations from Earl Howe have gone some way towards addressing those concerns, but Sir Bruce Keogh's review, which is taking an holistic view of regulation in the sector, will be vital in tying together our actions and addressing weaknesses that may have arisen as the industry has changed over many years. As Earl Howe has observed, it is incumbent upon all those involved in delivering care to redouble their efforts in reporting incidents of concern, but it is

even more pressing that communication as a whole be improved. We are also reminded of the importance of co-operation across national boundaries and regulatory sectors.

In view of all the work that has already been undertaken and that is on-going, Scottish Conservatives do not see the need for the public inquiry that Jackie Baillie seeks, and will therefore support the Scottish Government's amendment at decision time this evening.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Michael Matheson. I can give you around seven minutes, minister.

11:22

Michael Matheson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

It has been a useful debate. I think that, on reflection, most members would recognise that this is an issue that goes beyond party politics and is about trying to ensure that we do the right thing in addressing the concerns that have been raised. Unfortunately, Mary Fee's suggestion that there has been inaction by the Scottish Government in that regard is not only not reflective of the facts, but is simply wrong. It is important that, in contributing to a debate on an issue of such importance around women's health, members reflect on what action is being taken.

The experience of one of Malcolm Chisholm's constituents demonstrates the type of response that we have asked NHS Scotland to make. I recognise that members may have different views on what that response should be, but it is simply wrong to suggest that no action has been taken.

It is right, when a matter such as this arises and when the regulatory regime that we have in place has not protected individuals from the alleged fraudulent activity of the company that produced the breast implants, that we look at whether there are ways in which we can ensure that the regulatory system is more effective in addressing the concerns. Nanette Milne is correct to say that it is not possible to get a 100 per cent fail-safe regulatory system, but we clearly have to ensure that we learn lessons in order to ensure that the system is sufficiently robust, which is what the Earl Howe review was intended to do. I acknowledge Malcolm Chisholm's view about the content of that review, but it is important to recognise that the review will be supplemented by the wider review by Sir Bruce Keogh that is being undertaken at present and which will report next year on whether further measures need to be taken beyond the recommendations of the Earl Howe review.

I recognise that despite the review, people—including members of the PIP implants Scotland

campaign—continue to have concerns about the regulatory regime. However, it is important that we ensure that the reviews that are taking place address those concerns and the concerns that the PIP implants Scotland campaign believes the MHRA, the Department of Health and others have to address. As a Government, we are open to considering the matters and to making the necessary representations where that is appropriate.

Concerns have been expressed about the content of PIP breast implants—Malcolm Chisholm made a specific point on that in relation to his constituent. I understand that the MHRA has carried out further tests on PIP implants and that, as part of Sir Bruce Keogh's work, the data and the toxicology findings are being looked at. I am informed that there are difficulties in carrying out toxicology tests on breast implants that have ruptured, which leads to difficulties in offering certainty on what may be in those particular breast implants. That is the scientific expert advice that has been provided, but I understand that further tests have been taken as part of the Sir Bruce Keogh review.

Maureen Watt raised the issue of how breast implants are chosen by different clinicians. NHS Scotland does not routinely provide cosmetic surgery, and the number of breast implants is limited. The guidelines and criteria on their use are clear—they are largely for breast augmentation for women who have undergone a mastectomy. The choice of breast implant is largely decided by clinicians, who work with patients to establish what is most appropriate to that individual. That is why we allow boards to procure breast implants that their clinicians believe are best suited to their individual patients, rather than controlling procurement nationally. I am sure that Maureen Watt will recognise the benefit that is gained from that approach.

Jackie Baillie: Will the minister take an intervention?

Michael Matheson: I am very short of time and I want to cover as many points as I can.

A number of members mentioned the introduction of a register. Some members may be aware that we had a UK register that ceased because of the number of women who chose not to go on it—only a small number were prepared to do it. That, too, is being looked at through regulation and the Sir Bruce Keogh review, which will report next year. If there is a clear recommendation about the need to consider establishing a register we will, as I have said, reflect on the reviews and the implications for Scotland and see what action we can take to address that.

Jackie Baillie expressed concern about a difficulty that has been experienced by an individual from the PIP Scotland group from whom she has received representation. That experience contrasts markedly with the experience of Malcolm Chisholm's constituent. I assure all members that we will ensure that all cases of concern about how NHS Scotland has responded will be looked into. Members whose constituents have such experiences should feel free to make representations to the cabinet secretary or me to ensure that the matters are appropriately considered. The chief medical officer has written on two occasions in the past six months to GPs and surgeons to set out the Scottish Government's position on assisting women with PIP implants through our NHS.

I acknowledge the concerns of members of the PIP campaign. As the cabinet secretary set out last week, she does not believe that—based on the present information—the case for a public inquiry has been made.

We need to continue to work with the PIP campaign in Scotland to address its concerns. When necessary, the Government will take appropriate action in areas in which we have responsibility, and will make representations to the UK bodies that are responsible for addressing the issue. We will continue to work with all those bodies in order to provide certainty and to address concerns as and when they arise. On that basis, the most appropriate course that we can take at present is to allow the review process to be completed. Once that is done, we will look at its implications for Scotland and address any issues that arise for us when appropriate.

11:30

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Lab): As all members have acknowledged, this has been a useful debate, but some questions remain unanswered.

Why should there be an inquiry? Why should we not just rely on the Earl Howe report on the MHRA, and on the two reports by Sir Bruce Keogh? Why are they not sufficient? As the minister said, those reports are helpful, but they are not sufficient, although they will and should inform our approach.

In her thoughtful contribution, Nanette Milne reminded us of the fraud by the manufacturer, but the issue is not one of blame. We are talking about ensuring patient safety. That is what regulation is about, and the regulatory system failed those patients, some of whom are in the gallery today.

The Earl Howe report says that the MHRA did all that it could, but it fails to examine whether the system of reporting was adequate, as reports were

made directly to the company and might have been used as a substitute for an effective UK reporting system. Systems for reporting on adverse effects generally are an area of concern and, as Malcolm Chisholm said, there was a refusal to test at least some of the extracted implants.

The House of Commons committee has been justifiably critical of the Earl Howe report, although it is a pity that there has not been a greater analysis of it. The Government simply appears to have accepted it as being wholly valid.

I was somewhat disappointed in Maureen Watt's contribution. Many of the women that we are talking about have had reconstructive surgery, but others who sought private implants did so for quite genuine and reasonable psychological reasons. Although I understand what she is talking about when she talks about the emphasis on body image, it is not particularly relevant.

The stories of the affected women are striking for a number of reasons. It is those women who are asking the Parliament to act to ensure that what happened does not happen again in either this or other contexts, and I will come to that point in a minute. It is those women who are asking for an inquiry in Scotland—because there is a Scottish dimension to the issue. It is they who want the situation not to arise here again.

A number of members have talked about the difficulties that the women encountered as the scandal unfolded. The French Government took strong and decisive action, which contrasted with the rather slower and more confused action that was taken at the UK level. Margaret Burgess's description of the women's distress resonated, and that was quite helpful.

When we are told that some women had to pay for removal of the device even once it was established that the producing company had switched from medical grade silicone to industrial grade silicone without telling us and had not passed on information about the level of ruptures, we have to question what private companies were doing.

Those affected tell us that there has been some suggestion of a postcode lottery, so I welcome the minister's agreement to listen to and take up the issue for any woman who has not had a satisfactory response from the NHS. I hope that the campaign group will spread that information around so that some of the cases that we have already heard about can be raised.

When we hear about the woman who was not only charged for the removal procedure but was charged £100 for disposal of the removed device, we must question the ethics of the private company involved. Some women were also

charged when the provider did not think that the removal of the device was necessary, but if a woman faced with the situation wishes to have the device removed because her anxiety levels have increased, she should be entitled to have it removed, especially given the level of fraud that has allegedly occurred. We have particular problems in Scotland, because class actions cannot be taken here, unlike in England, but that is a separate issue that I do not fully understand.

The Howe inquiry has gone so far and the Keogh inquiry will go further, so why do we want to establish our own public inquiry? It is not that we do not welcome both of those inquiries, but if we are serious about a potential move to independence, we will need to consider having not just a Scottish Medicines Consortium to authorise medicines, but a similar body—the 81st regional body—to authorise devices. With 27,000 devices approved, that would be no mean undertaking.

The EU may revise the rules on devices, but it is clear from the scandal and from the scandal that is going to unfold regarding metal-on-metal hip replacements that the regulation of medical devices—particularly those involving implantation—is inadequate. Moreover, we cannot look to the United States for better regulation, as they, too, have problems with what constitutes a threshold for notification by companies of changes in devices. They, too, have their own unfolding scandals.

Scotland and this Government have a duty of care to Scottish residents, as Jackie Baillie and Mary Fee made clear, which falls within the scope of an inquiry. What efforts did the Scottish Government make when the first medical alert came out in March 2010? We are not accusing the Government of inaction once the scandal began to evolve, but there was a medical alert in 2010. Did we, at that point, inform all the providers in Scotland whose regulation we have responsibility for that they must pay heed to that medical alert? Did we, at that point, talk to women who had had implants that were subject to the alert? No, we did not. There was delay, and that must be considered by the inquiry because the issue may also arise in relation to the metal-on-metal scandal that we will shortly face. We need much greater clarity and effort to ensure patients' safety.

Some issues are reserved, and the MHRA deals with those. The Health Professions Council deals with the regulation of practitioners, but we have responsibility for determining the minimum standards of care, which can include things such as insurance cover and the medical qualifications that we believe are required. For example, should only dentists be able to perform tooth whitening? That is another issue that is coming up. There have been legal cases on the subject, but the fact

remains that unqualified people are still performing tooth whitening. Eye laser surgery is not cosmetic, but the level of qualification required of those who undertake it in Scotland is not fully regulated beyond HPC level. Regulations in respect of companies that do marketing in Scotland or undertake surgery in Scotland should be introduced quickly. We passed legislation in 2010, we held a consultation in 2010 and the consultation was completed in July 2011, but we still have not had a report. We have not acted with speed on the issue of more effective regulation of high-street surgery and the private sector; it requires greater speed.

Those are all issues on which we believe a public inquiry is needed to ensure that Scottish patients are adequately protected going forward. I therefore support Jackie Baillie's motion calling for a public inquiry.

Scottish Executive Question Time

General Questions

11:40

Factoring (Buildings in Mixed Tenure)

1. Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether consultation with owner-occupiers is mandatory prior to a registered social landlord introducing factoring arrangements in blocks of flats in mixed tenure. (S4O-01119)

The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil): Consultation is mandatory if the matter is included in the title deeds. When the deeds do not make provision for the process of appointing a factor, the tenement management scheme in the Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004 may apply. The scheme makes provision for majority decisions at meetings or, failing that, following consultation.

Elaine Murray: The cabinet secretary's answer will be of interest to my constituents. If a ballot has been undertaken of householders in a block— involving both owner-occupiers and tenants— regarding future factoring arrangements, will all householders be bound by the result of that ballot to comply with the terms of the factoring agreement?

Alex Neil: The answer is more complex than a straight yes or no because it depends on the status of the title deeds and various other factors. I suggest that Ms Murray writes to me with the specifics and we will do our best to give her a definitive reply on what applies in the circumstances.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of my concerns about unintended consequences of the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011, which is admirable legislation. For example, East Kilbride and District Housing Association feels that it is obliged to set a factoring cost for a limited number of shared equity owners for whom it had agreed that it was not worth it economically to set up a factoring system. Can he give some comfort to associations such as that?

Alex Neil: The member has written to Keith Brown, the Minister for Housing and Transport, on that point and will receive a detailed reply in the next few days.

We are looking at any unintended consequences of the legislation with a view to making any necessary amendments in the

housing bill that is planned for introduction next year.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Question 2, in the name of Ken Macintosh, has been withdrawn. The member has provided me with an explanation and I am satisfied with it.

NHS Boards (Targets)

3. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what recent discussions it has had with national health service boards that show significant variation below the mean in the recording of either referral-to-treatment or waiting time targets. (S4O-01121)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy (Nicola Sturgeon): Ministers meet regularly with NHS chairs and discuss issues of importance to the service, including waiting times. Each board and the health department also closely monitor each individual health board area as part of their routine discussions on delivery of waiting times standards.

The referral-to-treatment target is for 90 per cent compliance. The latest statistics show that the linkage rate from initial referral to treatment was 90.5 per cent for March 2012.

Dr Simpson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer but what I was really asking was what specific conversations she had had with boards such as NHS Ayrshire and Arran, which accounted for 93 per cent of all the breaches over nine weeks in the waiting time target for diagnostics and, in addition, accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the breaches of six weeks, which is the current target.

Almost another 50 per cent was accounted for by NHS Fife. Out of the total breaches of the diagnostic target, two health boards accounted for well over 90 per cent. I have asked NHS Fife about it and it has explained what happened and how it is being tackled. Has the cabinet secretary asked the questions of NHS Ayrshire and Arran? Can she tell us what the problem is in NHS Ayrshire and Arran and what support she is offering both boards, or has she yet again failed to ask the right questions?

Nicola Sturgeon: If Richard Simpson had listened to my original answer, he would have heard me say that we discuss all of those issues on an on-going basis with health boards, as appropriate. Where there are questions relating to the data submitted to Information Services Division by an individual health board or indeed the apparent performance around waiting times standards by that health board, that will be interrogated and followed up, as appropriate, by ISD, where it considers that appropriate, and by my officials.

I am more than happy to write to the member specifically in the case of NHS Fife, although I hear him say that he has already done that, and in the case of NHS Ayrshire and Arran, to ask them to offer their explanations for the issues relating to the data in each case.

Sheriffhall Roundabout

4. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to redevelop the Sheriffhall roundabout and achieve grade separation. (S4O-01122)

The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil): Our plans for junction improvements at the Sheriffhall roundabout on the A720 Edinburgh city bypass are outlined in intervention 22 of the strategic transport projects review, commonly referred to as the STPR.

We continue to engage with the relevant authorities regarding their proposals for future development around Sheriffhall to help to inform the further detailed design and development work required to determine the nature of those junction improvements.

Colin Beattie: Sheriffhall roundabout continues to be a congestion nightmare for my constituents and those travelling to my constituency. It also remains a safety hazard for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Does the cabinet secretary agree that some form of grade separation is urgently needed as part of a solution to the problem? Does he agree that in order to resolve the chronic congestion, urgent action is needed?

Alex Neil: We recognise the importance of upgrading Sheriffhall roundabout, which is why it is included in the STPR. The timetable for the junction improvements will be set in the context of overall affordability and our commitments to other STPR proposals. Inevitably, the 30 per cent reduction in our capital budget that Westminster has imposed is delaying programmes such as that one because, if we had the money, we would have been able to carry out many such projects far sooner than we will now be able to.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): As the Sheriffhall roundabout impinges on my constituency, will the minister confirm that I have taken a correct note of his words—is it intervention 22 in the STPR? Is that what will help me?

Alex Neil: That was a welcome intervention on intervention 22. I am absolutely sure that every intervention in the STPR is there primarily with the Borders in mind and will help Christine Grahame. We are absolutely determined to improve transport in the Borders, as we are throughout Scotland.

Commonwealth Games (Benefits to North-east)

5. Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what benefit the 2014 Commonwealth games will bring to the north-east. (S4O-01123)

The Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government is committed to creating a lasting legacy and maximising the benefits for the whole of Scotland from Glasgow's hosting of the 2014 Commonwealth games.

Activity throughout the north-east is being delivered with national partners and the three local authorities. Thirteen community sports hubs are, or soon will be, delivering services to the local community. One business that is based in the north-east is benefiting from having won a Commonwealth games-related contract, with many more contract opportunities to come. Six youth legacy ambassadors are developing new skills by engaging in a wide range of legacy activity and championing that to their peers and communities.

Local people and groups are also getting involved through our annual games for Scotland events and grant funding from the Big Lottery Fund's 2014 communities programme.

Dennis Robertson: Is the minister satisfied that councils such as Aberdeenshire Council are doing everything that they can to embrace the principle of the Commonwealth games in the interests of our young people and are ensuring that the community sport hubs and our school estates are accessible and affordable for our young people?

Shona Robison: Dennis Robertson focuses on an important issue. I am satisfied that there is good engagement with all local authorities in Scotland on the issue. We have made a commitment to deliver 150 community sports hubs throughout Scotland by 2016, and that is because many of them are the mechanism for opening up schools, so that schools are not closed beyond the school day. The facilities, which are often the best sporting facilities in a community, should be open in the evening and on the weekends. The community sports hubs provide us with a good way of achieving that.

Scottish Government (Off-payroll Employees)

6. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government how many of its employees have their salaries paid off-payroll. (S4O-01124)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): There are no such cases.

Alison Johnstone: I am pleased that action has been taken since I lodged the question. The issue of tax avoidance in the public sector is incredibly important. Will the minister advise when the 20 employees who were off-payroll will come on-payroll?

Going beyond individual employees, will the cabinet secretary consider action to ensure that fear of legal action does not discourage public bodies from contracting private firms that have responsible tax arrangements?

John Swinney: There has been no requirement to take action to remedy the situation since the question was lodged because there are no circumstances, and never have been, in which employees of the Scottish Government have been paid off-payroll.

As part of my review of public bodies appointments across 143 organisations, I identified 20 cases in which individuals were not being paid through the payroll, with tax deducted at source. The average remuneration for those individuals was £2,000 a year, so we should have a sense of perspective about this particular question.

The other point with regard to the remuneration of contractors who manifestly are not civil servants and manifestly are not employees of the Scottish Government is that the framework agreement from the Government requires consultants and contractors, including suppliers of temporary workers, to satisfy the Scottish Government that they conduct all financial accounting and reporting activity in full compliance with tax laws and regulations. That is what I expect, and that is what I will enforce.

Ferry Routes (Tendering Process)

7. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it is making with the tendering process for CalMac routes. (S4O-01125)

The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil): Our current focus is on finalising the Scottish ferries plan, which will define the main features of the future procurement of the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services. An announcement on the timescale for the tendering of those services will be made in due course.

David Stewart: Is the cabinet secretary aware of the serious concerns of RMT and Nautilus International about the significant increase in the number of foreign seafarers who are employed to work within United Kingdom waters at well below the national minimum wage and on inferior conditions?

Will he undertake to ensure that the new tendering process for the 2013 to 2019 routes is conducted on a level playing field, with no unfair advantage being accrued to one operator?

Does Mr Neil share my view that CalMac's consistent and successful record in investment in and training and employment of seafarers is critical to the future of the Scottish maritime sector?

Alex Neil: I am aware of the concerns. Within the procurement legislation and the framework of the European Union, we will do what we can to ensure that there is a level playing field in ferries procurement, as we do throughout the Government procurement process.

Like David Stewart, I am very impressed by the work that CalMac has undertaken, but of course I cannot allow that to dictate the outcome of any particular contract award.

Scottish Futures Trust (Hubs)

8. Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what social and economic impact the Scottish Futures Trust's hub programme is having on local communities. (S4O-01126)

The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil): The long-term nature of the hub programme facilitates the creation of new employment and training opportunities, and supports the development of long-term sustainable businesses.

Central to being appointed as a hub territory partner is making a pledge to create employment opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises and the third sector and supporting and engaging with local communities and training programmes. To date, more than 80 per cent of the value of hub construction work has been locally procured among SME companies.

The hub programme is also delivering high-quality public buildings for joint occupation by health, education, social work and other community staff, and the co-location of services is supporting the on-going drive to improve public services for communities right across Scotland.

Colin Keir: Since its opening four months ago, the Drumbrae library hub has attracted more than 55,000 visitors. Does the minister agree that the all-round success of the project is evidence that the hub model's joint working and shared delivery approach is succeeding in delivering value-for-money public services for local communities?

Alex Neil: The Drumbrae library hub is the first project to be completed by hub South East Scotland Ltd, and the first hub project to be completed in Scotland. I am delighted that it has

received an enthusiastic welcome from local residents.

The hub programme that the Scottish Futures Trust is taking forward will deliver £1.4 billion of community infrastructure across Scotland over the next 10 years. It is an innovative approach, and central to its success is collaborative working among local authorities, health boards, blue-light services and private sector development partners.

I look forward to many more projects like the Drumbrae library hub being delivered, bringing benefits to local communities throughout the country. That would not have happened if we had listened to the Labour Opposition and its opposition to the creation of the Scottish Futures Trust.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): Given that single-supplier framework agreements are restricted to four years under the European Union procurement directive, is the cabinet secretary confident that hubs are compatible?

Assuming that they are—and I hope, in the interests of the north Edinburgh health centre, that they are—will he tell me why the north Edinburgh health centre is taking so long to materialise, given that an initial agreement on the project was approved by the Scottish Government capital investment group in 2009?

Alex Neil: I am totally satisfied that the procurement arrangements are perfectly in order in relation to both EU legislation and our own requirements.

The reason for the delay in the specific project to which Mr Chisholm referred is to get agreement on some of the details among all the constituent partners, but my understanding is that substantial progress is now being made.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Last week, the Scottish Futures Trust won a clutch of awards for being the “Best Central/Regional Government PPP Promoter”. Is it not about time that we had some honesty from the minister and that he accepted what everyone else knows—that SFT schemes are just public-private partnership schemes under another name?

Alex Neil: I do not think that any member of the Labour Party is in a good position on this, given the huge disaster that private finance initiatives have left both north and south of the border. Let us take a Labour Party PFI project such as the one at Hairmyres hospital, where we will end up spending three to four times the original cost of the project. Labour opposed the SFT, but the SFT is delivering for the people of Scotland. Labour imposed cuts and the Conservatives endorsed them, and if it had not been for the SFT, we would not be getting

new colleges in Inverness, Kilmarnock and Glasgow, we would not be making progress with the sick children’s hospital in Edinburgh, and we would not be doing all the other things that the Government is doing that Labour failed to deliver over eight years.

Renewable Energy Investment Fund

9. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Perhaps this issue will be less controversial than the previous one.

To ask the Scottish Government when the renewable energy investment fund will be open for bids from community bodies. (S4O-01127)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Alongside the announcement in March of our plans to establish a renewable energy investment fund, we announced an interim package of support worth £2 million for community renewables for this financial year. That transitional support is open for applications, and community bodies that are interested in the scheme should contact Community Energy Scotland. That support will build on existing support specifically to ensure that communities can obtain finance for capital build. It will thus help to maintain the momentum towards our target for community and locally owned renewables while arrangements for the renewable energy investment fund are being finalised.

Patrick Harvie: I hope that, in answering my supplementary question, the minister will confirm when the renewable energy investment fund will be up and running and open for bids.

Previously, I have sought assurances from the Government that the definition of “communities” will be broad and inclusive and will allow joint bids in association with public bodies, such as councils. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that communities of interest will be able to apply for support, rather than only geographic communities?

John Swinney: I will write to Patrick Harvie on the specific point that he has raised to clarify matters, as there is a very specific definition of community interest companies. I will need to confirm that with him.

I reassure Patrick Harvie that an interim package of support, which was announced back in March by the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism, is available for applications as we work through the details of the renewable energy investment fund. There is no impediment to applications coming forward and being considered for the interim funding that we have put in place.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): What is the minister's response to urgent concerns that renewable energy developments by communities and individuals are being hampered by a lack of grid connection availability?

John Swinney: It is clear that ensuring the alignment of individual projects with grid connections is a major factor in ensuring that renewable energy projects can be taken forward. As Mr McGrigor will know, questions about access to the grid are essentially points for discussion with the power companies. If there are specific cases about which Mr McGrigor is concerned, ministers will be happy to try to assist in forming solutions. Ensuring that there is alignment between emerging projects and the available grid connections is a very practical issue that is at the heart of taking forward the agenda, and ministers would be happy to help out in any way that they can to resolve such questions.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):

What part can local authorities play in encouraging communities to make a contribution to the climate change effort? Does the cabinet secretary share my regret that Glasgow City Council's obstruction over the Castlemilk and Carmunnock Community Wind Park Trust has meant that people in my constituency have lost out on years of potential benefit from the project?

John Swinney: Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, public bodies must act in a way that will contribute to the delivery of the targets that are set out under the act. Therefore, on Mr Dornan's key question, Glasgow City Council and other local authorities have a key role in helping us to reach the targets.

I understand that it was not possible for Castlemilk and Carmunnock Community Wind Park Trust and Glasgow City Council to reach an agreement on the lease of land. We encourage dialogue, in the spirit of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, to make progress on such questions.

The Presiding Officer: Before we come to First Minister's questions, members will want to join me in welcoming to the gallery the Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly, Mr László Kövér. *[Applause.]*

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-00774)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): There will be meetings to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Johann Lamont: There were fun and games at Leveson yesterday. I am pleased that the First Minister managed to get through the whole day without telling Robert Jay that he was not asking the right questions.

The First Minister said yesterday that the only reason why he backed the Murdoch takeover of British Sky Broadcasting was for Scottish jobs. Can he confirm how many jobs would have come to Scotland if the Murdochs had taken over BSkyB? Will he say what the civil service and Scottish Enterprise assessments were of the deal?

The First Minister: Maybe that was because Robert Jay was asking the right questions yesterday.

The evidence for the impact on jobs and investment in Scotland comes in three parts. First, there is the evidence of James Murdoch—under oath, of course—to the Leveson inquiry on 24 April. I will read Johann Lamont the relevant part:

"I think we have to recall that this merger was about the creation of a pan-European digital television platform with major operations in the United Kingdom, and particularly that meant potentially quite a lot of operations and an increase in operations in Scotland, where technical support, IT, service centres, et cetera, were located for British Sky Broadcasting as an important employer there".

Secondly, we know—and Johann Lamont knows now—that 36 per cent of BSkyB's global employment is located in Scotland. At a meeting that I had with Mr Murdoch last year, it was explained that there would be an increase of 150 jobs in Livingston; those jobs were announced on 13 March and 16 May last year.

Thirdly, and crucially, there is the question of the outsourcing jobs. Johann Lamont will have studied my letter to James Murdoch after the meeting last January, when I quoted back the key point that he had conceded, which was that Scotland is a world-class centre for outsourcing. We were in danger last year because of the decision to move from six to two suppliers, which potentially put almost 2,000 jobs at risk in Scotland. Fortunately for Scotland, HEROtsc—with the assistance of Scottish Enterprise—was able to win one of the

two contracts and, instead of losing jobs, we gained jobs in Scotland.

Those are the facts of which Johann Lamont was not aware the last time she started asking such questions. Now that she is aware of the facts, will she concede that, whatever politicians elsewhere were doing, jobs and investment for Scotland were the priority for this Government?

Johann Lamont: First, that compelling case would have been interesting if, when the First Minister was first asked about the matter, he had not dismissed out of hand the fact that he was going to make a call to James Hunt. Secondly, my question was about what assessments the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise had made, not about what James Murdoch told the First Minister or anyone else that the deal would mean.

The fact is that the First Minister did not make the case on jobs. At the Leveson inquiry, Robert Jay QC put forward a compelling case that the First Minister appeared to be lobbying on Rupert Murdoch's behalf in return for the support of *The Sun*. The First Minister admitted that he was prepared to lobby—in secret, bizarrely—for Murdoch because a takeover would have been good for Scottish jobs. How many jobs did the Murdochs tell him would be created in Scotland if they had taken over BSkyB—or did they threaten to pull jobs out if he did not back the bid?

The First Minister: James Hunt was an English racing driver. James Murdoch was chairman of BSkyB. James Murdoch is the one who, under oath at the Leveson inquiry, made the commitment and the argument that the digital television platform would have led to an increase in jobs in Scotland.

BSkyB has credibility in Scotland because it has more than 6,000 direct jobs in Scotland—36 per cent of its entire global workforce. Incidentally, the success of HEROTSC—and of Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International in working with it—in winning one of the two outsourcing contracts is not a particularly strong suit for Johann Lamont, given that when she discussed it in April she was totally unaware of its importance, despite the fact that it led to the opening of a new centre in Glasgow.

The people who are aware of the importance of those jobs are the people in Livingston, Dunfermline, Uddingston and Glasgow. They are glad that they have a Government that fights for jobs in Scotland.

Johann Lamont: Everybody knows that those jobs have nothing to do with the BSkyB takeover. If the First Minister believed that, he might have shared the information that it was about those jobs

rather than being prepared to make secret phone calls on behalf of Murdoch.

The First Minister tells us of the importance of BSkyB to Scottish jobs, and he is right. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, that is a novelty, but he is right. BSkyB was a major employer in Scotland before the bid and it remains a major employer after the withdrawal of the bid—so what was the benefit to Scotland of the Murdochs taking over BSkyB?

The First Minister: To quote James Murdoch's evidence again,

"that meant ... quite a lot of operations and an increase in operations in Scotland, where technical support, IT, service centres ... were located for British Sky Broadcasting".

When the chairman of a company that employs more than 6,000 people in direct jobs in Scotland says that the digital television platform would lead to an increase in its operations and more jobs in Scotland—and when he announces another 150 jobs in March and in May—he has a great deal more credibility than Johann Lamont, a Glasgow MSP who was not even aware of the huge threat to jobs in Glasgow.

What ultimately reveals Labour's difficulty in this is that, when Johann Lamont was asked on Radio Scotland whether she would meet Rupert Murdoch because he was an important investor in Scotland, her answer—after a bit of hesitation—was that yes, she would meet him. That makes Johann Lamont the only Labour Party figure who wanted to meet either James or Rupert Murdoch to talk about jobs—the rest of them were apparently talking about many other things.

Johann Lamont: The difference between me and the First Minister is that if I met Rupert Murdoch, I would ask him how many jobs the deal brought with it. The First Minister seems to have taken him entirely at his word. The First Minister did not ask Scottish Government officials or Scottish Enterprise to assess things. Apparently, if Mr Murdoch says it, it must be true—meaningless assertion after meaningless assertion.

If the Murdoch bid would have created jobs in Scotland, why did the First Minister not ask Scottish Enterprise to assess the plan? What did the civil servants say about the bid and when did his Cabinet sign off the Government support for the deal? Why has he not answered the more than 40 questions that we have put to him about his dealings with Murdoch? As Robert Jay QC said yesterday,

"at the very least, there was a perception of cosiness"

between the First Minister and Rupert Murdoch. Nothing the First Minister has said changes that fact. Is it not true that Alex Salmond became

Rupert Murdoch's lackey not to create Scottish jobs but in an attempt to keep his own?

The First Minister: I have told Johann Lamont what James Murdoch said under oath at the Leveson inquiry, which speaks for itself. I have told her about the increase in jobs in Livingston, of which she seemed totally unaware. I have told her about the saving of 2,000 jobs through the intervention and excellence of HEROTsc, of which she was totally unaware in April. The Labour Party has been blissfully unaware of all those things.

I pointed out that I have had five meetings with Rupert Murdoch in the past five years. I also pointed out to the Leveson inquiry that that is not in the same league as the Labour Party of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. In fact, over Gordon Brown's brief period as prime minister, he managed some 17 meetings with Rupert Murdoch.

In case it is said that that was all in the past, in the bad old days of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, I remind Johann Lamont as gently as I can of the words of Ed Miliband in *The Sun* on 22 April 2011. He said:

"Red Ed has died a death."

He explained for *The Sun's* readers, who were his main concern, that he was going to develop a new set of policies. He told the readership of *The Sun* that, even before the new policies would be known by Johann Lamont or any other MSP,

"You will read it first in *The Sun*."

That strikes me as a pretty cosy relationship.

Johann Lamont: The First Minister has the cheek to accuse me—[*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order!

Johann Lamont: He has the cheek to accuse me of using a script, when he has prepared abuse that has nothing to do with the question that I asked him. [*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Order! We will hear the member.

Johann Lamont: The First Minister has to confront the contradictions between the fact that, on 11 February 2011, Fred Michel said that the First Minister

"will call Hunt whenever we need him to"

and the fact that, according to written evidence to the Leveson inquiry, the Scottish Government had not expressed a view in early 2011 on the takeover. The First Minister must explain why he supported a takeover when it was self-evidently not about jobs. Everybody knows that it was not about jobs, so he needs to answer the question.

The First Minister: I thought that I explained this at some length at the Leveson inquiry

yesterday. I am afraid that Johann Lamont's interpretation of that does not meet the general interpretation of what was said. Let me see whether she can understand the key point. The responsibility of this Government is not competition policy—that lies with Westminster. Nor is it plurality in the press—that, too, lies with Westminster. The statutory responsibility of this Government is jobs and investment for Scotland. I assure Johann Lamont that that is the priority of this Government and that it is what we fight for every day of every week. If the Labour Party does not like that, that is fine, because this is a contest between two parties, one of which cares about jobs and the second of which cares about whatever Labour cares about. Certainly, the Scottish people care about jobs, jobs, jobs.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister. (S4F-00750)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no plans to meet the Prime Minister in the near future. I think that the Prime Minister is otherwise engaged today.

Ruth Davidson: I am sure that the First Minister kept his seat warm for him.

Let us stick with yesterday's testimony. When Rupert Murdoch's new baby, *The Sun on Sunday*, was launched, Alex Salmond was the first edition's poster boy. He gave exclusive access and a full interview—nothing was off the table. The same edition had a front-page splash that said "Day of Destiny" and "Revealed" the date of the referendum. Yesterday, the First Minister said that he did not leak the date—indeed, it could not have been leaked because apparently you cannot leak a possibility. However, he did not say whether that date was given to *The Sun* as a possibility by one of his advisers. Did it come from the First Minister's office—from a spin doctor, a civil servant or another adviser—and did he approve the date's release?

The First Minister: Kind of unwittingly, I anticipated that Ruth Davidson might ask that question, because I read about it in *The Daily Telegraph* this morning—we could have an investigation into the cosy relationship between *The Daily Telegraph* and the Scottish Conservative Party. The point that I was making was simple—the date is not a preferred date or the date; it is a possible date, because it is in the autumn of 2014. The date of the referendum will be announced after we have analysed the consultation responses and seen what people have had to say in the more than 20,000 representations to the consultation. I understand that the Conservative Party did not make a

representation, so we can safely say that Ruth Davidson has no views on these matters. However, the people of Scotland have views and, when we have analysed the consultation, the date of the referendum will be announced.

Since Johann Lamont previously asked the same question, we have had a move forward, because we have heard that the Prime Minister is not fussed about the autumn 2014 date although, unfortunately, he did not tell Ruth Davidson. After all the huffing and puffing, week after week, it turns out that her leader—he is at the Leveson inquiry today, although I am sure that he will not be asked about this—is not bothered. The date will be in the autumn of 2014.

Ruth Davidson: It seems that all the charm and candour was used up yesterday and the First Minister is back to his usual self today. That was just like the First Minister—attacking anyone else and not answering the question. We were told:

“a Scottish Government source said: ‘This date is being lined up as the day when people will get the chance to vote for independence ... for Scotland.’”

Alex Salmond asks people to trust him on the issue, but we should look at the record of the past few weeks. The First Minister asserts that he has cross-party support for the independence campaign—no, he does not. He says that he knows that Scotland would not have to apply to join the euro—no, he does not. He asserts that he can put a Scot on the Bank of England’s monetary policy committee—no, he cannot. He asserts that Scotland can just use the Financial Services Authority as a financial regulator—no, we cannot. He is making it up as he goes along. He is getting found out and people are watching. People are looking for real answers to legitimate questions about the future of Scotland, but the First Minister is selling Scotland short by refusing to give them. Does he really think that, based on past performance, people will believe him any more?

The First Minister: As cheerfully and as gently as possible, I point out to Ruth Davidson that the Financial Services Authority is being abolished. It is no more. It is a dead Financial Services Authority. It has fallen off its perch. It has gone. It is finished. We cannae join it even if we want to.

On political parties, we should remember that, only a week or so ago, Ruth Davidson and her new colleagues in the cross-party alliance and joint campaign with the Labour Party were outvoted in the Scottish Parliament by the cross-party campaign for independence. Ruth Davidson touched on political parties’ fortunes. I have been reading that Tory Hoose website again, and I note that the Holyrood candidate for Almond Valley has been talking about the most disastrous results for the Conservative Party in the past 20 years, and then summing up by saying:

“Leader Ruth Davidson ... has to accept ... responsibility. This was her first electoral test, and the results were certainly not a vote of confidence from the Scottish public.”

She should sort out her own hoose first, before she starts asking me questions.

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): Is the First Minister aware that, on Tuesday, Scottish Gas announced 135 job losses at its call centre and support facility in Uddingston? The GMB and Unison officials there are concerned that the work is to be transferred within the company to a facility with poorer pay and conditions. The First Minister was quick to call Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs for his friend Sir David Murray and he could not wait to make a call to Jeremy Hunt for his friend Sir Rupert Murdoch. Are 135 Scottish Gas employees in Uddingston worthy of a phone call, or does the First Minister’s statutory responsibility to fight for Scottish jobs, jobs, jobs apply only to some and not to others?

The First Minister: That remark about Sir David Murray is totally untrue. I am used to Michael McMahon and others saying things that are less than factually accurate about me and the Scottish National Party, but if the member is going to say something about someone who is not in the chamber and therefore has no ability to defend themselves, I must at least put on the record that his remark about Sir David Murray is totally untrue.

Perhaps I can turn to the substance of what was meant to be a constituency question about jobs. Is Michael McMahon so caught up in the political battle that he cannot do the essential duty of any member of Parliament, which is to represent his constituents as best he can? I am aware of the matter and will be talking to the unions and the company to see what can be done for his constituents. We put the interests of his constituents first, even if his remarks put that into doubt.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-00752)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Cabinet will discuss issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

Willie Rennie: Earlier this week, I received a letter from a former senior official of Scottish Enterprise, who was angry at the appointment of the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to the board of Intertek for an annual payment of £55,000 on top of her £200,000 salary. What does the First Minister have to say to that former Scottish Enterprise official?

The First Minister: I am surprised, because there are precedents for the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise being a non-executive director on the board of private companies under the Labour and Liberal Administration. Perhaps the former official was part of that Scottish Enterprise team. I am not sure whether Willie Rennie was aware of that but, nonetheless, it is a fact.

Willie Rennie should look at the positive reaction to this move from a range of business organisations. A lot of people understand the benefits of having the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise as one of the very few Scottish women who have ever been on the board of a FTSE 100 company. There are no conflict of interest concerns, because they have all been dealt with in Scottish Enterprise's rules and regulations. Perhaps Willie Rennie should look at the broader picture and see the potential benefits to Scotland—and to Scottish Enterprise—of the appointment that was announced earlier this week.

Willie Rennie: Two years ago, the First Minister told the chamber that John Swinney had already acted to heavily restrict bonuses in the public sector; only now we find that there is a loophole allowing access to an extra £55,000. Most people—perhaps not those on the Scottish National Party benches—would not accept that £55,000 for 12 days' work can be justified for someone who is already being paid £200,000 every year. [*Laughter.*] SNP members might laugh, but most people will find their laughter hollow.

I cannot really believe that the First Minister supports this appointment. If he reverses this decision today, he will get my support. Will he act?

The First Minister: I was just wondering myself what anyone would pay Willie Rennie as a non-executive director. I suppose that that might have been part of the reason for the interest shown in his comments.

There is a substantive point that Lena Wilson did not put in the press release—it is typical of the woman—but which I should make clear to Willie Rennie, because it might change his attitude to these matters. Under contracts that were drawn up during the years of the Labour and Liberal Administration, Lena Wilson has a contractual entitlement to a public sector bonus; indeed, it was commonplace for the contracts for the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to set out bonuses. She has relinquished her right to that public sector bonus. It seems to me that Willie Rennie should support that move, because it is in line with Government policy to eliminate contractual entitlements to bonuses from public sector contracts, even those that were drawn up and framed during the Labour and Liberal years of

government. Eighty per cent of the people who were entitled to a bonus have voluntarily relinquished it. Lena Wilson has relinquished any entitlement to a public sector bonus. For the sake of fairness, on the record, Willie Rennie should accept that that is in line with Scottish Government policy. He should welcome that.

Suicide Rate

4. Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to address the disparity in the suicide rate in Scotland compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. (S4F-00755)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Scottish Government is working hard with our partners in the national health service, local authorities and the third sector to reduce suicide and improve mental health and wellbeing. One life lost is too many, but the most recent figures published by the General Register Office for Scotland show that 2009 and 2010 had two of the lowest numbers of suicides in the past 20 years.

We have been supporting suicide prevention by improving access to psychological therapies; training front-line NHS staff in suicide prevention awareness; taking action to support people who abuse alcohol; and funding NHS Health Scotland's choose life programme, which is the national strategy and action plan to prevent suicide in Scotland.

Marco Biagi: Research by the University of Edinburgh that was published this week showed that Scotland still has higher rates of suicide than the rest of the UK, which stems from the fact that Scotland has much higher rates of mental ill health in general. Research aside, anyone who has had personal contact with suicide through friends, family or loved ones knows how deep a tragedy every case is. Can the First Minister provide an assurance that the forthcoming and incredibly welcome mental health strategy will set out a substantive and comprehensive approach to improving Scotland's mental health?

The First Minister: I echo the member's comment about every suicide being a tragic loss. He is also right to point to the importance of mental health in many such tragedies. That is one reason why mental health is a priority for the Government. As the member knows, the mental health strategy was one of the first that we consulted on after last year's election. The consultation closed on 31 January this year. We received a substantial number of responses—more than 340—and we will publish the mental health strategy in the summer. It will build on some of the successes that have been achieved in mental health and will set priorities for future improvement between now and 2015.

I am sure that the whole chamber understands the importance of the issue and the historical problem that Scotland has with such tragedies. Once the new strategy is in place, we will unite behind it to do whatever we can to reduce the number of such tragedies.

Modern Apprentice Programme (New Jobs)

5. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister how many new jobs have been created as a result of the modern apprenticeship programme. (S4F-00760)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): As at 31 March this year, there were 35,262 apprentices in training, of whom 21,931 were aged between 16 and 19. Modern apprenticeships enable young people to gain better skills and a recognised qualification, and to develop confidence in the workplace. In addition, of course, every modern apprenticeship in Scotland is tied to a job.

Kezia Dugdale: Everyone in the chamber wants to tackle Scotland's youth unemployment crisis, but to do so we need the facts. The people of Scotland were led to believe by the First Minister, week after week, that the 25,000 apprenticeships were created to help the 100,000 young Scots who are out of work, but now we know that at least 10,000 of those went to folk who were already well established in jobs. On an issue as important as this, why cannot he just be straight with people?

The First Minister: Over the past few days, I have watched Kezia Dugdale engage in what I think has been one of the most disreputable campaigns against modern apprenticeships in Scotland. At the heart of her new-found complaint—the rules on the matter have not changed from when the Labour Party was in office—is her belief that there are far too many people on the modern apprenticeship scheme who have been in jobs for six months or longer.

I have had a look at the figures. Let us remember that the number of modern apprenticeships in Scotland has almost doubled since this party took office in 2007—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Mr Findlay, be quiet.

The First Minister: Of course, the Labour Party voted against that in this year's budget.

I have looked at the heart of Kezia Dugdale's complaint. If we look at 16 to 24-year-old apprentices, who predominate in the modern apprenticeship programme, we see that the proportion of them who had been in employment for more than six months was 23 per cent. That means that 80 per cent were new workers going into apprenticeships in the 16 to 24 age group. What was the figure when the Labour Party was in office in 2006? It was 49 per cent. In other words,

when Labour was in power, with a reduced number of apprenticeships, half of the young people had been in a job for six months or longer. That figure has now been reduced to 23 per cent.

Kezia Dugdale has the effrontery to conduct a campaign against a modern apprenticeship scheme that is one of the most successful in western Europe.

Higher English Curriculum

6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the teaching profession regarding proposed changes to the higher English curriculum. (S4F-00770)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The SQA works closely with teachers and subject experts in the development of qualifications. More than 5,000 teachers, lecturers and academics have been involved in the development of the new national qualifications in more than 60 subjects. That is an unprecedented involvement of expertise in the development of this key element of Scottish education. The higher English qualification to be introduced in 2015 has been developed in that manner.

Liz Smith: Last week, teachers of English in Scotland's schools backed an Educational Institute of Scotland motion that told Mike Russell to reverse his controversial decision to insist that there is a compulsory question on Scottish texts in the English higher, describing it as

"nothing to do with education". [*Interruption.*]

That is the view of the EIS and many English teachers across Scotland. They raised concerns that

"Instead of ... enriching children's learning, it will close it off and narrow it."

Does the First Minister agree with that comment?

The First Minister: Liz Smith should look at the report of the expert Scottish studies working group, its recommendations and the people who were on it. I give as an example the view of Brian Boyd, professor of education at the University of Strathclyde. He said:

"I welcome the announcement that all students sitting higher English should be entitled to study a Scottish text. It's the least we can do to signal the importance of our literary heritage and celebrate contemporary Scottish writing at the same time."

The EIS, incidentally, should not be represented as being against the study of Scottish history and Scottish texts and literature. That is not its position.

I say to Liz Smith that the Conservative Party's hostility, often, to the element of Scottish literature and history being developed in schools, and to the move to give the next generation of young people things that were, frankly, denied to my generation, does her party no credit. Indeed, its former deputy leader identified its attitude to such subjects as one of the reasons for the continual and everlasting decline of the Conservative Party in Scotland.

The Conservative Party should reconcile itself to the idea that many, many people in Scotland want to be able to learn about Scottish literature, culture and history in our schools and to have those placed in an international dimension.

12:33

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Scottish Executive Question Time

Rural Affairs and the Environment

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The first item of business this afternoon is themed question time. The first theme is rural affairs and the environment. I would be grateful for short and succinct questions and answers to allow as many questions as possible to be asked.

Proposed Water Framework and Industrial Emissions Directives

1. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has received regarding the impact on businesses of the proposed water framework and industrial emissions directives. (S4O-01129)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): The Government has regular dialogue with businesses over the development and implementation of policy. The water framework directive is a well-established policy and officials recently met the chemical industry and others as part of our development of a forthcoming consultation on the implementation of the industrial emissions directive.

Angus MacDonald: Some concern has been expressed recently by industries in my constituency regarding timescales for implementation of both directives. Given that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said a few months ago that the impact on industry would be minimal, will the minister highlight to his United Kingdom Government counterpart and European Union officials the fact that, given that the current economic downturn is creating significant challenges in the petrochemical and agrochemical industries and the fact that the costs involved in implementing the directives can be considerable, there has to be a degree of give and take—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr MacDonald, I need a question.

Angus MacDonald: Will the minister ask that industries that require extra time be given it in order to comply with the directives?

Stewart Stevenson: As recently as 19 April, I wrote to the UK Government to support the UK negotiating strategy on the implementation asking that it be proportionate and that timescales be

appropriate in order to avoid unnecessary and disproportionate cost.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

The Scottish Government's consultation document on proposals for an integrated framework of environmental regulation says that, in order for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to become the sort of regulator that we need, consideration should be given to having a single permitting procedure which, it is argued, will simplify the range of current procedures. Can the minister clarify what sort of procedures we need? In the week of the Rio+20 conference, can he assure us that there will be no risk of private enterprises being able to opt out of regulation and being able to undertake their own regulation of our natural resources—specifically, water?

Stewart Stevenson: It is up to private enterprises to obey the law and regulations. To that extent, they have to be internally self-regulating, and everyone in the company has to understand that. The role of bodies such as SEPA in regulation is in inspecting those processes and the outcomes. None of the changes that we are considering will change the basic principles of the duties within the company, or our role in monitoring what they do in order to deliver the desired outcomes.

Common Agricultural Policy

2. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands)

(SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the reform of the common agricultural policy. (S4O-01130)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): I met the UK and other devolved ministers in London on 2 May to discuss, among other things, the common agricultural policy negotiations. I also have regular discussions with UK ministers ahead of each agriculture council meeting in Europe, and will be meeting them again on Monday when I attend the next agriculture council meeting in Luxembourg.

In addition, Scottish Government officials are working closely with UK officials to ensure that Scottish views are fed into the process.

John Finnie: What assurances can be given to the crofting community that reform will address the anomalous situation that has resulted in crofting land being classified in the same way as prime agricultural land elsewhere in Scotland is classified?

Richard Lochhead: The crofting communities are taking a close interest in a number of issues, and we are paying close attention to the situation. However, in theory, the move from the historic way of paying single farm payments based on area

could benefit the crofting counties and crofters who qualify. The reasons for that are obvious, and concern the taking into account of the amount of land that is involved.

I could go on at great length about a range of issues in this area. If the member is aware of any specific concerns, he could ask for a meeting with me, or he could write to me, and I will investigate the matters.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): What hope can the cabinet secretary hold out to those who have entered farming since the previous reforms and who, consequently, have no entitlement to the single farm payment? What assurances can he give that their situation will be addressed in this round of common agricultural policy reform?

Richard Lochhead: Alex Fergusson has raised a very good point. The issue is one of our top priorities for the negotiations. I know that ministers tend to respond to all concerns by saying that they are priorities, but I am sure that Parliament is aware that the matter is a key priority for Scotland.

We must ensure that we have a much fairer system for delivering agricultural support. Irrespective of when someone became an active farmer, they should qualify for the payment if they are active. We are trying to convey that clear message to the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development.

There has of course been movement, which allows new entrants who pass a test in the draft regulation to qualify for support, but we do not think that that goes far enough for Scotland's circumstances and many new entrants would still be excluded, so we are still pursuing the issue.

Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): What discussions has the Scottish Government had to ensure that, in the new system following CAP reform, only those who actively farm the land are entitled to receive the single farm payment? Does the Scottish Government believe that provision should be made to prevent the single farm payment from being shared with the landlord as part of the rent?

Richard Lochhead: That relates to the previous question about ensuring that genuinely active farmers receive the single farm payment and other related support. That issue is one reason why we were pleased to secure in the negotiations what we are calling the Scottish clause, which is in the draft regulations and which the Scottish Government communicated, with industry support, to the European Commission. That provision will allow us some leeway to define activity in Scotland in due course, once the new policy is in place.

We clearly want active farmers to benefit from the payments—not inactive farmers. In the situation that was highlighted in Margaret McDougall's question, tenant farmers should qualify for the payment.

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): In the context of CAP reform, the United Kingdom Government agriculture minister has said that what matters is that the UK Government speaks for Scotland on the basis of what he terms "shared objectives". However, unlike the UK Government, Scottish farmers do not support a reduction in pillar 1 funding. Can the cabinet secretary therefore clarify how the Scottish interest can be protected in Brussels when we currently have no seat at the top table?

Richard Lochhead: In the absence of a seat at the top table, I suggest that the first solution is the election of an SNP Government. Thankfully, that happened not too long ago, so we are in the best possible position to try to influence the UK Government and Europe in the interests of Scotland's farming communities.

Of course, we must negotiate not only with other member states and the European Commission but with the UK Government. That dilutes our priorities to a certain extent, because a member state can have only so many priorities and we need to share priorities with the rest of the UK when it comes to negotiations.

However, I believe that Scotland is punching above its weight. In my answer to the previous question, I gave the example of the so-called Scottish clause in the draft agricultural policy, which is a solution that has been made in Scotland and which the Scottish Government persuaded the European Commission to adopt.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I regret to advise Parliament that question 3 has not been lodged.

Water Pollution

4. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to tackle water pollution. (S4O-01132)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Scotland's river basin management plans include a range of measures to protect Scotland's water environment from pollution. The Scottish Government is working closely with key stakeholders on the implementation of the plans.

Claire Baker: Concerns have been expressed by constituents in Kinglassie in Fife about pollution in the Lochty Burn. Locals have worked hard to improve their local environment and to make it an attractive waterway to the village, but their efforts

have been hindered by recent pollution of the burn by iron deposits, possibly from old coal mines. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency is working with the Scottish Coal Company to investigate the issue, but it has been doing so for over a year and we are no further forward. Will the minister raise those concerns with SEPA? Will he ensure that SEPA is adequately resourced and has robust strategies in place to deal with water pollution arising from Scotland's industrial past?

Stewart Stevenson: I say briefly that I am happy to raise the issue with SEPA and to ensure that I am informed on this clearly very important but local issue. On SEPA's resources, it has become a very effective organisation and the way in which it now discharges its responsibilities means that we probably have better coverage than we have had for many years.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister join me in welcoming Scottish Water's best practice incentive scheme, which seeks to protect water supply quality, for example at Loch Ascog on Bute? Could that scheme be extended elsewhere?

Stewart Stevenson: I know that Scottish Water takes environmental issues extremely seriously. As Jamie McGrigor does, I very much welcome the publication of best practice, and I welcome the news about what is going on in Bute, of which he has just apprised me. I will certainly look into extension of that scheme to other parts of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 was not lodged, but the member has provided an explanation for that.

Public Bodies Climate Change Duty

6. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive how it is meeting its climate change public sector duty to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. (S4O-01134)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Officials in the energy and climate change directorate lead work to co-ordinate the Scottish Government's own compliance with the duties in part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. That includes both operational action and appropriate policy responses, as set out in the guidance that the Scottish Government published in February last year to assist all public bodies in complying with the duties. Particular progress has been achieved in embedding carbon emissions reduction measures across the operation of the estate, and in improving governance, target setting, reporting, public engagement and acting sustainably—for example, through sustainable procurement.

Gavin Brown: I have looked at the minutes of the public sector climate action group, which the minister chairs, I think. It is stated in those minutes that

“Zero Waste and Sustainable Procurement are to be taken forward at a lower level of priority”.

Can the minister expand on that statement?

Stewart Stevenson: I chair that group jointly with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities environment representative. That representative will be someone new, as the previous one was not re-elected.

What Gavin Brown has read, of course, reflects how relative priorities will change over time as progress is made on activities, and we move our primary focus to areas in which greater attention is required. That is an example of progress having been made and of a refocusing on areas in which progress is less satisfactory.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): How are local authorities performing in contributing to meeting climate change targets? In particular, how is Glasgow City Council performing? Following an Audit Scotland report in 2010-11, that council was shown to have the worst record of all 32 local authorities.

Stewart Stevenson: The guidance on public bodies' duties is very clear, and it applies to all public bodies—including all Scotland's councils. All the councils, including Glasgow City Council, signed a declaration in 2007 to work on that subject. It is, of course, for Glasgow City Council to determine how it delivers on that aim, but I certainly expect every council and every public body to demonstrate significant progress now. I am disappointed to hear what James Dornan has reported.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Will the Scottish Government undertake an assessment of the overall progress of the public sector under all three parts of the public sector duties? If so, how will that be done and when will the results be published?

Stewart Stevenson: We monitor all the activities from the 21 reporting streams under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. That progress is monitored in significant part through the COSLA and Government joint body, to which I already referred. For the time being, that appears to be the best way of tracking what is happening in local authorities.

Waste Reduction and Recycling (Promotion)

7. Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to promote waste reduction and recycling. (S4O-01135)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): We are driving forward that agenda with a range of measures. Just this morning, I was delighted to help to launch an innovative pilot project across four local authorities to recycle disposable nappies—450,000 of which are disposed of in landfill each and every day in Scotland, believe it or not. It is a staggering figure.

Other innovative programmes include the recently announced deposit return and reverse vending initiative, which will test opportunities to improve our collection of used packaging. More generally, of course, we have the new Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012, and our targeted investment in collection and processing will continue to support increasing levels of recycling from homes and businesses.

Stuart McMillan: Some local authorities have made significant improvements in their recycling rates, but it is disappointing that the amount of municipal waste that is sent for recycling by others, such as Inverclyde Council, is consistently below the Scottish average, even though they, too, have made steps forward to reach the target that is set out in the Scottish zero waste plan.

What further targeted support can be given to local authorities to encourage them to improve their recycling levels?

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government supplies funding to local authorities, and between 2010 and 2013 we are funding zero waste Scotland to the tune of almost £70 million, much of which goes to local authority initiatives the length and breadth of the country. We also give support for individual initiatives. For instance, we gave an additional £5 million this year to support food-waste collections, which I know many members support.

A number of initiatives are in the pipeline. The recent regulations, which I mentioned, will take Scotland to the next stage towards becoming a zero waste country. I hope that Inverclyde Council will be able to benefit from that. There are different challenges in different parts of the country, and how far an area makes it towards its targets often comes down to leadership and determination at local level. We will continue to work closely with local authorities.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): The cabinet secretary knows of the good work that is done by community social enterprises, such as the Dumbarton Road Corridor Environment Trust in my region—Glasgow—where neighbourhood recycling is particularly challenging. What support can the Government give to such groups to encourage greater take-up of recycling?

Richard Lochhead: I am well aware that there are many excellent social enterprises in Drew Smith's area and elsewhere in Scotland, which help with Scotland's recycling agenda. Many such enterprises benefit from a range of support, for example through zero waste Scotland's various funding streams and the climate challenge fund. Members who want to raise specific issues that relate to their constituencies should feel free to write to me.

Canals (Environmental Improvements)

8. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what work it is doing to improve the local environment around the canal network. (S4O-01136)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): We provide British Waterways Scotland with Scottish Government grant support of £10 million per year. British Waterways works closely with partners across Scotland to make a significant and positive impact. An example is the Helix Trust project, which attracted funding of £25 million from the Big Lottery Fund and transformed around 350 hectares of underused land into vibrant new parkland.

Sarah Boyack: I very much welcome the minister's answer. In Edinburgh, the Fountainbridge canalside initiative has been formed by local enthusiasts to promote better environmental quality, an urban orchard, allotments and increased biodiversity. What support is available to help such groups to progress their plans and bring them to fruition?

Stewart Stevenson: I very much share Sarah Boyack's interest in canals. In urban settings such as Fountainbridge there are big opportunities to improve the environment by using the canal as an anchor point. Partnership working with British Waterways Scotland, which is well used to working directly with a range of community bodies, is the most appropriate approach.

Seafeld Waste Water Treatment Works

9. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how many complaints were made about the Seafeld waste water treatment works in the monitoring year following completion of the odour improvement plan. (S4O-01137)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): In the monitoring year that ended on 1 June 2012, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency received one complaint, Scottish Water received 21 complaints and City of Edinburgh Council received 243 complaints. Many complaints related to a specific

incident in March, in relation to which remedial measures have been put in place.

Malcolm Chisholm: Given the large number of complaints, despite the fact that option A in the odour improvement plan was supposed to take more than 90 per cent of the local community out of the odour zone, and given the particular failure of option A to deal with peaks of solid effluent coming into the plant, does the Government accept that further investment will be required, and is it ready to take account of that in future financial allocations to Scottish Water?

Stewart Stevenson: Scottish Water has been receiving some £110 million each year, which is a substantial investment. The most recent odour problems have been caused by a winter that was substantially drier than normal, which led to a build-up. A specific issue to do with incorrect storage of sludge in contravention of the site's odour management plan has been addressed.

Water Framework Directive

10. Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making towards meeting the goals of the water framework directive. (S4O-01138)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): The directive requires member states to have river basin management plans to manage the water environment. We are halfway through the first cycle of producing plans and 63 per cent of Scotland's water bodies are at "good" status or better.

Nigel Don: I welcome the progress that has been made. How will improving water be considered in the context of the review of spending priorities for the Scottish rural development programme?

Stewart Stevenson: Improving water quality is one of the key objectives for the next SRDP. Water policy officials are fully engaged in the development process to ensure that we deliver on improving Scotland's water quality objectives.

Justice and the Law Officers

Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary

1. Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive when it last met the chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary and what matters were discussed. (S4O-01139)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary is in regular contact with

the Scottish Executive to discuss police-related matters.

Alex Fergusson: I am grateful for that response, but I am sorry that the cabinet secretary has not discussed recently what I can only imagine is the frustration of the police over the Scottish Court Service's inability to enforce compensatory orders.

Three years ago, a constituent of mine had her car badly vandalised. The perpetrator was caught and ordered to pay a compensatory fine of £199, which he agreed to pay voluntarily over a period of time. Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that it is unacceptable that three years later, despite numerous summonses and court appearances—I presume at considerable cost to the public purse—the fine remains unpaid and the criminal remains unpunished?

The Court Service tells me that

“there are still cases where we cannot manage to collect the money due”.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that that is not acceptable? What might he be able to do about it?

Kenny MacAskill: I am more than happy to discuss the particular matter that Mr Fergusson has raised. I understand that the principle in those situations would be that the executor or executrix would receive the money and the court service would seek to recover it.

Overall, fines collection rates are higher than ever and the Scottish Court Service is taking robust enforcement action. Unpaid fines bring the law into disrepute—not only do the victims of crime not see satisfaction, but it undermines the integrity, dignity and status of the office of sheriff or justice of the peace, and of those who have imposed the fine.

The Scottish Government published an independent fines evaluation report on 30 November 2011. The report states that because of the robust approach that is taken by the Court Service there is now recognition that fines will be pursued. Defaulters are seeing that there is no hiding place, whether in the case of taking vehicles or other matters. We always try to improve things and it would be helpful if we could get direct access to benefit deduction through the Department for Work and Pensions.

I am more than happy to speak to Mr Fergusson about the particular case to which he referred. I share his frustrations, as do all right-minded people. If a fine is enforced, it should be met and I assure the member that the Court Service does its utmost to ensure that.

Scottish Court Service (Review)

2. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it expects to receive the results of the Scottish Court Service's review of justice delivery. (S4O-01140)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): As I explained last week, the series of stakeholder dialogue events organised by the Scottish Court Service on future court structures has now concluded. Those events were held to listen to views on a range of ideas around the efficient use of the court estate and the implications of impending justice reform—including the review of civil justice and jury trials.

The Scottish Court Service is considering feedback from those events. If future proposals are presented to and accepted by the Scottish Court Service board I would expect to receive the results in autumn 2012, when they will form the basis of a formal public consultation.

Joan McAlpine: The Scottish Court Service consultation is considering the best way to deliver justice as opposed to the wider implications of court closures. If the Scottish Court Service recommends the closure of any town courts, can the cabinet secretary reassure me that their wider contribution to the strength of our communities will also be taken into consideration—for example in jobs, the spend of court staff in each town and the contribution of working court buildings to the sense of place, pride and history in communities that are often ancient market and county towns?

Kenny MacAskill: I can absolutely reassure Joan McAlpine on that point. Obviously, the court service has a priority to look at the circumstances relating to the agency and involvement with the courts, but it recognises that these are historic matters. Sometimes things do have to change because our society has changed. I grew up and practised law at one stage when the sheriff court was in Linlithgow; population shift resulted in its being moved to Livingston. These things do not always remain static, but I assure Joan McAlpine that this is primarily a matter for the board. Ultimately, however, any decision it made would have to be consulted upon. It would then have to discuss that with me, and I would have to bring the matter to Parliament. I absolutely assure her that the situation would be viewed in the round, and not simply in terms of bricks and mortar.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 3 has been withdrawn for understandable reasons.

Knife Crime (Education Campaign)

4. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made by the no knives, better lives campaign. (S4O-01142)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): No knives, better lives continues to make excellent progress, with our £1.5 million investment now supporting young people in 10 local authority areas across Scotland. Along with record investment in policing, innovative prevention initiatives such as that mean that Scotland continues to get safer. Recorded crime is at its lowest level in 35 years; it is down 23 per cent since 2006-07. Violent crime has also reduced by 19 per cent over that period. The number of recorded offensive weapons crimes is at its lowest since 1997-98.

James Dornan: It is recognised that the Scottish Government takes knife crime extremely seriously, and is making great strides to combat it through initiatives such as no knives, better lives, as has been seen in recent events in Castlemilk in my constituency. However, as has been highlighted by a number of recent attacks in Glasgow, there is clearly still work to be done. Will the cabinet secretary inform me of the further actions that the Scottish Government will take to combat this scourge on our communities?

Kenny MacAskill: I thank James Dornan for raising that point. We accept that although progress has been made, there are still far too many incidents that sometimes result in great tragedies not just for individuals and their families, but for entire communities, which is why we continue with our efforts with the no knives, better lives scheme, and why we support Medics Against Violence and the national violence reduction unit, as they investigate how to tackle gang violence.

Equally, we continue to support the proportionate and legitimate use of stop and search and, indeed, the tough actions that are being taken by our courts. Scotland's has the toughest knife-crime sentence regime in the United Kingdom. A custodial sentence is 50 per cent more likely in Scotland than is the case south of the border, and it will likely be 75 per cent longer than the sentence that would have been imposed south of the border. The average sentence for carrying an offensive weapon has increased from 118 days in 2005-06 to 288 days in 2010-11, which is supported by the Lord Advocate's new prosecution guidelines.

I assure James Dornan that we do not rest on our laurels and that we have made progress. However, there are still far too many tragedies and there is no single simple solution. We require tough enforcement and a visible police presence, and we need to educate and to change a culture that my predecessor termed the "booze and blade culture". Progress is being made, although there is still a considerable journey to travel.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Last week I met my constituents Sharon Louise Duffy and Leanne Riley from Pumpherston. They have been campaigning against knife crime, following the murder of their friend and relative Jim Tierney. I hear what the cabinet secretary says about sentencing, but what will he say to my constituents, who believe that the new sentencing guidelines are regularly being ignored by the courts?

Kenny MacAskill: The judiciary is independent of the office of justice secretary, as Mr Findlay should be aware. I can say that the statistics show that people who carry knives are getting tough and severe sentences—the most severe sentences in the United Kingdom—and that the period of sentences has more than doubled.

Equally, those who go beyond merely carrying knives—such as in the instance to which Neil Findlay referred—face tough and severe sentences. It is not for me to comment on an individual sentence. Suffice it to say that the Crown has the power to appeal sentences when it views them as inappropriate and I know that the Solicitor General—who is sitting next to me—and the Lord Advocate have not hesitated to do that when they have felt that justice has not been served. We have an appropriate system in which we separate the office of justice secretary, which is a political position, from those who must impose justice. I believe that we have the right balance with tough prosecution and an appropriate and independent judiciary. We do not rest in our efforts and progress is being made.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (Legal Trainees)

5. Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what impact assessment has been carried out regarding the proposed reduction in pay for legal trainees in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service from 2013. (S4O-01143)

The Solicitor General for Scotland (Lesley Thomson): The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service recently reviewed the salary levels for legal trainees in order to align with the Law Society of Scotland's recommended rates. The reviewed rates will be implemented from August 2013, and will be payable to trainees who will commence traineeships from that date. An equalities impact assessment has been carried out.

Helen Eadie: I confirm to Parliament that, as some members might know, both my daughters are employees of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, but neither is directly affected by

the issue. I am raising the question separately and independently of them.

The decision to cut the pay of some of the lowest-paid members of staff in the COPFS cannot be easily reconciled with the Scottish National Party's pretence of holding itself up as a social democratic party with a supposed commitment to protecting lower-paid people. Will the Scottish Government address the differential between the pay for a trainee solicitor in the Crown Office and the pay for a trainee in the Scottish Government's solicitors office in St Andrew's house, which is as much as £7,000? Will the Solicitor General ensure that traineeships do not become available only to those from wealthy and privileged backgrounds?

The Solicitor General for Scotland: The assessment in relation to the trainee rates in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to which I referred took into account the commitment to provide traineeships in the legal profession and to live within public expenditure pressures. In considering whether that salary review would impact on a particular group, it was found that the data showed that the people involved were predominantly aged between 21 and 25. To ensure the appropriate continuation of a diverse workforce among the trainees—just as the rest of the COPFS workforce is diverse—a review is ongoing in relation to those trainees who will commence in 2013. That will ensure that no one suffers detrimentally from Crown Office traineeships always being based in Edinburgh, as has been the case in the past.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): On access to the legal profession, will the Cabinet Secretary for Justice confirm that he is willing to have discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on extending the eligibility for a maintenance allowance for diploma students to students who are taking the postgraduate diploma in legal practice, to help to stop the increasing elitism of the legal profession?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not sure that that was exactly within the terms of the initial question, but I ask the Solicitor General whether she would like to respond.

Jenny Marra: The question was for the cabinet secretary.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): How can I answer, when the initial question was not for me?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Miss Marra, but the Solicitor General answered the initial question, so we will move on.

Antisocial Behaviour

6. James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to combat antisocial behaviour. (S4O-01144)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Tackling antisocial behaviour and making communities safer and stronger remain top priorities for the Government. In March 2009, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities jointly published the framework for tackling antisocial behaviour, which is entitled "Promoting Positive Outcomes: Working Together to Prevent Antisocial Behaviour in Scotland". That followed a thorough review of national antisocial behaviour policy in which we recognised that prevention, early and effective intervention and diversion should be at the heart of the policy.

Since 2007, more than £46 million has been invested or fully committed through the cashback for communities scheme, which provides preventative and diversionary activities and directly benefits more than 600,000 young people. It also prevents them from becoming involved in antisocial behaviour and offending. We have also tackled antisocial behaviour through the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 and by providing support for the forthcoming high hedges (Scotland) bill.

James Kelly: There is no doubt that the intimidation that is associated with antisocial behaviour heaps stress on local communities. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to consider the use of new technology in the reporting of antisocial behaviour? That would not only be effective in processing such complaints, but would provide transparency to local communities on how the complaints are followed up, which would give vital reassurance that antisocial behaviour is being taken seriously.

Kenny MacAskill: James Kelly raises an interesting question. I am happy to undertake to find out what we are doing across the Administration on that. I know that many police officers use Twitter, for example. These things are a matter of balance because, in some areas, there is a digital divide, so Facebook pages or Twitter would not be available to some people.

However, the point is well made. The technology is part of our world and antisocial behaviour is an issue: we should try to join both things up. I am more than happy to respond to James Kelly in writing about what is going on. I imagine that some of it is a matter of officers and constabularies simply showing initiative. We are happy to support such moves and, indeed, to share good practice. Some of these matters are

best dealt with at local level, but the member is entitled to expect us to make good schemes known to others in order to ensure that all communities can benefit from innovative ideas, wherever they might have been introduced.

Fiscal Fines

7. Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what consensus it has reached with other parties regarding allowing the proceeds of fiscal fines to remain in Scotland. (S4O-01145)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Within the Scottish Parliament, only the Scottish National Party and the Greens support the kind of constitutional change necessary to allow all the revenue from fines levied in Scotland to be available to the Scottish Government.

Sandra White: I find that quite disappointing. I would have expected other parties in the chamber to support the efforts of the Government and the Green party to ensure that that money is used to fund anti-crime initiatives in Scotland. How does the amount of fine income that is removed from Scotland by Her Majesty's Treasury compare with that taken from England and Wales?

Kenny MacAskill: Excluding a large one-off fine, the Scottish Court Service transferred to HM Treasury a total of £28.6 million of fine income in 2010-11. The accounts of HM Courts and Tribunal Service show that it transferred £113.3 million to HM Treasury in the same period, suggesting that if Scotland transferred the same amount per capita as England and Wales it would be £14 million better off per annum. I note that members of the Opposition have asked for support for the expansion of courts, victim support services and other things; if we in Scotland could access that money, many of those requests could be delivered.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary recognise that over the past four years £4.5 million has remained in Scotland because those fiscal fines have not been collected? Will he press the Scottish Court Service to use the enforcement powers at its disposal to ensure that those fines are paid?

Kenny MacAskill: I do not know whether Lewis Macdonald heard my earlier response to Alex Fergusson, but I made it clear to Mr Fergusson that the Scottish Court Service is seeking to do what it can and progress has been made. We do not have any control over the Department for Work and Pensions and it would make things much easier if we had the same direct access to benefits to ensure that those who have received a sentence serve it. Equally, I would love that £4.5

million figure to be dealt with and we will continue to work on the matter. Nevertheless, that sum is significantly less than the £14 million that we are remitting annually south of the border.

I wish that Mr Macdonald would recognise that all the things that he wants us to do could be done much more easily and more quickly if we could use all the funds collected in Scotland and did not have to remit them to the London Treasury. [Applause.]

Police Officers

8. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): I thank the chamber for its applause as I rise to speak.

To ask the Scottish Government whether it can confirm that the Scottish police service will not face the reductions in numbers and pay and conditions being experienced in England and Wales and will welcome transfer applications from officers in those countries. (S4O-01146)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The Scottish Government is committed to maintaining a visible police presence on the streets of our communities and we now have the highest number of police officers ever recorded. We will not be implementing the Winsor package, which recommends changes to terms and conditions for officers in England and Wales.

I am delighted to confirm that officers from England and Wales can apply for a transfer to a Scottish police force. It is, of course, an operational matter for the chief constable but I have met many who have done so and I am delighted that they have chosen to serve here.

Bill Kidd: I welcome the cabinet secretary's response and especially welcome the 7.9 per cent increase in the Strathclyde force, which covers my Glasgow Anniesland constituency. I congratulate the cabinet secretary on the excellent reception that he received at the Scottish Police Federation conference, which stands in direct contrast with the slow hand-clap that Theresa May got south of the border.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we have a question, Mr Kidd?

Bill Kidd: Will the cabinet secretary comment on the difference in the relationship between the two federations and their respective Governments?

Kenny MacAskill: I have a great deal of respect for the Scottish Police Federation, welcome my meetings with its representatives and am delighted at its reception for me and other members of the Government. We have not imposed the Winsor package because we believe that it is an attack on the terms and conditions of

those who serve in the force; indeed, we ruled out its implementation before Tom Winsor's review even began. I believe that such a position is justified because of our debt to those who serve.

Common Fisheries Policy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a statement by Richard Lochhead on the reform of the common fisheries policy. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:40

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead):

Yesterday morning at 4.20 am in Luxembourg, European Union ministers finally reached agreement on some of the big issues that will help to determine how our fisheries will be managed in the future. I was there to the bitter end, along with other bleary-eyed ministers and officials. It is certainly not a rational way of reaching decisions that will affect the sustainability of our fisheries and the very future of our fishing industry and our coastal communities over the next decade or so.

We need a new way of doing things and, thankfully, the agreement goes some way towards delivering just that. For the past six years, I have attended fisheries councils and, of all the ministers who have been involved over that time, I think that only my Swedish and Maltese counterparts, who were in Luxembourg yesterday, and I have endured. Perhaps the pace and sleep deprivation have taken their toll on all the others. In reflecting on my experience, I firmly believe that we have an agreement that lays the foundations for the most significant reforms in the history of the common fisheries policy, even if a lot of work and negotiation lie ahead before the new policy becomes law in Europe. I am pleased that the new agreement has been influenced by Scotland's efforts to change radically European fisheries policy, which I think have been supported by all parties in the Parliament over a long period.

Last week, I set out my top priorities for reform of the CFP. I explained that the current CFP was broken and that the only means of rescuing our fisheries was to empower member states to work together at regional level; that sustainability must be at the heart of everything that we do, as must our stakeholders; and that the obscene waste of discarding, in particular, had to be addressed for the good of all and the credibility of the EU.

Given the starting point of the reform process and the constraints that Scotland faces, Parliament can be satisfied with what Scotland has achieved at Luxembourg. It is important to understand that it is one important step on the long road that lies ahead. Yesterday's agreement involved member states agreeing a position—not law—to present to the European Parliament.

Failure to have reached agreement would have been a disgrace. In the event, it was a close-run thing—agreement was achieved only by qualified majority and, at times, it looked as though no deal would be secured. That would have meant that reform of the CFP would have been delayed and, no doubt, that it would have been dictated by the Commission and the European Parliament, which would have left member states and our industries facing the unknown. However, in the face of the significant and entrenched views of others, we got a deal and it is one that the people of Scotland can welcome.

Let us be clear. Scotland was negotiating within the boundaries of the diverse views of the other 27 member states, including the United Kingdom Government, with which we also had to negotiate. Reaching a deal involved ironing out priorities that were often conflicting. There are those in Europe who are stuck in the past and who are reluctant to take tough decisions, and there are landlocked member states that have no direct interest in the marine environment, but which still wish to use the negotiations to further their national interests.

I will provide the Parliament with some details of the agreement. I will focus on the two key priorities that dominated the discussions in Luxembourg: regionalisation and discards. As Parliament acknowledged again last week, the current CFP is characterised by centralised micromanagement. We all recognise that we need to change fundamentally how decisions are made in the first place if we are to achieve better outcomes in the years ahead. For instance, real and meaningful regionalisation can help to deliver a tailored discards reduction plan. That is why I have been doing my utmost to promote the decentralisation of the CFP and to empower member states. Devolving decision making to those who are most knowledgeable about particular fisheries and allowing them to develop tailored management measures was my top priority ahead of the discussions.

For as long as we are in the CFP, the role of Brussels should be limited to setting the overall framework and key targets. Within that, member states should have the freedom to manage their fisheries. The agreement delivers a commitment to regionalisation, and within that I am delighted to say that we also achieved a key Scottish priority. We successfully tabled to the UK and the council a Scottish clause to allow member states to take their own measures, in agreement with their partners in a region, without having to continually refer back to the Commission. That clause was accepted. In practice, that should mean that management decisions can be made more quickly and that they can be tailored to local management needs.

An important issue on which regionalisation will enable us to make progress is the scandal of the discarding of good-quality fish. Like many, I want to see an end to discarding, but it is a complex issue that takes many different forms and has many different causes. Understandably, that controversial issue was the key battleground at this week's council, and in the dead of night it nearly caused the whole deal to break down.

The deal that has been agreed proposes to end discarding in pelagic fisheries by 1 January 2014 and to phase in stock-by-stock transition to discard elimination in mixed white-fish stocks and nephrops between 1 January 2015 and 2018. The provision to land all that you catch is part of a wider discards package. It is a complex package that includes an uplift in quotas to reward fishermen, which is important, and a move from the current land-based quotas to catch quotas—in other words, a focus on what is taken out of the sea, not simply what is landed.

Another big win was a commitment to review the technical conservation fisheries management measures that get in the way of discard elimination, as we all know to our cost. That will be done before a landing obligation kicks in. Again, that is good news for Scotland and the challenges that we face.

The outcome is challenging for our industry, but I believe that it will be deliverable. Scotland has made great strides on discards reduction and I am pleased that the momentum is now set to continue. Let us not forget what we have achieved in Scotland in recent years. Our co-management approach to fisheries is something from which the rest of Europe can learn, and it is doing so.

I draw the Parliament's attention to two other important elements of the deal. First, taking the science into account, fishing rates must support what is referred to as maximum sustainable yield—a level of mortality of fish stocks that ensures that the stocks are not compromised. Agreement was reached that the necessary exploitation rate will be achieved by 2015 where possible, and by 2020 for all stocks. There is also provision to deal with the complexities of our mixed fisheries.

The second element is on our historic fishing rights. The Commission's original proposal to establish a mandatory system of transferable fishing rights across Europe has been rejected. We in Scotland fought against the proposal from day one, and I am pleased and relieved that our work has paid off, with only a voluntary scheme now being proposed. I welcome the UK Government's movement on that issue over the past year or so. Although we would have liked the reference to the issue to be removed from the agreement, the change is still an important victory.

In summary, there has been a significant step forward in the reform debate. I recognise that many, including the Scottish Government, would have preferred a more rapid path to the ending of discards, but I believe that what was achieved was a good result, especially under the circumstances. I reiterate that it is far from being the end of the story. Under the co-decision process, the focus will now move to the European Parliament, which will have its say in the reform negotiations. The processes are complex and extensive negotiations are expected to last well into 2013. We have gained from the round, which I firmly believe has put Scotland on the front foot. We will use that advantage and our growing reputation and profile to drive forward the gains throughout the remainder of the reform process.

The agreement was welcomed by many Scottish voices yesterday and today. I recognise that some might believe that the UK is not being ambitious enough. On the other hand, other voices believe that it is going too far, too fast. However, after presiding over the appalling scandal of discards for more than three decades, ministers have signed up to beginning the elimination of discards from day one of the new CFP, and after years of painful and damaging micromanagement that has been centralised in Brussels, ministers have signed up to meaningful decentralisation.

Although the council agreement is not perfect, it is a big step forward that will help to meet the aspirations of our fishing communities and safeguard our stocks and marine environments. This is an opportunity to reflect before heading back into the fray encouraged—I hope—by the support and recognition of the Scottish Parliament and our stakeholders. There is much still to do, but the agreement is a good and important start for Scotland and maybe—just maybe—we can begin to steer our industry, our fishing communities and our marine environment into calmer waters.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we must move to the next item of business. It would be helpful if members who wish to ask a question were to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for providing an advance copy of his statement.

It is only a week since we debated reform of the common fisheries policy and I am pleased that the cabinet secretary has returned with a fairly positive report on what has been achieved so far, which demonstrates the value of positive working relationships within the UK and that Scottish fishing interests are the UK's fishing interests. We went in with a shared agenda on discards,

conservation and regionalisation, and that approach has shown results.

There is broad agreement that progress has been made on a lot of key issues, but there is still much detail to be decided that will determine how successful the reform will be. Environmental organisations are concerned that there are no binding targets on discards. While the Scottish Fishermen's Federation warns against inappropriate regulation, my concern is not so much that the Scottish fishing fleet will not strive to meet the proposed targets but that other member states might take a different view. There must be a level playing field. Will the cabinet secretary comment on how we guarantee that?

Furthermore, the discards target has been set at January 2018. Is it the cabinet secretary's intention to push for the earlier introduction of a ban? How will he ensure that the timetable for a ban will coincide with the development and introduction of regionalisation and the subsequent multi-annual management plans? Unless those are co-ordinated, I do not feel that they can work. Is the cabinet secretary confident that the earlier ban that he desires and the proposed ban would both respond to the needs of mixed fisheries?

Finally, I note what the cabinet secretary said about empowering member states, but does he agree that that will work in the interests of sustainable fishing only if decisions are taken by regional parties? The next stage is the European Parliament, where the detail and timescales to which the agreement will operate will be decided. What will the Scottish Government do to influence the next round of decision making?

Richard Lochhead: I thank Claire Baker for her questions, and I will attempt to answer as many as I can. I welcome many of her comments, although at times I thought that I was listening to the Conservative spokesperson; I am sure that that was inadvertent on her part.

On other member states, as I said in my statement, it is important that we now have an agreement that, for the first time, involved fishing ministers sitting round the table in Brussels and achieving the two major outcomes to which I referred, on regionalisation and tackling discards. Clearly, the detail of how that will be enforced in each region or across Europe will be hammered out over the coming year or so. I accept that we must pay close attention to that. Ultimately, each fishing minister will be held to account by their Parliament and their people, as we will be in Scotland.

On the timetable for banning discards, because we have a mixed fishery in Scottish waters, that is an unbelievably complex issue. However, we have shown that we can cut discards and we are

convinced that, given a few years, we can eliminate discards from our fisheries. We must therefore have a timetable in place, but we cannot make a law simply by writing dates on bits of paper—and at the end of the day, this is about a law. We cannot set unrealistic dates that simply cannot be achieved in a mixed fishery. We need a bit of time. We need to develop the gears, the science and so on before we can get to where we want to be.

We can perhaps be a bit more ambitious than the provisional timescale that was laid out in the agreement yesterday, but we must be careful that we do not get ahead of ourselves and that we have the ability to reduce discards before the dates are set in law.

We want to ensure that the regulations take into account the fact that we have a mixed fishery. We ensured that that was the case with the regulation that aims to achieve maximum sustainable yield by 2015 if possible. We welcome the 2020 date, because that will give us an extra few years. We cannot say that all stocks in a mixed fishery will be at the same level at the same time, because there are interdependent relationships. The 2020 date was a commonsense proposal.

On the timing of regionalisation to ensure that we can have discard bans and that other measures are put in place that are suited to Scottish waters, I think that regionalisation is the big prize. Regionalisation can lead to discard bans, but they cannot lead to regionalisation, so we must get regionalisation in place. That is why having all member states sitting round the table and signing up to such an agreement for the first time in 30 years is a major breakthrough.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, cabinet secretary. We are tight for time and it is unlikely that I will be able to call every member.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Although I am happy to congratulate the cabinet secretary on his undoubted stamina and ability to stay awake, I begin by doing something that he failed to do: I recognise the highly significant role of Richard Benyon MP and the UK Government, without whose voting power the outcome in Scotland's interests would not have been achieved.

The Scottish Conservatives recognise and welcome the fact that progress has been made on regionalisation, but on discard bans—something that we all want to see—are the timescales realistic? Given that the cabinet secretary is aware that the pioneering work of Scottish fleets is a work in progress, is the declaration of statutory end points rational? How will he ensure that measures to reduce discards are practical and deliverable by Scottish fishermen in our mixed

fisheries? Will the cabinet secretary join me in commending Scotland's prawn fishermen, who this year have pioneered trawls that can reduce discards by up to 70 per cent? Does he agree that that type of practical approach to fisheries management is what is needed?

Richard Lochhead: I join Jamie McGrigor in congratulating Scotland's prawn fleets for adopting measures this month that will lead to a reduction in discards of white fish of between 60 and 70 per cent. That is a massive step forward, and a big challenge that the industry is willing to meet. I am sure that we all want to congratulate it on doing that.

That approach shows that we can reduce discards. If we adopt measures today that will reduce discards by 60 to 70 per cent, perhaps there are other measures—indeed, there are other measures—that we can adopt over the next few years to reduce discards by 100 per cent. That is the objective. I know from attending the council yesterday morning that there are a number of member states that would probably prefer not to go down that road. That is why we need to have a timetable in place, and why it is good that we address the discard issue not only in Scottish waters, but across all Europe's waters.

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): Will the CFP agreement support the developing Scottish practice of co-operation between fishers and scientists in reducing discards? Will that make the timescale that we adopt in parts of our fisheries realistic? Many of the boats that land fish in ports in my constituency will be fishing in various parts of the Scottish waters, and the effort that will be required to achieve that will be varied.

Richard Lochhead: Yes, I believe that the agreement takes us down that road. Of course, that is why a commitment to meaningful regionalisation is so important, as we have shown in Scotland. Indeed, yesterday morning, others—particularly from the Commission—were stopping me regularly to tell me that they had heard that good things are happening in Scotland. The rest of Europe is talking about Scotland and the co-management process that we have in place. The process means that we have to take really tough decisions, but the measures that the prawn fleet has adopted to tackle discards show that we have a brave industry that is willing to make bold decisions. That takes us down the road of better co-management and more local decision making.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary said that the Scottish Government would have preferred a more rapid path to the ending of discards. Indeed, in reply to Claire Baker, he said that we could be a bit more ambitious than was agreed at the council

yesterday. What date did the Scottish Government propose for the ending of discards and did that proposal attract any support?

Richard Lochhead: There is no doubt that we can settle for 2016. The agreement is 2017 for the phased approach of white fish and nephrops stocks. Clearly, the European Parliament has to have its say and more negotiations have to take place. However, other countries wanted the timetable expedited, even from 2016, to perhaps 2014 or 2015. For the reasons that I have outlined, that could be counterproductive and might not get us to where we want to be.

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): I welcome the statement and the cabinet secretary's hard work on the CFP.

The cabinet secretary mentioned regionalisation and the fact that member states may be able to take their own measures, which would give Scotland, for example, more control over our fisheries. Will he provide us with a bit more detail on how that might work and where he hopes to get to in relation to that?

Richard Lochhead: The method of regionalisation that is being proposed, albeit with detail still to be negotiated in the coming months, is that member states will agree measures on a regional, fishery-by-fishery basis. When the member states agree those measures, the Commission will effectively adopt them. That is a far cry from where we are at the moment. Clearly, there is still a big role for the Commission and a common fisheries policy.

I would have preferred to see more radical reform from the negotiations, but we had a point from which we had to start. That might not have been the starting point that I would have liked, but I recognise that it is a big step forward from where we are at the moment and it will lead to better decision making and outcomes for our fishing communities and stocks.

Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary said much in his statement about the new powers that member states will have to make decisions on fishing. How does he foresee member states working together in a multilateral way to deliver on those objectives?

Richard Lochhead: A number of regional bodies that advise on fishing policy in Europe are already up and running. Those bodies feel that they are toothless or powerless, and they are, ultimately, just advisory bodies. What we are talking about when we talk about regionalisation are effective decision-making bodies. As long as there is agreement at the regional level, the European Commission will be empowered to adopt what is agreed. That is a much more

powerful position for decision makers in each fishery.

In my response to Dave Thompson, I should have mentioned that adoption of the Scottish clause, which we tabled, will mean that national Administrations will be able to propose measures to regional bodies and, if there is agreement on those, to implement them without consistently having to go back to the Commission, which can take months and sometimes years. Again, that should expedite good decision making and give member states more power directly.

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I, too, welcome the deal that has been delivered, which is due in considerable part to the fact that our cabinet secretary is one of the most experienced and skilled fisheries ministers in the EU. I pay tribute to the deal that he has managed to deliver.

Looking to the future, could we not deliver even more for our fishing industry if Scotland had her own seat at the top table?

Richard Lochhead: I could, of course, agree with the member's opening comment as well as the rest of her comments. Of course Scotland would have more influence if we had our own seat at the top table.

I pay tribute to the UK Government, which worked with us on a number of important issues. We tend to win UK Government support when our interests coincide with the interests of the industry elsewhere in the UK. That is fair enough. It is a good thing, and it reflects the current constitutional set-up. It should not, however, distract us from the fact that we could have much more influence and say over the future of fishing policy with our own seat and negotiating machinery as a member state within Europe. At yesterday's council, I sat and watched with admiration how the Danish Government was able to carry out its role as president in getting European fishing policy to a much more radical place than it has ever been before. That country is, of course, the same size as Scotland.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I agree with the cabinet secretary's observations and objectives on regionalisation: it is the right approach.

On quotas—because they, rather than discards, are the point—will the cabinet secretary ensure that boats are not hit financially by measures that might sound sensible but which do not work in practice? Does a landing obligation on all boats mean an end to the cod recovery plan?

Finally, on the science, whose science will underpin the announcement that the cabinet secretary made this afternoon? Will it be that of

Marine Scotland or of other science bodies? On the concept of science, does he recognise that quite a number of the stocks on which our boats depend have no underpinning science whatsoever?

Richard Lochhead: Tavish Scott raises a number of important points. One really important victory in the negotiations was the fact that we were adamant that, if discard bans are to be put in place in Scottish waters, the result should be more quota for the Scottish fleet when the science backs that. Otherwise, the fish will stay in the sea, even when maximum sustainable yield is achieved and our fishermen could sustainably land some of that fish. If the fish was over quota, it could be landed but then sent for non-human consumption, when it could be commercially landed by the fleet in return for a discard ban. That objective has been secured and is now an important principle of the policy for the future, provided that the European Parliament supports it, which I am sure it will.

Tavish Scott's question about science is a good one. As I said in my statement, some of the detail is still to be hammered out in the coming months. The regional bodies will have to have scientific advice and, at the moment, that is carried out on a European basis. Marine Scotland is part of that. That might well continue to be the case, but there should be much more leeway for regional bodies to access their own scientific advice. The European funds that are being discussed just now should also be used for better science.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): During last week's debate on reform of the common fisheries policy, I raised the issue of the Shetland box, the retention of which has not been explicitly confirmed by the European Commission in its reform package. Does the minister know whether the Shetland box is to be retained? If it is not, will the minister support its retention?

Richard Lochhead: There has been no decision yet on the future of the Shetland box and that was not one of the key issues discussed at the negotiations. As members can imagine, that was due to the fact that this week's negotiations were on the general approach to the reform process. Many of the individual measures within the regulations will be negotiated in the future. We have, however, asked the European Commission why the Shetland box was missing from the draft regulations that it published, and we await an answer from the Commission.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I welcome the agreement on regionalisation, the principle of a discards ban and the removal of mandatory tradable fishing rights, which would have benefited those with the biggest pockets. After regionalisation—which I hope will come

sooner rather than later—will the Scottish Government commit to the principle of allocating our fishing rights to the boats that can fish most sustainably and selectively, thus rewarding those with the fewest discards?

Richard Lochhead: I understand the sentiment behind the member's question, but the objective is to reduce discards in the first place. All vessels fishing in Scottish waters will have to adhere to the discards ban and they will all, therefore, fish in conservation-friendly ways by definition. That is the place that we want to get to and I am confident that we can get there. The industry is working on a lot of new measures and will continue to do so over the next couple of years because it is in its interests to have the most sustainable fishery in Europe just as much as it is in the interests of the Parliament and everyone who is involved in the debate.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): As the cabinet secretary said in his statement, the Commission's proposal to attain maximum sustainable yield by 2015 has been watered down by the council, and the maximum sustainable yield target is now applicable "where possible". How will the cabinet secretary ensure that we work together with our European partners to gather the best scientific advice about our fishing stocks, so that we can fish them as sustainably as possible?

Richard Lochhead: There was a good argument for putting into the agreement yesterday morning the fact that the target should be 2015 "where possible" because we simply cannot achieve by law a 2015 deadline for all the stocks in our mixed fishery. We have more than 30 stocks in the North Sea, for instance, which relate to each other in terms of biology. There is no way that we can make it a law that they should all be in the same place at the same time by 2015. That was recognised many years ago in the Johannesburg agreement, which also set the deadline as 2015 if possible. What we agreed yesterday reflects the international commitment and, as the member says, we have until 2020 to get the science together to ensure even better decisions in the future about what we do to get all stocks to MSY by that date. At the moment, we have good science for only about 40 to 45 per cent of our stocks, and all countries must work together to improve on that.

Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP): I, too, strongly welcome the rejection of the proposed mandatory system of transferable fishing rights across Europe and the cabinet secretary's comments in response to Jamie McGrigor's question on the nephrops fleet, which is particularly important to the Eyemouth area. Can the cabinet secretary update the chamber on how discussions with Iceland and the Faroe Islands on

discards and the impact on pelagic fisheries will move forward?

Richard Lochhead: That is an important point. Here we are, in Europe, talking about the conservation of our key stocks, yet Iceland and the Faroes are behaving irresponsibly. I hope that they will come back to the negotiating table soon in the interest of protecting our mackerel stock. This year, there may be a chance of negotiations earlier than in previous years. The European Commission is looking into that at the moment and we will see how that progresses. We are keen to get those countries back to the table as soon as possible. In the meantime, I hope that they are paying attention to how Europe is getting its act together on other stocks. They should get their act together on the valuable mackerel stock.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Can the cabinet secretary say a little more on how he can ensure that the voice of Scotland's fish-processing sector, which sustains many valuable onshore jobs, can be heard consistently in the reform talks to ensure that new policies are aligned with that sector and do not threaten the supply chain?

Richard Lochhead: That is another important point. We must remember the interests of the processing sector in the debate. I welcome the declaration—which was agreed yesterday morning as part of the deal—that a European advisory council for the fish-processing sector will be set up. That is a new initiative, which we welcome. In Scotland we have our seafood partnership, the purpose of which is to ensure that the processors are sitting round the same table as the catching sector so that we are much more joined up. Scotland is being held up internationally as an example because our fishing industry is much more joined up than those elsewhere in Europe.

Youth Employment

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-03295, in the name of Angela Constance, on young people and economic growth. I advise members that the debate is very tight for time. Minister, you have 13 minutes.

15:10

The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance): Last December, President Barroso, in response to growing unemployment across Europe, urged all member states to develop youth job plans, increase apprenticeship numbers, guarantee education or job opportunities for young people leaving school and redirect European funds to youth unemployment.

Well before that, the Scottish Government had responded to the situation by appointing me as a dedicated youth employment minister, committing to 25,000 new apprenticeships a year and announcing the opportunities for all initiative—an unprecedented guarantee of a place in education or training for all 16 to 19-year-olds who require one. We published our draft strategy for youth employment in January. Last month, we announced that we would direct £25 million of European funds to youth employment.

Tackling youth unemployment needs short-term responses, medium-term action and a longer-term strategy, all of which we articulated in our youth employment strategy, the final version of which will be published at the end of this month.

In the longer term, our investment in the early years and early intervention, the curriculum for excellence and the reform of our post-16 education system will ensure that any systematic problems in preparing young people for adulthood and the world of work are addressed. Over the next few months, we will develop further measures for the increasing number of young people aged 18 to 24 who are unable to secure jobs because of depressed demand in the labour market. Our short-term focus has been on action for those most acutely affected by the recession.

I am pleased to say that there has been a hugely positive response to the draft youth employment strategy, which has prompted many into making commitments. I have spent the past four months meeting hundreds of individuals, businesses, social enterprises and others to discuss the translation of those commitments into actions.

As a direct outcome of the national economic forum, Scottish Enterprise published its own youth employment plan, outlining actions for supporting

businesses and industry sectors to recruit young people. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry has arranged a series of meetings with large employers to explore how it can encourage companies and their supply chains to support the young unemployed.

To extend employer engagement and drive action at a local level, I initiated a series of action forum events, starting in Lanarkshire in May. The events bring together local employers, young people and key partners in action-focused discussions on how we can work more effectively across all sectors to support youth employment.

On Tuesday, more than 100 people attended the Glasgow action forum at Willie Haughey's City Refrigeration premises. In the next two weeks, I will lead similar events in Dumfries and Edinburgh. More will follow later in the year as I work across Scotland to drive home the message about supporting young Scots into work.

The public sector remains a key employer. Following a meeting of public sector chief executives in March, I received around 100 pledges to take on apprentices, offer work experience and student placements, and increase the proportion of young employees in the public sector. For example, Scottish Enterprise will double the number of employees under the age of 25 in its workforce, Highlands and Islands Enterprise will increase its proportion of young employees to 10 per cent and Perth and Kinross Council will increase its young workforce from 170 to 450 over the next five years.

Public procurement projects are also supporting the creation of job and training opportunities for our young people. Of the 380 new jobs that are being created through the new south Glasgow hospitals project, more than 80 so far have gone to 16 to 24-year-olds. Further, 140 of the 180 work placements have been set up for young people, and 90 apprenticeships will also be created.

Recognising the distinctive role that social enterprises and the third sector play in helping to deliver our youth employment ambitions, we have invested nearly £10 million to create employment opportunities in that sector through initiatives such as community jobs Scotland. In association with the Commonwealth games legacy fund, a further £5 million will support jobs and other opportunities through major sporting events. That is in addition to the recent announcement by the First Minister of £1 million for the Prince's Trust to support young entrepreneurs and start-ups, which comes hot on the heels of the £750,000 that was given to the same organisation to support more young people into jobs, education and training, which will benefit up to 7,000 young Scots.

To refer to such commitments as "pocket-money announcements" is an insult to the thousands of young people who will benefit from them, and to the organisations that are offering work opportunities.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Will the jobs that the minister announced in the enterprise companies be new posts, or will the young people concerned replace older workers in those posts?

Angela Constance: As Kenneth Macintosh knows, many organisations across the public sector are living with the reality of shrinking workforces. We know, as he should know, that young people are hit the hardest in a recession, and I think that we should welcome what organisations such as Perth and Kinross Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise are doing. We have to ensure that others follow them, in order to make sure that more opportunities are provided for young people and that the proportion of young people that such organisations employ is increased. I am clear that the public sector, including the Scottish Government, has to lead by example.

Much of the £9 million that has been allocated to the local authority areas that are most affected by high youth unemployment rates and levels will support young people into sustainable jobs with local companies. That will support more young people such as Lauren, who attended my Lanarkshire action forum on youth employment last month. She was about to finish work experience with Serco but had no job to go to. The good news is that she started this week as an administration assistant with a local firm, Assure Alarms, which will receive a 50 per cent wage subsidy from South Lanarkshire Council. I am sure that we all agree that that is money well spent.

As I mentioned, we will use the £25 million of European money to provide support to small businesses across Scotland that are willing to step up and offer unemployed young people a job.

Last month, the Commission for Employment and Skills published a report that showed that employers in Scotland reported higher levels of work readiness among school and college leavers than those elsewhere in the United Kingdom did. Around a quarter of employers said that they had recruited someone straight from education in the past two to three years, and the majority were satisfied with their work readiness. That demonstrates the positive impression that many young people are making on their first venture into work. However, it also tells us that three quarters of employers do not recruit young people straight from school, college and university, and I want to encourage more to do so.

The Scottish Government has confidence in the positive role that young people can play in supporting economic growth. We demonstrate that confidence with our £72 million annual investment in modern apprenticeships, which enable young employees to develop valuable occupational skills in a range of industry sectors and give their employers the opportunity to demonstrate their confidence in them by investing £7 for every £1 of public money that is invested in apprenticeships.

Some employers have negative perceptions of young people and are reluctant to recruit anyone from that age group. Of course, there are some young people who do not possess the skills and aptitudes that are most valued by employers and I am committed to doing all that I can to ensure that we address that issue.

There are other reasons why some young people are not work ready. Lack of meaningful work experience presents a significant barrier to employment, so it is important that we persuade employers to offer high-quality work placements. To ensure that young people are ready for the workplace, we all need to help build their employability skills.

The employer-led certificate of work readiness, which is being developed by Skills Development Scotland, will recognise the work readiness of 16 to 19-year-olds. Central to the certificate will be 192 hours of work experience, which will be supervised in the workplace.

Wherever I go, I promote the business case for recruiting young people. Given the pressure on businesses in the current economic climate, recruiting young people might sound counterintuitive, but I have no doubt that companies need to invest in young people to achieve the business growth that will help them to thrive when the economy recovers.

I know from the many employers of all sizes that I have met over the past few months that there is a real appetite to support our youth employment agenda. I am determined, as is this Government, to take full advantage of that.

Investing in our young people brings returns to businesses in commitment and loyalty. Young people bring creativity, innovation and a willingness to learn, and their flexibility and adaptability help to enhance productivity.

I am driving that message home across Government and our agencies. I want us to lead by example and demonstrate the benefits of investing in young people. This year, the Scottish Government will offer young people more than 150 apprenticeship or work placement opportunities, and we are increasing our efforts to ensure that all public bodies do likewise.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The minister mentioned that she is spending £70 million on modern apprenticeships. The Parliament has to be accountable for that money. How many of the people who complete apprenticeships remain in full-time employment?

Angela Constance: I know that Mr Findlay is a relatively new MSP but he, like everybody else in the chamber, should know that to be an apprentice in Scotland someone already has to be in a job. The modern apprenticeship scheme is the envy of the rest of the United Kingdom. It is sad that Mr Findlay does not know that we are operating the same modern apprenticeship scheme that operated under Labour. That is an important point. There are only two differences—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): Interventions from a sedentary position are not welcome.

Angela Constance: In fact, we are doing three things differently. We are doing it bigger, we are doing it better, and we are increasing the priority given to 16 to 24-year-olds.

The completion rate, which indicates the proportion of young people who complete their modern apprenticeship, is at a record high of 75 per cent. Is that not money well spent? Surely Mr Findlay is not suggesting that we should spend less money on modern apprenticeships when 94,000 young people are seeking work.

I want us to unite in the Parliament and to encourage more young people to take up their opportunity, whether it be a college place or a modern apprenticeship. For Mr Findlay's information, Skills Development Scotland's board is already doing work to find out the facts, as opposed to the scaremongering and anecdotal evidence that some employers in some sectors discard young people after their training. Most employers are trying to survive in a difficult economic climate and they know that they must get value for money from their investment. Given that it costs £9,000 to train an engineer, why would any self-respecting employer get rid of a young modern apprentice?

There is no doubt that our young people face difficult times. I do not believe that anyone in the chamber wants to see a generation of young people defeated by economic circumstances that were not of their making. I include members such as Neil Findlay in that, even if their words do not always replicate that view.

This is a matter on which we should unite as a Parliament, because this is not the Scottish National Party's modern apprenticeship scheme; it is Scotland's modern apprenticeship scheme. At the Glasgow action forum this week, someone suggested that we should think of Scotland as a

family firm, where we all take responsibility for developing young people in our employ. I think that that fits well with our strong tradition of community, and I urge members to join my campaign to persuade employers to support young Scots into work.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that recruiting young people makes good business sense and is crucial to sustainable economic growth; notes that the employers' survey carried out by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills showed that the majority of employers in Scotland that recruited a young person straight from school, college or university were satisfied with their skills; welcomes the £25 million of European Structural Funds announced on 9 May 2012 to support youth employment over the next two years, and agrees that this should be focused on supporting young people into work in small and medium-sized businesses.

15:25

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): It may surprise the minister that Labour has a real willingness to work with the SNP Government on young people and economic growth. That is why, as a party, we supported the SNP's motion back in February when we debated youth employment for the first time with the minister in her new role.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Kezia Dugdale: I have spoken for literally 15 seconds. Mr FitzPatrick should give me a few more minutes to move on.

We will support the minister's motion today. Labour's amendment would simply add to the end of it our serious concerns regarding the ability of the modern apprenticeship programme to help the 100,000 young Scots who are currently desperate for work. I will get to the detail of that issue shortly; first, I want to say something about the tone of the debate.

Concerns that I have raised over the past couple of days have been shot down as scaremongering from a Labour Party press release. It has been said that I was "silly" and that I had made an outrageous attack. The First Minister lost his temper at First Minister's question time today. He referred to a "disreputable" campaign and said that it was an "effrontery" for me to dare to even raise the matter. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning also lost his temper on "The Politics Show" on Sunday. He chose to shout down Isabel Fraser instead of taking on the arguments. Viewers were left thinking that he was furious because he had been found out.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): If I was furious in any way, it was the fury of

disappointment that a member of the Labour Party who attended the youth summit and who I thought would work with others to achieve jobs for young people wanted instead to take political advantage from them. That was disappointment in her as a spokesperson, but there is still an opportunity for her to redeem herself and separate herself from the empty vessels on her benches.

Kezia Dugdale: The reality is that the figures did not simply magic themselves into a Labour press release; they came from Skills Development Scotland, and they represent a clear set of facts. Last year, the Scottish Government delivered 26,427 modern apprenticeships. Of course we support the ambition to upskill the workforce, but the figures unequivocally show that 10,000 of those modern apprenticeships went to folk in work—to people who were well established in jobs for at least six months.

Joe FitzPatrick: Which of those 10,000 people should not get the opportunity of a modern apprenticeship?

Kezia Dugdale: We would not take those opportunities away from young people. I will come back to Mr FitzPatrick's point shortly with a suggestion about how the Government can continue what it is planning to do and also create opportunities for people in work.

Last Friday, I went to Asda at the Jewel in Edinburgh, where I met a number of young people who had worked for Asda for three years and had joined the Government's modern apprenticeship programme. I would not for a second take away their opportunity to upskill in their work and to be invested in as employees. They carry themselves with pride and look forward to developing their careers with Asda. However, in the eyes of the public, that is in-work vocational training, not apprenticeships. That is where the con at the heart of the debate lies.

Grahame Smith of the Scottish Trades Union Congress raised that con in his opinion piece in the *Daily Record* this week.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Kezia Dugdale: No. I am sorry, but there is a lot to get through. Mr Gibson will have the joy of listening to me close the debate as well, so if he speaks in the debate, I will seek to rebut some of his points then.

In his opinion piece in the *Daily Record*, Mr Smith said that one thing that the Scottish Government could do is ensure that for every apprenticeship that was created for somebody in work, it created another apprenticeship for somebody who was not in work. That would be a

very constructive way for the Government to proceed, and I look forward to hearing what it has to say about the STUC's position.

I want to put on record—and I do not do so lightly—that I had to fight tooth and nail to drag the facts out of Skills Development Scotland. Letters went unanswered and e-mails and calls were ignored. Many of my Labour colleagues have had a similar experience when dealing with SDS. Either it does not have the resources that it needs to answer queries or it is wilfully obstructing access. Both situations are unacceptable and I strongly urge the minister to address the point in her closing speech.

Angela Constance: I take seriously any issue that any member of the Scottish Parliament has with an agency over which I have charge. I give the member that commitment.

Will the member have the good grace to acknowledge that this is the first year in which SDS has captured the data in detail? Surely she will agree that it is good news that, according to her press release, 81 per cent of 16 to 19-year-olds started a modern apprenticeship within six months of entering employment.

Kezia Dugdale: It is interesting that the minister says that this is the first year that SDS has collected figures in such detail. At First Minister's question time, the First Minister referred to figures from 2006. I asked the Scottish Parliament information centre where the figures came from and learned that they came from a survey of people who had been through training and apprenticeship programmes. They were not like-for-like figures.

On the myth about 2006, I say to the minister that back in 2006 Labour did not count level 2 modern apprenticeships in the form in which they existed at the time. That is fact 1—and it is level 2 apprenticeships that account for the significant growth in the number of modern apprenticeships. The important fact is that in 2006 youth unemployment in Scotland was 60,000, whereas now the figure is 100,000. The Government says that I have a cheek in criticising a programme that is exactly the same as the Labour one; I think that the Government has a cheek in taking the same approach to apprenticeships in a time of crisis as Labour took when the economy was booming.

The SNP cannot escape the simple fact that it said that it would create 25,000 modern apprenticeships to tackle youth unemployment in this country, when the reality is that it is not doing so and 100,000 young Scots who are without jobs are paying the price.

If the minister insists on harking back to when Labour was in power, let me say to her that, according to figures that are published on the

Scottish Government website, Labour spent £60 million in 2006-07 on creating 15,869 apprenticeships, whereas the SNP is spending £72 million to create 26,427 apprenticeships. The SNP is spending £1,000 less per apprentice throughout Scotland. In truth, the commitment to 25,000 modern apprenticeships is a slogan that works for Alex Salmond but it is not a policy that is working for Scotland's 100,000 young unemployed people.

In the debate in February I asked the minister to take forward and report to the Parliament on three things. I said that long-term youth unemployment had doubled in the six months before the debate. It has now quadrupled. Jenny Marra will talk at greater length about that. I asked the minister for a strategy to address long-term youth unemployment, but the Parliament has yet to see a finalised strategy for youth employment—and the minister has spent all her money. I also asked the minister about procurement, which Iain Gray will talk about in his speech.

I repeat my call for the Scottish Government to be straight with people. That is the very least that 100,000 young Scots can expect.

I move amendment S4M-03295.2, to insert at end:

“; is concerned that current efforts to tackle youth unemployment through the modern apprenticeship (MA) programme are falling short of the needs of 100,000 unemployed young people in Scotland, with 10,000 MAs undertaken in 2011-12 by those in jobs for six months or more; is further concerned by the spike in long-term youth unemployment, now four times greater than last year, and considers that Scotland needs a finalised youth employment strategy that not only gets young people to work, but equips them with the skills to compete in a global labour market.”

15:34

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I welcome this debate on youth employment. I was a lecturer for 20 years before I became an MSP, so I am fully aware of the enormous benefit of training and education to people of all ages. I was hoping for a more constructive debate—but there is still time.

In the debate in February I welcomed the appointment of a dedicated Minister for Youth Employment and the fact that the Parliament would get regular updates on the issue. I also welcomed the social enterprise fund, raised issues to do with literacy levels in schools, expressed concern about the £33 million cut in further education funding, and highlighted the employment levels and rate of positive destinations, including further study, for Scottish graduates, which are much better than the UK average.

The response from the Minister for Youth Employment was:

"I will not take any lectures from the Conservatives on youth or adult unemployment."—[*Official Report*, 9 February 2012; c 6365.]

There was no analysis of any of the content of my speech and no response to any issue in my speech. I trust and hope that today either the minister or Mike Russell will, when summing up this hugely important debate, respond to the contributions of MSPs across the chamber rather than making dismissive statements.

Sir Tom Hunter gave an inspirational speech at the business in the Parliament conference last week. He reminded us that the business birth rate in Scotland is exactly the same as it was in 2003. Given that the Government's motion refers to

"supporting young people into work in small and medium-sized businesses",

I hope that it will enhance dialogue with small businesses to give them the opportunity to get more apprentices and to support them in growing their businesses. Of course, it is not just the quantity of apprenticeships that counts, because the quality of the training and the ability to transfer skills also help to keep young people in the job market.

I noticed that the education secretary was at the business in the Parliament conference and nodded positively when Sir Tom Hunter emphasised the need for the education system to be more closely aligned to the world of work. We fully support that, given the points that the minister has made.

Michael Russell: I am glad to say that that work is well under way with the college reforms. In particular, I hope that the member will reflect on a core message from Tom Hunter, which was the need to encourage entrepreneurialism. That message permeated the whole of last Friday's conference. The Government is deeply engaged in supporting innovation with organisations such as Entrepreneurial-Spark.

Mary Scanlon: I am delighted about that. There was some criticism about how entrepreneurialism was encouraged in the past, and I am pleased to hear the education secretary's positive response.

Sir Tom Hunter also pointed out just how much can be achieved by "a can-do attitude". I would find it helpful if the Government could lead from the front with a can-do, positive attitude instead of constantly carping and criticising other political parties and the Westminster Government.

Tom Hunter talked of people turning up their noses at vocational education and also said that university lecturing careers should be based on jobs for students and not on research papers. That

was undoubtedly food for thought. It is shameful that the vocational budget in further education has been cut by more than £33 million by this Government.

Tom Hunter also said that

"it is the Government's responsibility to paint the picture".

That was in response to the hopelessness felt by so many people in Scotland. I will come back to that, because this is not only about jobs and about being good for business but about confidence and self-esteem for the individual.

I will quote what were probably the two most important points made by Tom Hunter that will remain with me. First, instead of "political point scoring", politicians need to co-operate, innovate and form successful, positive partnerships. We are all committed to the reduction of youth unemployment. I do not think that there is an MSP in the chamber who does not want a successful, positive partnership.

The second important point that Tom Hunter made was about the need for

"maturity and decency to put party politics aside"

and deliver for Scotland. He asked us please to put party politics aside—we will all be with the Government on that one.

The first line in the Government's motion is:

"That the Parliament believes that recruiting young people makes good business sense".

Of course it makes good business sense, but it does more than that.

Research by the Prince's Trust this year confirms that the emotional health of young people is affected by unemployment: they are more likely to feel stressed, down and depressed. Research by Bell and Blanchflower in 2010 states that

"unemployment is a stressful life event that directly reduces individual well-being."

It also states that

"Unemployment increases susceptibility to malnutrition, illness, mental stress, and loss of self-esteem, and increases the risk of depression. The unemployed also appear to be at higher risk of committing suicide"

and of being in a poor physical condition. I would simply add that to the Government's motion. I fully appreciate that employing young people "makes good business sense", it does far more than that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now, please.

Mary Scanlon: I close by saying that in its last four years, the previous Administration had 3,000 more apprentices per year than this Administration has had in its first four years. I have the figures, if members would like to see them.

I move amendment S4M-03295.3, to insert at end:

“; believes that there needs to be greater dialogue between the Scottish Government and small businesses; believes that there should be a greater focus on the quality of the training and apprenticeships provided, rather than just on the numbers of places available, so that there is greater emphasis on ensuring that training programmes are tailored to the needs of the individual young people; views with concern that there has been a lack of analysis when deciding how to allocate the £30 million youth unemployment strategy budget particularly in terms of the lack of clear guidance to local authorities on what they are expected to achieve, and is disappointed that the Scottish Government policy was unimaginative in relation to raising private sector capital and expertise to complement the £19 million allocated thus far.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are extremely tight for time, so speeches of six minutes or less, including interventions, will be welcome.

15:40

Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP): I rise in support of the Scottish Government's motion. As the minister set out, the SNP in Government has done everything in its power to tackle youth unemployment. The Scottish Government is investing in record numbers of modern apprenticeships, which I will come to later. Unlike its counterpart in England, this Government is maintaining the education maintenance allowance. The Government is also guaranteeing all 16 to 19-year-olds an employment or training opportunity, under opportunities for all.

Clearly, the Government has achieved and, indeed, exceeded its pledge to deliver 25,000 modern apprenticeships in 2011-12 and has invested £72 million in the process. The Government will continue to deliver 25,000 new modern apprenticeships each year for the rest of this parliamentary session. Of course, unlike in England, those modern apprenticeships are linked to real jobs. In relation to that, I will mention the presentation that was given to us this morning by Donald MacRae, the chief economist at the Bank of Scotland. He said that, over the past 12 months, the Bank of Scotland's labour market barometer indicated that Scotland's labour market performance is better than that of the UK as a whole. When he was asked what he attributed that to, he cited the strength of the oil and gas sector, the strength of renewables, and he said that he believed that the Scottish Government's modern apprenticeship programme had a role in it. He also encouraged a plan A+, as he put it, or, as I would call it, a plan B, to address the fundamental problem of growth in the economy—that is a message for members of the UK coalition Government. He also suggested that there might be a case for delaying the UK Government plans

to restore balance in public sector finances. I would be interested in Mary Scanlon's view on that.

Skills Development Scotland data at the community planning partnership level indicate that in the Scottish Borders area, some 258 modern apprenticeships were completed in April to December 2011. Of those, 83 per cent went on to positive destinations. Historically, it has proved more difficult to generate MA enrolments in the Borders, due to the economy being more than usually dependent on SMEs to provide such opportunities. However, the figures, which show that there are 437 modern apprenticeships in training as at December 2011, indicate that we are on track to get a much better performance in the Borders. I am confident that with a number of local initiatives that are now under way, we have a good chance to meet or exceed what would be a pro rata number of about 500 modern apprenticeships for the area.

I wish to highlight a crucial issue that is at the heart of the Government's motion—that of replacement demand. We often talk about growth in the economy and the increase in the number of people being employed in a sector. Even when employment in a sector is in decline or static, however, there is always replacement demand: a stream of younger people are needed to replace those who are retiring at the end of their careers. That has been a strong driver in a number of important initiatives. In the Finance Committee yesterday, the Minister for Youth Employment cited the oil and gas sector, which has proactively taken competition out of the labour market and decided to pool its resources to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of apprentices to meet emerging needs. Competition from the renewables sector has obviously played a part in that, too.

As the minister has visited Hawick Knitwear and the Johnstons of Elgin plant in Hawick, he knows that the Scottish Borders knitwear group training association has pooled together a group of 14 employers—soon to expand to 23—who have also set aside their competitive interests in favour of the future of their sector and decided to ensure that they provide a sufficient pool of trainees and apprenticeships. When we met the apprentices, of whom there are a hundred—it is hoped that that figure will expand to 150—about 60 to 80 per cent of those the minister spoke to had come directly from Jobcentre Plus, rather than having had word-of-mouth referral or having worked there already. That shows the importance of such schemes in extending opportunities to those who are furthest from the labour market.

The minister has dealt with most of Kezia Dugdale's comments this week but, in response to them, I will quote Graeme Ogilvy, who is the

director of the construction industry training board, ConstructionSkills Scotland. He said:

"Employers enrol their apprentices onto the programme at the start of the college term in September. That should not stop us hiring young people earlier in the year and giving them a job. Any change would deny these young people the chance of paid employment. You have to ask if that would be useful right now. The Scottish Government is right to keep the eligibility criteria for funding without any qualifying criteria such as time in the job."

Kezia Dugdale: Will the member give way?

Paul Wheelhouse: I will when I finish the quote. It continues:

"This meets business requirements, gives more people the opportunity to train to industry standards and reduces unnecessary red tape that hinders success."

I will take the intervention now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Forgive me, but the member is in his last minute.

Paul Wheelhouse: I apologise to Kezia Dugdale—I had not noticed the time going by.

I commend the Government for continuing the adopt-an-apprentice scheme. The Finance Committee heard how important that scheme has been in the construction sector. As I said, the sector has declined in some parts, but has been more stable in others. However, a number of people who were taken on as apprentices have been made redundant during the recession. The figures suggest that 6,204 apprentices in several sectors were made redundant between April 2009 and 2012. The scheme has been vital, as it has ensured that 52 per cent of those people were found new posts, many of which were in the construction sector. The Government has undertaken to ensure that young people who do not find a place under such a scheme have positive destinations through other training or employment opportunities.

15:46

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The belief that the future capacity of this country to thrive is no more or less than the potential that is embodied in our young people is undoubtedly an idea that unites rather than divides us. The Parliament should be a place where we come together with the Government to meet our obligation to remove any barrier and to open any door that lies between younger generations and their opportunity to be all that they can be. That is why, six months ago, in Labour's last debate under my leadership, we called for a new minister to take the issue of youth employment to the heart of Government. That the Government responded with the post that Ms Constance now occupies is very much to its credit.

Just as we forged positive agreement in the heat of debate that day, we did so back in 2009 when, in the course of a fractious budget that took two attempts to pass, the First Minister agreed to Labour's demands to end two years of cuts in the apprenticeship programme and to begin to increase it again. It is exactly because our support for the minister's task is central to our beliefs that we cannot but speak out when the Government's actions fall short of what our common purpose demands. That is why we cannot stand by when the figures show that not enough of the new opportunities that are created are going to unemployed young Scots and that the apprenticeship programme does not complement the economy's needs in sectors such as engineering or renewables.

Kenneth Gibson: The member talks about a reduction in the number of apprenticeships but, in 2005-06, there were 20,196 modern apprenticeships in Scotland whereas, the following year, under Labour, there were 15,869, which is a fall of 21 per cent. Surely, before the member criticises the SNP he should criticise the Labour Administration that was in power at that time.

Iain Gray: No, Mr Gibson, my criticism is that the Government needs to spend less time counting apprenticeships and more time making those apprenticeships really count.

Colleagues from other parties have said that ours is a disreputable argument. However, the disreputable argument that has been mounted this week is the one that says that, because we voted against the budget, we voted against apprenticeships. That is not only disreputable, but infantile. It is the political equivalent of the argument that, because Scotland beat France a couple of years ago, if France wins Euro 2012, Scotland will really have won it. We voted against the budget because it would not grow the economy; it would cut tens of thousands of public sector jobs; and it would cut teachers from our schools and nurses from our hospitals—and we were right. There were many reasons to vote against the budget, but apprenticeships were certainly not one of them.

The minister made a number of very good points, including the need for employers to look beyond the recession. However, that is not happening. For example, 1,000 tradespeople leave the electrical industry every year but there are only 400 apprentices. When the upturn comes, that gap will mean a massive skills shortage. I know that the problem with increasing those numbers is the fact that apprentices need jobs—the Government is right about employed status. However, those jobs should be coming from public sector contracts. No matter whether they are capital or service contracts, unless we ensure that

local and small companies get their share of what is available and unless we insist that every single contract creates opportunities for young people to get off the dole, we will waste the most powerful mechanism that we have.

I know that the minister agrees, because her draft strategy has at its heart a sustainable procurement bill. Why did she not mention the bill today? Where is it? What are we waiting for? Every day, contracts are being let, still aggregated and still tendered 92 per cent on price alone. We know what works. In Wales, public contracts are let 70 per cent on the basis of social benefit, not price; Glasgow has its apprenticeship guarantee and graduate employment promise; and in Falkirk procurement was used to create hundreds of apprenticeships, which were filled with youngsters lifted from the unemployment scrapheap. The minister herself highlighted an example from Perth and Kinross Council. Why can every single council in the land not do the same? If the Government had the political will to force every council to stop increasing council tax, why can it not put the same effort into getting every council to emulate Glasgow and Falkirk and stop the rise in youth unemployment?

The minister is right to say that she needs to reach back into schools to see what is happening there. She also mentioned curriculum for excellence, but an unintended consequence of that move is emerging right now to undermine her efforts. Teachers are telling us that because of the way in which course choices operate, pupils are dropping all sciences at the end of secondary 2. On Sunday, I heard Mike Russell say that curriculum for excellence will not change the laws of physics, but science teachers are telling him that, as a result of it, fewer pupils will learn the laws of physics. In three years' time, we will not be able to find the very scientists, engineers and technicians that we need to drive our economic growth.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now, Mr Gray.

Iain Gray: Because there is so much common ground and common purpose, we should support the Government's motion. However, we need an agreed strategy—in fact, we need it yesterday, not tomorrow—as well as plans with more depth, dynamism and detail and the right focus. That is why, if we are serious, we must support Labour's amendment.

15:53

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Gordon Brown once said that there would be no more boom or bust in the economy—how wrong he was. I wonder what the Labour Party really

thinks of his legacy, which has left us with a Con-Dem coalition whose only solution to the economic quagmire is austerity. I argue that its economic and financial medicine is a poison that is causing even more damage.

As in the 1980s, our young people are feeling the worst effects of the situation. In the early Thatcher years, we saw the dole queues lengthen and millions thrown on to the scrapheap of economic inactivity. As a young man, I watched many of my school mates struggle to get a job; indeed, many of them were forced into the YTS, which, in my area, was commonly known as “Yon Thatcher's”—and I cannot say the final word, but there are seven shades of it.

However, unlike the 1980s, the people of Scotland now have their own Government. Although it has limited powers, it has acted to try to get as many of our young people as possible into work, education or training; invested around £72 million last year to support 26,427 modern apprenticeships; is spending double the amount spent by the last Labour-Liberal Executive on apprenticeships and training; and has doubled the total number of modern apprenticeships and other training opportunities from 55,288 in 2006-07 to 112,501 in 2010-11.

Kezia Dugdale: I am interested to hear that, according to Mr Stewart, his Government has doubled investment in apprenticeships and training. The figure of £35 million has been mentioned in Ms Constance's press releases, too. As the Scottish Government's website shows, investment has increased from £60 million, not £35 million, to £72 million. Perhaps the member could explain where his figure of £35 million comes from.

Kevin Stewart: That is the official figure that I have; £72 million is more than double that £35 million.

Nothing that we have heard from Labour is about common cause. The reality is that the modern apprenticeship scheme is exactly the same scheme that existed under the Labour-Liberal Executive; the only difference, as the minister has pointed out, is that the scheme is now bigger and better and is doing the job.

Iain Gray *rose—*

Kevin Stewart: I have very little time, Mr Gray. I have already taken an intervention.

We have heard some real nonsense. During his speech, Mr Gray talked about the budget, but the fact is that Labour tried to vote down the budget, which included provision for 25,000 modern apprenticeships.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member give way on that point?

Kevin Stewart: I may take an intervention from Mr Smith later.

On 10 February last year, John Swinney said that he had offered Labour

“all they had asked for and more ... This, apparently, is not enough for Labour. Every single thing I was asked to deliver by the Labour Party I offered the Labour Party. They have now been caught red-handed in a state of total hypocrisy.”

Today, we are again getting total hypocrisy from the Labour Party. When Ms Dugdale sums up, I would like to hear exactly what the Labour Party wants to do in this sphere. Her amendment does not spell everything out. Does she intend to deny those folk who are already in employment the chance to gain a modern apprenticeship? If she does, I would like her to meet some of the folk in Aberdeen whom I met recently, who have benefited from being on the modern apprenticeship scheme.

During his speech, Mr Gray also said that he would like every council to have a youth employment strategy and a way of dealing with the issue. I completely and utterly agree with him. I urge him to ask his colleagues in Aberdeen to back the motion of Councillor Gordon Townson on his plan for a youth employment strategy for Aberdeen. Thus far, it seems that they will ignore it.

Iain Gray: Surely Mr Stewart is not suggesting that a party that ran Aberdeen City Council for the past five years, during which time it failed to introduce a youth employment strategy, can criticise a party that has been in control for five weeks. I look forward to Aberdeen City Council's youth employment strategy, because the change in that council is the best thing that could have happened.

Kevin Stewart: There is an easy answer for Mr Gray. There were measures in place to deal with youth employment in Aberdeen, although they did not amount to a full strategy. The SNP's manifesto contained a commitment to deliver a full youth employment strategy to tie in with the Government's youth employment strategy, but it seems that the Labour Party and its Tory and independent allies do not want to go down that route. Labour is again being hypocritical.

I do not want people to be put on the scrap heap, as happened in my youth in the 80s. I want to hear from Ms Dugdale what she would do about those 10,000 folk who are on the modern apprenticeship scheme and who were previously in employment. Does she intend to deny them that opportunity? She should be straight, not hypocritical.

15:59

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the debate and fully support the motion.

I begin by dispensing with the notion that Ms Dugdale spun—which the First Minister deplored this morning—when she said that one of the Scottish Government's flagship policies was a blatant con. She compounded that by attacking SDS. I do not know when she last visited SDS; I did so two weeks ago, when I went through all its figures, and I feel it to be a highly robust organisation.

I do not know how many apprenticeships Ms Dugdale has managed in her vast breadth of business experience. I only know that I have started and managed very many. Although I never question where her heart lies on the issue of the young unemployed, I am afraid that I do question her head and her knowledge.

In the businesses with which I have been associated, I would never have started an apprenticeship programme and planned for an apprentice until we—he or she, me and my managers—were absolutely sure that the career or trade to be followed was a suitable vehicle for the person's individual aspirations.

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Chic Brodie: I ask the member to let me make the point.

As our colleague Mr Michael McMahon, who is not in the chamber now, said at the Finance Committee just three weeks ago:

“We should not try to fit square pegs into round holes.”—
[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 23 May 2012; c 1213.]

To do that is irresponsible and uncaring for the young person involved.

Mr Gray said that we are fixated on numbers. He might be fixated on numbers, but we are fixated on young people.

John Park: In the member's experience, what he said might be the case, but in the experience of most people who run businesses, an apprentice is someone who goes through a job interview procedure and is then employed, and the vast majority of apprentices, until the numbers that we have seen in recent years, have been people who were not in work before they embarked on the apprentice training programme.

Chic Brodie: I will say this with as little arrogance as I can summon up. Having been involved with some 23 companies, I would like to put that experience alongside the non-statement that the member has just made. It clearly shows that he does not understand the process. I am surprised by that.

It is compatibility of career planning and responsibility of management that ensure that our existing employees can more seamlessly move into a fully supported, trained situation in which they become happy and contented employees. That is why we have 35,265 apprenticeships today.

That said, let us look at the more substantive elements that will marry our young people to economic growth. At university level, as Universities Scotland has stated, employability is already embedded as a core part of the learning and teaching strategies. Companies that have invested, are investing and are reinvesting in Scotland cite the strength of Scotland's young graduates as a key factor. Any member who is in doubt about that should ask FMC Technologies, enStratus, State Street or Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft and hear them declare that our young graduates are the reason for those companies coming to Scotland.

The reform of our colleges to focus on supportive learning and training in the industry sectors that dominate our economic strategy—food and drink, aerospace, engineering, tourism and so on—is key to the long-term employability of our young people. There has been a shift to an understanding that vocational education is as important an element as a university degree in creating an efficient physical infrastructure to support that economic strategy, yet we still hear complaints. Additionally, programmes such as opportunities for all, get ready for work and training for work and the statement that has been made on Government procurement policies are critical to the foundation of the young in employment.

I will not rehearse all the funding or beneficially comparative statistics that show that we are in the right direction of travel regarding young people and economic growth. It is not we who currently have our foot on the economic brakes. In these straitened times, which are not of our making, I applaud the wonderful words of Tom Hunter, which Mary Scanlon mentioned. In the chamber last Friday, he called for a new entrepreneurial enlightenment, particularly dedicated to the young. To achieve that and to think outside the box is the better preserve of the young.

In a time of serious skills shortages in some of our key developing industries, such as renewables, it is time to educate the teachers, the lecturers, the parents and even some Labour members by having our growing businesses invite them in to see and share the excitement, the potential and the future economic capacity of our country. Let them then encourage their children and their students to embrace that and do the same.

Above all, let us further engage the young in entrepreneurship through the development of our social enterprises and collectives and create a hunger in them to develop new skills and new wealth, serving and saving their communities as they do so. Even in these difficult financial times there is an opportunity for us all to come together without fear, favour or tribalism to boost the future of our young, rather than have conflict that demoralises them. By so doing, we can boost their employment prospects and our economy.

16:05

Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland)

(Lab): As someone with 25 years of experience working in training, I appreciate the chance to speak in this debate. Members on all sides can agree that there is no more pressing issue facing Scotland than the position of our young people in this challenging and changing economy. In every part of my region there are above-average levels of youth unemployment, and news continues to emerge of yet more redundancies at major employers, with Phillips announcing job losses in Hamilton this week.

The fundamental problem in our economy is a lack of aggregate demand, which is worsened by a self-defeating deficit-reduction strategy. The Chancellor's fiscal policies are sapping not just consumer confidence, but investor confidence and the UK economy is being pushed back into recession. As we all know, recession and contraction in the economy puts young people in a vulnerable position.

Before addressing what the Scottish Government can do in response, I will briefly refer to what can be done by others, such as employers, volunteers and even members of the Scottish Parliament. You do not need to be the Minister for Youth Employment to make a difference. For example, last week in South Lanarkshire I hosted a jobs fair in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. It was telling that some exhibitors were so overwhelmed with inquiries that they ran out of application forms and had to photocopy new ones. They all commented on the calibre of the jobseekers, many of whom had qualifications or had previously been in good jobs.

I also convened a number of very successful meetings between Skills Development Scotland and ScotRail at which we discussed what more local employers could do to help. As a result of those meetings, ScotRail entered into a partnership with South Lanarkshire College and won a contract from SDS to deliver a bespoke course for young people in my region through the college learning programme. Those young people will receive 192 hours of teaching and 190 hours

of practical work experience, combining a course with relevant and worthwhile work-based learning.

I reiterate that as members of the Scottish Parliament we can make a difference, and we must. We can make a legitimate input into finding solutions in Scotland's struggle with unemployment. Since every member has a part to play, every member should at least be invited to the regional action forums on youth employment that are taking place across the country. As a member representing Central Scotland, I was disappointed to learn that none of Lanarkshire's regional MSPs was invited to the action forum meeting that took place last month.

Angela Constance: I offer Ms McCulloch an apology for that. My concern was that, given the number of regional MSPs who have an interest in Lanarkshire, we would end up with 30 MSPs at the event and squeeze out other people. However, on reflection, Ms McCulloch's point is well made. As we move forward, I can give her an assurance that that will not happen again and that all MSPs will be included in the events. If we need to get extra chairs, so be it.

Margaret McCulloch: I thank the minister for that statement. I will certainly be there when other such events take place.

There has been much debate about the Scottish Government's commitment to modern apprenticeships. However, I make it clear as someone with a lifetime of experience in training that I have the highest regard for the modern apprenticeship programme in Scotland. I know that everyone across the chamber shares that sentiment. No one here today would criticise the integrity of the modern apprenticeships or the achievement of the apprentices. It is wrong for any member or any minister to suggest otherwise. While no one doubts the quality of the programme and the benefits that it can bring to individuals and employers, I urge the Scottish Government to look again at the bigger picture in its youth employment strategy.

My party's central ambition for the economy is full employment. That means more jobs now and in the future, and investment in our young people's skills so that they are far better placed to take advantage of the upturn when the recovery comes. We know from Scottish Government data on destinations for school leavers that, although the number of school leavers who are going into higher and further education has increased, the number who are going into training has shown little change and the number who are going into employment is in serious decline.

Training programmes are crucial if we are to capture young people who are furthest from the labour market, boost their employability and put

them on the path to real work. Scotland's youth employment strategy must make it clear how training programmes—in their entirety—support a strategic skills pipeline that is sensitive to the needs of different sectors and localities. The Government must be forthcoming with that information if the Parliament is to have the confidence that it is making best use of the welcome but limited European social fund priority 5 funding.

The Scottish Government must also be more forthright about its intentions regarding procurement. Today's strategy again refers to public procurement and the use of community benefit clauses in securing employment for young people, and it restates the Scottish Government's commitment to a sustainable procurement bill. However, the test of that commitment will be its actions, and not its words. I appeal to the minister to ensure that a comprehensive bill on procurement is introduced as soon as possible. We cannot accept excuses or any more delays.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member must close, please.

Margaret McCulloch: In a challenging and changing economy, we need the Scottish Government to make good on its promise of an all-Scotland response to youth employment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you so much.

16:11

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP): Although modern apprenticeships are a key part of the Government's programme, we risk losing focus on the fact that the issue is wider than simply modern apprenticeships. If we do not recognise that, we lose sight of the bigger picture.

We must not get into quasi-Orwellian language in referring to modern apprenticeships as if some are more valuable than others. All apprenticeships have value, so to use terms such as "making modern apprenticeships meaningful", which, by extension of logic, implies that some, or all, are meaningless, is unhelpful and not to the credit of the members who made those remarks, although the implication may have been unintentional.

Kezia Dugdale: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark McDonald: No, thank you. I have less than six minutes and I have a few points that I want to make.

The Finance Committee has been taking evidence on employability. We are grateful to the minister for coming before the committee yesterday in its final evidence session. I raised a

number of points during that session, although some would say that it was more banging a drum than raising a point. I want to put on record some of my thoughts on the work that might be done on the subjects of stigmatisation and role models.

An area that I have been keen to explore—it was raised by Who Cares? Scotland at the Finance Committee—is looked-after children, and how we deal with people who are leaving care, given the current economic situation in which job opportunities are not always available. For whatever reason, a stigma is attached to people who have left a care setting when they apply for a job, particularly if they are up against four or five individuals who do not have that background. We must do all that we can to break that stigma.

One way to do that is to have local authorities using their corporate parenting role positively. As parents, we aspire to give our children the best opportunities and, if we operated a family firm, we would try to find opportunities in that firm for our children, if possible. Local authorities should consider this from a corporate parenting perspective. I commend the work that has been done by Aberdeen City Council in offering work experience placements to looked-after children within the council organisation, and I hope that other local authorities might consider doing likewise.

Beyond that, we need to consider whether there are opportunities to use role models—people who have left a care setting and are in the world of work. They do not have to be high fliers but can be people who hold down a steady job and who can share their experiences and act as mentors and role models, if they wish to do so. That is something that we also need to look at positively.

Another area of stigmatisation is the mentality that we have had for too long in Scotland that certain jobs are undesirable. They become categorised as those jobs that people will end up doing if they do not stick in at school. We need to break that cycle and stigma, and use positive role models to do that. At one of the Finance Committee meetings, representatives of Asda told us that their chief executive started in the company as a shelf stacker with one O level. That is the kind of person we need to have operating as a positive role model to show people that, although they should aspire to leave school with academic qualifications, it should not be seen as the end of the world if they do not achieve that outcome.

The minister spoke about the stigmatisation of young people in the difficult views that businesses sometimes have. That came across in the written evidence to the committee from GTG Training, and it was disappointing that it was not able to attend the committee to be questioned about the

evidence that it gave about the employability of young people. When businesses identify young people they feel are not ready for employment, they absolutely must signpost them to where they can receive training and support to make them more employable. If they do not do that, those young people will just become caught in some kind of ridiculous merry-go-round or pass-the-parcel from employer to employer. They might not be able to access the workforce but neither can they access the assistance that is required to give them the necessary skills to get them into the workforce.

The minister spoke about meaningful work experience and engagement with employers. I commend the work that is being done by the schools careers industry partnership in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. An article appeared on the STV Aberdeen website yesterday that said that hundreds of youngsters are set to benefit from a training programme that will help school leavers to find work. The scheme is partially funded by local authorities and through sponsorship from the oil and gas and subsea sectors. It seeks to provide young people with skills, training and assistance to get the skills that they will require to enter the world of work when they leave school. Alastair Fraser, the director of Coaching Training Consultancy, said of GTG Training:

“Essentially they were saying that youngsters aren’t used to work or fit to work. Our experience in working with more than 800 young people is that they need help and support to sell themselves well.”

The work that is being done by the schools careers industry partnership in the north-east should be looked at and replicated elsewhere. We owe it to ourselves to help our young people in every way possible.

16:17

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): As the minister will know from February’s debate on youth employment, I very much welcome her appointment; the development of a youth employment strategy; and the investment, including the £25 million of European structural funds, to address a serious and complex problem that touches every part of the country. Iain Gray was absolutely right to say that addressing the problem of youth unemployment sits at the top of the political agenda and the objective is shared right across Parliament. That is reflected in the motion and, I would argue, the amendments, both of which the Liberal Democrats will support.

Although I applaud the fact that Angela Constance has focused on the issue and that the Scottish Government has made many commitments, concerns are emerging about the way in which they are playing out in practice.

Other members have touched on some of those concerns. For example, one of the key strands of the Government's strategy for tackling youth unemployment is the promise to create 25,000 modern apprenticeships each year, which is undoubtedly an ambitious commitment. Rather more worryingly, earlier this year, the minister was unable to tell the Education and Culture Committee how that is to be achieved, what proportion of the overall number of apprenticeships will be taken up in the public sector, and what demand there is in different parts of the private sector and among businesses of different size and scale. The impression was that the Government has set an eye-catching target but is less than sure about how it is to be met or where the demand is to come from. If that is the case, the risk must be that the target becomes the primary focus, driving policy and its delivery, and that steps will be taken by those who act on behalf of ministers to ensure that the targets are hit, no matter what or how.

Kezia Dugdale: I could not agree more with Liam McArthur on that point. Would he be interested to know that almost 13,000 of the modern apprenticeships that were delivered last year were delivered during the final quarter, which suggests a target-focused culture?

Liam McArthur: That observation underscores what I am saying. The risk is that resources are not invested in the most appropriate place and that the policy intention of ministers is not delivered.

From meetings with various businesses, I am aware that changes to the funding arrangements for modern apprenticeships are also creating practical difficulties. Understandably, much of the attention has been on meeting the needs of 16 to 19-year-olds, but it is not until they are in their 20s that many young people decide that they want to undertake an apprenticeship. That is the message that I got when I visited a major employer last month, yet changes that were made to the funding rules earlier this year appear to have reduced the level of support for 20 to 24-year-olds to half what is available for 16 to 19-year-olds who take up a modern apprenticeship. It was pointed out to me that encouraging more of those in the older age group to take up apprenticeships and so progress would free up opportunities for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Angela Constance: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam McArthur: I am afraid that I do not have time.

Kezia Dugdale talked about the number of those taking up modern apprenticeships who are already in work, in many cases for six months or longer. That has elicited a fierce response from the Government. The normally phlegmatic Mike

Russell appeared at risk of doing himself a mischief over the weekend, so exercised was he about those claims. Indeed, it was a mischief that the First Minister was in danger of self-inflicting earlier this afternoon. For the record, I am in no doubt about the enormous advantages to young people of undertaking an apprenticeship while in work. However, ministers refer to the 25,000 apprenticeships as a key plank in their strategy to tackle youth unemployment but are unclear about how and where the target will be met. It is hardly surprising, then, that the public assume that the policy is targeted directly at reducing the number of 100,000 young people whom the Government's strategy estimates to be unemployed.

That is not to say that good things are not happening. Just this week, I was lucky enough to attend the YouthLink Scotland forum session and meet those who are involved in the Rural and Urban Training Scheme out in Newtongrange. RUTS is a great example of an organisation that uses a youth-work approach—in this case, motorcycle maintenance—to equip young people with the confidence and skills required to achieve their potential and raise their aspirations. When I spoke to some of the young people on the programme, it was clear what a positive difference RUTS had made to their lives. Interestingly, the evidence shows that RUTS can also make a difference in the wider communities in which it operates.

Another programme that is making a significant difference is the £1 billion youth contract initiative that was announced by the UK Government last year. Under that programme, UK ministers have given a commitment to fund incentives for companies to take on young people as well as to provide extra support, through Jobcentre Plus, for unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds and an offer of work experience or a sector-based work academy place for every 18 to 24-year-old who wants one. I recognise that there is an overlap with some of the commitments that the Scottish Government has made. However, as well as delivering significant consequential to Scotland, the youth contract can and must be used to expand the capacity and range of options that are on offer to young people in this country.

Before closing, I will touch briefly on two other areas that have a bearing on the issue. NUS Scotland rightly highlights concerns about the ability of our colleges to meet the demands that are placed on them by ministers. Despite a reduction in the cuts to their budgets, colleges will be under enormous pressure over the next few years, yet they are key players in providing our young people—indeed, people of all ages—with the skills that they need to get up and get on in these challenging economic times. In particular, a continued and relentless focus on widening

access, in both our colleges and our universities, is essential. A failure to have such a focus will see Scotland's relatively unimpressive track record deteriorate further, and the consequences of that would be serious.

In relation to careers advice, I make a plea with regard to the Government's my world of work initiative. Ministers insist that they are not seeking to replace front-line careers advisers with web-based services. I welcome that assurance but feel that it sits uncomfortably with planned changes to staffing arrangements in the northern isles. Removing key posts from the service in my constituency sends absolutely the wrong message to staff and, importantly, those whom they are there to support.

As ever, there are many issues that I have not covered, but I welcome the opportunity that Parliament has had to debate—I congratulate Iain Gray and Mark McDonald, in particular, on two excellent speeches—the crucial role that our young people have in building sustainable economic growth in Scotland.

16:24

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I welcome the debate and thank the Minister for Youth Employment for bringing it to the chamber. The debate ties in with much of what the Finance Committee is doing in looking at employability, which Mark McDonald touched on.

Youth unemployment and economic inactivity continue to be a major problem that the Parliament must do all that it can to address. Margaret McCulloch made a thoughtful and positive speech. In particular, her comments on aggregate demand were well put. We can talk about apprenticeships and other measures as much as we like but, as Stephen Boyd of the STUC told the Finance Committee, we need demand in the economy if we are to turn Scotland's economy around and provide jobs not just for young people but for everyone who is without work.

However, Mr Gray's view seems to be that if only he had been elected First Minister, everything in the garden would be rosy. In the ultimate political tautology, numbers seem to count only when it suits Labour. He castigated the SNP for apparently falling numbers of apprentices in the first couple of years that it was in government but, apparently, when Labour was in power, it was okay to have a 21 per cent reduction in the number of apprentices. I do not see how he can square that circle.

In its submission to the Finance Committee, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts pointed out that Scotland has consistently had one of the highest proportions of young

people not in education, employment or training in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, throughout the period going all the way back to 1996.

The reality is all the more disconcerting given that much of that period, leading up to the economic crash in 2008, is considered to have been a time of relative economic prosperity for the UK as a whole, albeit much of it fuelled by debt. Clearly, Scotland's young people did not reap the benefits of that so-called prosperity or union dividend. In fact, in my North Ayrshire constituency of Cunninghame North, youth unemployment increased during that period, which was presided over by Labour Governments in London and Edinburgh, as well as by a Labour administration at North Ayrshire Council.

Thus I welcome the policy and direction that the SNP Government has ushered in since coming to power. Recently, we have created the opportunities for all programme, guaranteeing that all 16 to 19-year-olds not already in learning or employment will be offered a suitable training or education placement to combat the long-standing problem of a large proportion of that age group being inactive. Despite stringent budget constraints, we have found additional funding to assist local authorities in areas where youth unemployment is particularly rampant, including £828,000 for North Ayrshire.

Work readiness was mentioned in the press recently, and my colleague Mark McDonald referred to the evidence from Arnold Clark's GTG Training. However, if we look at the figures at all levels—school leavers, those who have completed time at college and those who have graduated from university—the proportion of people who are work ready in Scotland exceeds the proportion in Wales, Northern Ireland and England. Our young people deserve credit for that.

Unfortunately, the Labour Party has spent much of the past week attacking the SNP Government's highly successful modern apprenticeship scheme. Apparently, Labour has only just found out that all apprentices in Scotland are employed before they begin an apprenticeship programme, which was also the case when the Labour Party was in power at Holyrood. It has already been pointed out that the scheme is run in the same way as it was when Labour was in office.

Politically chameleon-like—when I mentioned that to Mike Russell he said “comedian-like”, although I do not find it amusing—Kezia Dugdale tried to say that the situation is different now in Scotland so we need a different way to address the situation. It is almost like criticising one's own political party.

Kezia Dugdale: Will the member take an intervention?

Kenneth Gibson: I would have done if the member had taken one from me. She took interventions before and after mine. In this Parliament, we make and concede to interventions in the same way.

Iain Gray: Will the member take an intervention?

Kenneth Gibson: I am happy to take one from Mr Gray, who took one from me.

Iain Gray: Surely the point is that, if the Government's argument is that its apprenticeship programme strategy is right for 2006, it cannot possibly be right for 2012. It is no surprise that it is not working. [*Applause.*]

Kenneth Gibson: Thunderous applause from Kezia Dugdale alone on the Labour benches there.

I dispute the suggestion that it is not working. It is not just that there are more people in apprenticeships; we have doubled the number of people in training. When we talk about whether it is working, we have to take into account the overall economic situation, to which the member's colleague Margaret McCulloch appropriately referred. We are in a difficult economic situation, and I find it astonishing that Labour members have not taken that on board.

The truth is that Labour's are shameful attacks. I quote Labour's own house journal, the *Daily Record*, which said on Monday:

"When the Labour Party created modern apprenticeships, it was a way of creating opportunities for young people. The SNP have made modern apprenticeships a way for politicians to lie to the public."

We wonder why the First Minister responded in the way in which he did, with passion but not with anger, as Labour members appear to have indicated.

Labour members have also repeatedly called on the Scottish Government to increase funding for colleges but, by 2014-15, the Government will have invested £4.7 billion in colleges since 2007—40 per cent more than the previous Labour-Lib Dem Administration invested during its two terms in office.

Mr McArthur might want to look at what the Tory-Lib Dem coalition is doing south of the border. Indeed, Ms Dugdale's former employer, NUS Scotland, has welcomed the Government's commitment to maintaining college places and student support budgets at their current level.

I support the motion.

16:30

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Like many members who have spoken today, I am going to focus on the reality of apprenticeships for a number of people, particularly in the area that I represent. We all agree that the employed status of apprenticeships in Scotland, which the rest of the UK is now moving towards, is something that we can be proud of. It means that the decisions that we have taken on apprenticeships have always been relevant to the needs of employers and have always been closely tied to employment—that is the most important issue in today's debate, and we should not lose sight of it.

Chic Brodie is not here, but I want to respond to a couple of the points that he made. I sit next to Chic Brodie in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, so I actually quite like him, but he cast some doubt over my experience in this area. However, as someone who, as I might have mentioned before, is a former apprentice, who was head of employee relations at Babcock and ran its apprenticeship scheme, who, as a trade union official, worked with a number of companies on apprenticeship programmes, who has taken an interest in apprenticeships since being elected in 2007, and who has worked with a range of sector skills councils and other bodies on the issue, I think that I am a wee bit qualified to have a view on the issue and to say something about it.

Also in response to Chic Brodie, I say that, yes, the balance has tipped. In the past, people who had been in work for a while would have got the opportunity of taking up certain apprenticeships. However, the headlines about companies such as Arnold Clark, CR Smith and Scottish Gas suggest that there are thousands of apprentices who are not in work who are applying for jobs, and the people who get those jobs are people who are not in work. The perception that a lot of people have is that apprenticeship opportunities go to people who are not in work through the normal selection and recruitment process that there would be for any job. We have to get that point clearly on the record today.

That is at the heart of the problem that the Scottish Government has on this issue. It has created a certain perception with its provision of 25,000 apprenticeships. No one mentioned that someone might have been in employment for six months or longer before they took up the apprenticeship. The perception that has been created is that the 25,000 apprenticeships are there for people who want them, and that the apprenticeships last for three or four years and are in traditional trade jobs such as plumbers, joiners and electricians. I know that apprenticeships go right across the board and that there are 130 different types of apprenticeships. I support that

kind of vocational training and believe that it is right that we have the ethos of apprenticeships right across our workplaces in Scotland. However, the reality is that, of the 26,000 apprenticeships in 2010-11, only 3,789 were what we would describe as traditional apprenticeships. The gap between the reality and the public's perception is a huge issue. As politicians, we have a duty to address that.

I do not know about other MSPs, but people regularly come to speak to me about their sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters not getting the opportunity to take up an apprenticeship and get started in a career. We have to recognise that problem. We should support in-work training and recognise those opportunities for what they are, but we should also recognise that there is a desire for traditional apprenticeships and that we need to think about how we support them, not only in terms of Government support but in terms of the local economies.

Angela Constance: I appreciate Mr Park's advocacy and support for what are perceived to be traditional apprenticeships. I, too, am pleased that the number of construction apprenticeships has held up, in spite of the recession, and that the number of engineering modern apprenticeships has increased.

However, would John Park accept that our provision and alignment of the modern apprenticeship programme must tie in with the Government's economic strategy and that we must also respond to the needs of employers and provide modern apprenticeship opportunities in other growth sectors such as food and drink, the creative industries, tourism, energy and oil and gas?

John Park: I accept that and, if the minister goes back through the record over a number of years, she will see that I have said that for the past four or five years. What I do not accept—Kezia Dugdale made the same point—is the focus that there currently seems to be, particularly in the third and fourth quarters, on achieving a certain number of apprenticeships. On a Friday, someone is a person sitting in their seat doing a normal job but, on Monday, all of a sudden they are an apprentice. We should not take that approach to ensure that we hit the targets, because it does not fit in with the Government's economic strategy and it will not help younger people in the longer term.

I will make some constructive suggestions. We must get some detail on the modern apprenticeship figures. Given that £72 million is being spent on the scheme, it is right that the Scottish Government should say annually what the figures are. How do we increase the opportunities for level 3 apprenticeships? Is the number of level

2 apprenticeships appropriate? Is it right that we focus on people who are already in work, or should we focus on people who are outside the labour market? Let us have an honest discussion about the figures. There is a lot that we can agree on and I hope that we can move forward together as a Parliament and start delivering for the young people of Scotland.

16:36

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): The debate is a very important one. We should recognise that we are all concerned about any young person who is unemployed and is not getting the opportunities that we would want them to have.

I am sure that at this time of year other members will have been invited, as I have been, to a number of school award ceremonies. I was at one last Tuesday at Abronhill high school, at which I saw an array of fine, talented young people receiving awards for real achievement. The idea that those young people might not be afforded the opportunities that we all want to see them get and the opportunities that I have had terrifies me. If there is any suggestion that concern about the issue is not shared across the board, I hope that it is not taken seriously. I think that it is viewed as a serious issue across the chamber. Iain Gray was right to say that the issue should unite us rather than divide us.

We are all aware that we are in difficult economic times. We should also be aware that the youngest are among those who are the most vulnerable to the effects of the economic downturn. We see how grave the situation is for young people in some other countries. For example, youth unemployment is running at over 50 per cent in Greece and Spain. There are obviously problems here, but we do not have as severe a problem as there is in those other countries.

Of course, that is not to take a complacent attitude. I am glad to see that the Scottish Government is doing what it can with the powers and resources that it has at its disposal to try to ensure that it provides opportunities for young people. The creation for the first time of a dedicated post of Minister for Youth Employment was a signal in that direction, and I think that the creation of that post was welcomed across the board.

I will talk a little about what the Scottish Government is trying to do. Mark McDonald made the very good point that the debate should be about more than modern apprenticeships, but a lot has been said about them in the past few days and I want to pick up on what has been said.

Let us focus on the facts. Last year, the Scottish Government invested £72 million to support more than 26,000 modern apprenticeship starts—a figure that exceeded the target of 25,000. John Park made a very good speech, as he usually does, but he repeated the criticism, which Kezia Dugdale made more explicitly, of the modern apprenticeship scheme being target driven. Call me cynical, but if this Scottish Government was not to meet the target, I wonder who might be the first person to criticise it for not having met the target. Perhaps that is too cynical a perspective to put forward in this debate.

The point has been made, rightly, that the modern apprenticeship scheme runs as it always has done, but there is one important key difference. The difference is that, under this Government, nearly double the amount is being invested in the modern apprenticeship scheme than was the case under the Labour-Liberal Executive. That should surely be welcomed.

I understand the point that Iain Gray was trying to make, but I was concerned to hear him suggest that we should not just be counting the number of apprenticeships. He went on to say that we should ensure that the apprenticeships are meaningful. He must be careful about the language that he employs. I think that every young person who is engaged in a modern apprenticeship is doing something meaningful.

Iain Gray *rose—*

Jamie Hepburn: I am sure that Iain Gray will want to put on the record that he thinks so, too.

Iain Gray: I am grateful to Mr Hepburn for giving me the chance to correct a mistake that he and one of his colleagues have made. I did not say that there are apprenticeships in the modern apprenticeship programme that are not meaningful; rather, I said that we have to make the programme count, by which I meant that we have to make it deal more effectively with the unemployment crisis and more effectively match the economy's needs. That is not the same as saying that the apprenticeships are not meaningful. It is very different.

Jamie Hepburn: I am glad that Mr Gray has had the opportunity to clarify his remarks and that he accepts, as we all do, that modern apprenticeships are meaningful.

That is probably enough about modern apprenticeships. Mark McDonald and I have made the point that there are other things happening as well.

I want to pick up on the £9 million that the Scottish Government has invested in six local authority areas that face particular challenges with youth unemployment, some of which are historic

challenges. I was very glad that North Lanarkshire was the second largest beneficiary of that investment, and was very happy to join the minister at an event at Cumbernauld airport to announce the £9 million investment. The minister and I were able to speak to young people who were actively engaged in the programme that North Lanarkshire Council was taking forward. They are being supported in their employment by the local authority, and it was clear that they were benefiting from that investment and the investment that has been built on by the Scottish Government. It was also useful to speak to the manager of the airport, who frankly stated that he was a bit cynical about the idea at first but went on to recognise the benefit of investing in young people. That should be the basis on which we all proceed. We should all recognise the benefit of investing in young people at all times, but particularly in these difficult economic times.

16:42

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): When Michael Moore, Iain Duncan Smith, John Swinney and Angela Constance went to Dundee in March to discuss ways to tackle unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment, I was encouraged that they might focus on Dundee. Kezia Dugdale and I sat in Dundee College that morning and listened to the minister talking about youth unemployment. She also took questions from young unemployed people and local businesses in Dundee. At that point, I believed that we could try together to tackle rising youth unemployment in our city. However, I was disappointed. Three days after the SNP ministerial car had swept out of Dundee, it was announced that £9 million would be shared across Scotland to tackle youth unemployment, but not one penny would come to Dundee, which was the venue for the Scottish youth unemployment conference.

Angela Constance: Is Ms Marra aware of the methodology? This is the first time she has raised the issue with me. One stream of funding was targeted at six local authorities that have the most acute problems. That is not to say for one moment that Dundee, Fife, West Lothian and West Dunbartonshire do not have problems, but money was targeted to other areas on that occasion. As we proceed to the medium term with our strategy, Jenny Marra should welcome the fact that we have European social fund money with which we can move forward and ensure that other areas of Scotland will also benefit.

Jenny Marra: I will go back and look at the minister's methodology, because my understanding is that Dundee's youth unemployment rates are worse than those of three of the five areas at which she targeted that

investment. I am sure that she and I can correspond on that matter in the future.

The SNP came to Dundee with warm words and assurances, but did not regard the city's youth unemployment problem as being big enough to deserve investment. Furthermore, when asked why Dundee's young people had been overlooked, a Scottish Government spokesperson replied that money had been earmarked for areas that have particular youth unemployment problems.

Let me tell the minister about the extent of youth unemployment in Dundee, so that next time she will not do us the disservice of sharing a platform with the Tories in Dundee and telling us how concerned she is, but will instead address the problem with hard investment. In Dundee today, 1,705 16 to 24-year-olds are claiming unemployment benefit while Dundee has 674 modern apprenticeships, so it is clear that that number should be multiplied by three. The Scottish Government's statistics show that during the past year the number of 16 to 24-year-olds in Dundee who have been claiming unemployment benefit for six months or more rose by a staggering 109 per cent, and the number who have been claiming for a year or more soared by 642 per cent. I would like to think that the Scottish Government simply did not know the true extent of the problem in Dundee before its spokesperson told our young people that they are not a priority for the Government.

For too long, the Government has used its flagship policy on modern apprenticeships as an excuse for ignoring the problem. The Government has claimed countless times that 25,000 modern apprenticeships have been created. We now know, as a result of Kezia Dugdale's assiduous research, that the claim is spurious and that the reality is that the Government cannot even administer a modern apprenticeships scheme effectively, let alone transform apprenticeships into sustainable jobs for unemployed youngsters.

When I think of Dundee, I think of our potential. I think of our life sciences and technology sectors and our future as a renewables hub. I think of our proud manufacturing history—NCR, Timex and Kestrel—I think of all the young people I meet who tell me that they desperately want to work, and I think of the young men and women who want to work in construction and engineering, who want to work with their hands and make things.

Some people stopped me in the street in Dundee last week to ask me when the renewables jobs will come. So far, the Government has failed to deliver on those jobs, despite our city's promise. The investment from Gamesa did not come to Dundee, and although it is almost six months to the day since the First Minister came to Dundee to sign a memorandum of understanding with

Scottish and Southern Energy, we still wait to hear the outcome. We still do not know how much our portion will be of the national renewables infrastructure fund or when it will come to Dundee. Perhaps the Government will tell us today—or soon.

We owe it to Dundee's youngsters to give them every opportunity to meet the expectations that we teach them their hard work will allow them to achieve. On behalf of our young people, I urge the Government to make youth employment an even higher priority.

16:48

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I declare an interest, because I intend to speak about the auto industry. I come from an auto business background.

When I contemplated employing a young person, my prerequisite for a candidate was that they should be willing to learn. I never sought people who had already been trained, but much preferred to provide training that would benefit the individual and produce the skill set that was required for the job. No doubt other employers have a preference for ready-trained people, but in my experience the other approach is far better. However, training is vital if we want the best from the workforce.

That view is supported by a recent survey of employers by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. The commission found that employers in Scotland are more likely to invest in building the skills of their staff than are employers anywhere else in the UK.

My business, which my son now runs, is involved in supplying the motor repair industry. In general, the motor trade has a fine record in recruiting and training young people, whether we are talking about mechanical engineers, coach painters, panel beaters or a host of technical professions which, I am sure, many members do not know about. However, because of the massive financial pressure on the sector that the credit crunch has caused, the auto industry as a whole, and the auto repair industry in particular, have had to guard and spend every penny wisely.

I note that the modern apprenticeships scheme has been of significant assistance to the sector. I find it difficult to understand Labour's rhetoric on modern apprenticeships. First, it wrecks the economy and then it cuts the Scottish budget while continually demanding that the Scottish Government spend even more money than it did when it was in administration.

Whether it is for health, local government or education, Labour politicians demand more.

Labour negotiated with the Scottish Government the number of modern apprenticeships that it believed were required. The Government provided funding for even more, but Labour still voted against modern apprenticeships. What is even worse is that despite voting against that increased number the Labour Party is still demanding more—not so much like *Oliver Twist*, more like *Stan and Oliver*.

Kezia Dugdale: Does Gil Paterson accept that when it comes to youth employment, the cost of not acting is far greater?

Gil Paterson: Of course the cost of not acting is greater, but Kezia Dugdale can see what this Government is actually doing: it is acting to the best of its ability.

The modern apprenticeships scheme is welcome. It is welcomed by young people in particular—mostly because they know that it is not a kiddie-on scheme, but one that comes with a job attached, offering them some security for the future. I well remember the dreaded yoppers scheme, in which young people who were looking for jobs or careers were simply used and abused in a scheme that led to nowhere and offered no security.

This Government has a different priority for young people across our country and for our industry. However, it is constrained in terms of what it would like to do and what it can do. If only it had the levers of power over the economy, the difference that could be made would be far greater. That said, the evidence speaks for itself and the Government's commitment to young people can be measured in spades.

Last year, the Scottish Government invested about £72 million to support more than 26,400 modern apprenticeships—which exceeded the target of 25,000. Based on those figures, the Scottish Government is on track to deliver the 125,000 modern apprenticeships that it promised to the people of Scotland over this parliamentary session.

Compared to other countries in Europe, where youth unemployment is rising and their Governments are struggling to tackle the problem, Scotland is faring comparatively well. It would be naive to say that we have solved the problem, but I am proud that this Government is committed to tackling it and to ensuring that young Scots are able to advance themselves, be it through further education or through the workplace.

I fully endorse the Government's position and I urge everyone to support the motion.

16:53

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The contributions to this debate, which have been fiery at times, put into sharp perspective the extent of the challenge that we all face in tackling the great scourge that is any society that is scarred by the unemployment of far too many young people.

The speeches have also put into sharp perspective the difficulties of balancing greater numbers of jobs for young people with a qualitative approach that ensures that those jobs are more than just a statistic in the Scottish Government's official economic data. They should instead be a meaningful employment opportunity. As Iain Gray pointed out in his good speech, the definition of that is vitally important. The employment opportunity must also be fulfilling and be for the longer term, as came through strongly in the discussions at the Finance Committee meeting yesterday.

No one is pretending that the job is easy, particularly when it is set against trends in the global economy. It demands detailed scrutiny of exactly where the problem lies, and a well-evidenced analysis of where the policy and spending focus should be. Yesterday and today, my colleagues Gavin Brown and Mary Scanlon have been asking the Scottish Government some very important questions on that front. They have asked it to be clear about the exact causes of unemployment among our young people, and about the quantitative and qualitative measurements by which it intends to judge whether their policy focus is a success. That point was made very well by John Park and Liam McArthur.

The minister has rightly said that local business forums can be very helpful in the micromanagement that is required in employment policy. She was right to say that that also includes schools, colleges and universities. That will succeed only if there is a transparent approach and an accepted rationale for where spending is greater and likely to have its best effect.

My colleagues and other members are keen to tease out of the minister a little more about the criteria that she is using to award six local authorities additional resources. That comes back to Jenny Marra's point. Nobody is disputing the reason for doing that, but they want to know the criteria by which the awards are being made possible, and how we will assess the success of the additional resources.

The point that was made by several Labour members is crucial: training programmes have to be tailored to suit the skills of young people, rather than the young people being developed to suit the training programmes. I do not accept the high

percentages that are sometimes bandied about in some quarters, which say that the vast majority of our young people are unemployable.

I do accept—not least because it is the very consistent and powerful contention from virtually every part of the highly respected business community in Scotland—that far too many young people do not have the right skills and, sadly, are not sufficiently well schooled in the basics of literacy and numeracy, or sufficiently aware of the professional approach that is required in the work place. Yesterday, we saw another report on our schools which—yet again—highlighted the need for more action in that area, particularly in our deprived communities.

Once again, I stress the importance that the Scottish Conservatives attach to dealing with the issue at the youngest possible age. It is all very well for Governments to be talking about colleges and universities widening access—which is entirely right—and setting a certain number of places aside for students from disadvantaged communities, but—to be quite frank—that is not where the focus should be. That point is too late in the day for many young people, which is why we need to tackle that issue earlier, particularly in primary school.

Provided that employers buy into its philosophy and new exam structure, the curriculum for excellence should be a real opportunity to make the school experience much more meaningful to each individual, and to combine that with much greater rigour when it comes to the basic skills. That, combined with taking on board what Donaldson, Roe and Christie all said to us, should allow us to make much better progress when it comes to their developing the right skills.

It is by those means that we can hope to change attitudes to technical and vocational training, and to remove the still-persistent view that a non-university education is somehow second class. In his excellent speech in this chamber last week, Sir Tom Hunter had some extremely important things to say to us, as some members have mentioned. We need more imagination and creativity about how we can instil the entrepreneurial spirit in more of our young people. There are many other entrepreneurs who want to see the Scottish Government make much greater efforts to encourage private sector capital into the process. That needs much greater attention if there is to be a fully coherent approach in the manner that the minister has said she wants. That can only happen if we remove the barriers that prevent some employers from taking on new apprentices.

We can argue a lot about the numbers and about what constitutes an apprenticeship and what does not. I am sure that that has some importance, but so does the qualitative aspect of

what we are doing and that, in turn, demands a much more robust, transparent and evidence-based policy.

I support the amendment in the name of Mary Scanlon.

16:59

Kezia Dugdale: If I may, I will—before I address some of the points that members have raised—cover a couple of points that I did not manage to get into my opening speech. The first is on redundant apprentices. Back in 2009, the Scottish Government set up a scheme called safeguard an apprentice, which was designed to support businesses that were struggling to survive by giving them £75 a week to help them to keep on an apprentice. The Government quietly scrapped that scheme at Christmas time.

Angela Constance: The scheme actually ceased last September, so it is sad that Miss Dugdale has taken so long to catch up. In 2009-10, the scheme benefited 291 young people and, in 2011-12, the figure fell to 15. It was costing more to run the scheme than it was actually helping people. Will she retract her silly, wilful and deliberate misunderstanding of the situation and get to the facts?

Kezia Dugdale: I apologise for getting the dates of December and September mixed up, but I will not apologise for setting out the fundamental facts at the heart of the issue. The minister says that the scheme was scrapped because of a lack of demand. Is she seriously telling us that, in the current economic circumstances, businesses do not need help to keep on their apprentices?

A second scheme called adopt an apprentice is designed to place apprentices who are made redundant with different firms so that they can continue their qualifications. That is popular with small businesses such as Wishart Contracts in my area of Edinburgh, because they get a skilled apprentice without much of the associated cost. The SPICe briefing on youth employment that was given to the Finance Committee this week says that the future of the adopt an apprentice scheme is unclear. At that committee this week, the minister confirmed that she plans to continue to fund the scheme, but she did not say to what degree or by how much.

Angela Constance: For clarification, I told the Finance Committee that, in March, I made an announcement at a very public *Holyrood* conference in the city that we were once again extending the scheme. Please master the brief.

Kezia Dugdale: Again, the minister fails to answer the question, which is this: how much money is she going to spend on the scheme next

year? I can tell her how much she spent in the past two years, so I am surprised that she cannot tell us how much she wants to spend in the future. I ask her for that detail. The questions on the support that she is providing for redundant apprentices bring us back to the heart of the matter, which is that her Government is more interested in delivering the 25,000 modern apprenticeships as a number, rather than as a policy.

Neil Findlay, in an intervention, made an important point about the way in which Skills Development Scotland records the figures on where apprentices are after they complete their qualifications. That agency records nothing about where people are three, six or 12 months after they have completed their course, or about whether they are still employed. That is a worry. Probably, a significant number of those people end up back in the dole queue, even though they have their apprenticeship certificates. The minister has suggested that that might be scaremongering or that it is untrue, but if she looked at the local authority websites advertising apprenticeship schemes, she would see that, time and again, whenever a local authority advertises an apprenticeship, it is for a fixed term, which is the length of time that it takes somebody to complete the apprenticeship. It is no wonder that people are worried about whether the jobs exist at the end of the programme.

There are other issues that I wanted to cover in my opening speech. My colleague Jenny Marra asked legitimate questions about the methodology behind the £9 million that has been given to six local authorities. I would like to ask why not a single job has been advertised on the community jobs Scotland website since March this year. In answer to one of my parliamentary questions, the minister said that the scheme will return in August of this year—

Angela Constance: Will the member give way to let me answer that question?

Kezia Dugdale: I am sorry, but I want to continue.

If the scheme is so successful, why did the minister let it stop for five months when 100,000 young people are out of work? In 2011-12, the Government funded the scheme to the tune of £10 million to create 2,000 opportunities. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations asked for that to be extended and offered to deliver 6,000 opportunities over three years for £21 million, but it got £6 million to deliver 1,000 opportunities. What is the cost to society if those people remain unemployed when there is a perfectly good scheme that she continues to remind us of, but which is not getting the money that it needs to deliver?

I remain concerned about activity agreements and whether they should be considered as positive destinations in the eyes of young people.

Mark McDonald made an excellent speech that touched on the transitions between different employment programmes. I, too, am worried about the number of young people who are simply recycled around the system, but the problem is that we cannot see that particular story in the employment statistics. I also share Liam McArthur's concerns that many SDS offices are closing or reducing their hours and that young people are increasingly being referred to online sources. That, in my experience, is not how young people want to access careers advice; they want to be able to turn up and ask questions. The system should not be simply appointments-based.

Iain Gray made an important point when he said that we should spend less time counting apprenticeships and more time making them count. He also killed the myth that because we voted against the budget we voted against modern apprenticeships. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order!

Kezia Dugdale: That reminded me of Mark McDonald's speech in the UK budget debate, in which he argued that one might vote against a budget but that does not mean that one is against everything in it. I say to Mr McDonald that he should join us now that he has seen the light. We have a seat for him here. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order! We will hear the member.

Kezia Dugdale: Kevin Stewart simply got his facts wrong when he said that £35 million was spent in 2006. I have in my hand the Scottish Government press release—I will give it to him afterwards—and on the back, it refers to £60 million in 2006. If his minister is going to accuse me of not doing my homework, I ask Mr Stewart to do his before he comes back to the chamber to talk about this issue.

The Presiding Officer: The member needs to wind up.

Kezia Dugdale: Absolutely, Presiding Officer.

When the minister started her job, 100,000 young Scots were out of work; now that she has been in it for six months, 100,000 are still without work. We want to work with the Government on this issue, but it has to be straight with us and with a public that is desperate for opportunities for our young people.

17:06

Angela Constance: Over the past few days, there has been much excitement in Scotland as

the Olympic torch has travelled through our country. A modern apprentice on a business management course called John brought the torch into Hopetoun and, after the week that we have had, my thought was how symbolic that was.

The Olympic torch symbolises world peace and understanding, but it is fair to say that we have not had much peace and understanding in the chamber today. Nevertheless, there have been some substantial, heartfelt and considered contributions and, in that respect, I want to pick out a few people.

Mark McDonald always speaks from his heart and I assure him that I, this Government and the rest of the chamber share his commitment to improving the life chances of Scotland's looked-after children. As a former mental health officer, I am glad that Mary Scanlon mentioned the link between unemployment and mental health, and I give her an undertaking that if I do not respond to certain points in my speech I will endeavour to do so in writing.

Iain Gray had some golden nuggets in his speech. I am a reasonable person—or at least, as reasonable as a politician gets. I assure him that a consultation on the public procurement bill is imminent. I also assure the chamber that the needs of young unemployed Scots will be up front and central in that bill.

Iain Gray: I simply have to ask the minister what many people are asking: when is that consultation going to happen?

Angela Constance: I appreciate that Mr Gray really wants to have an answer to that question. However, as a former minister himself, he will know that, first, certain things have to take place in the Government. However, the consultation will happen soon. He will have something to get his teeth into and we look forward to getting constructive feedback on maximising procurement opportunities.

Iain Gray and others also touched on the role of local government. In this all-government, all-Scotland approach to tackling rising youth unemployment, single outcome agreements and my on-going dialogue with local authorities are pivotal. Indeed, part of the reason for having local action forums on youth unemployment was to find local solutions rooted in local economies. The chamber may also be interested to know that Skills Development Scotland is devising youth employment plans with every local authority in Scotland.

I will not accept the amendments of the Labour and Tory parties for reasons that I hope become apparent.

The draft youth employment strategy was warmly welcomed, but I took on board the views that the Parliament expressed when we debated it a few months ago. I wanted to address, in a meaningful and considered way, some of the equality issues to do with women, young disabled people and young people from the black and minority ethnic community. We accepted that there was a need to sharpen our focus on diversity issues. I do not do such things in a tokenistic manner. I want those matters to be addressed in a meaningful and rich way.

I would like to encapsulate what the short, medium and long-term response of this Government is to youth unemployment. Surely the chamber must accept that we needed to act quickly. When I came into my post, we had to make a series of decisions, between December and March, about money that was available for year 1. Surely that was a commonsense approach. I assure members that although we do not need to waste time and effort in reinventing the wheel, we must ensure that every pound spent by the public purse adds value. I can give members that assurance. We needed to act quickly. Are people seriously suggesting that I should wait until we have a finalised youth employment strategy, with every dot and comma checked, before I can allocate much-needed resources to some of our communities in Scotland?

Members who criticise the decisions that have been made should say which decision should not have been made. Are they talking about the decision to give £1.5 million to the employment recruitment incentive to support young care leavers into work? Are they talking about the provision of £6 million for community jobs Scotland? I have heard many Labour members talk about the life-changing impact of community jobs Scotland on the young people on that programme, which is currently still in its first phase. We will, of course, be advertising soon, in a timely manner and in accordance with the requests of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, which has put forward a programme for its second phase. Are members criticising the allocation of £2.5 million to the social enterprise challenge fund, the provision of £5 million for the Commonwealth games legacy or the money that was given recently to the Prince's Trust?

Mention has been made of pocket money. I came into this post with a budget of £30 million. With the identification of £25 million of European structural funds, that has nearly doubled. Crucially, that £25 million has to be match-funded by another £35 million. That rolls up to a budget of £90 million over the next few years. I do not describe that as pocket money.

As far as the medium term is concerned, we need to do more, specifically on long-term unemployment, as Jenny Marra and others said. We have a good offering for 16 to 19-year-olds. There is no doubt that the claimant count among 18 to 24-year-olds is rising. Although we do not want to duplicate services that are provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, we must add to what is currently available to young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment or who are in that position.

Kezia Dugdale *rose—*

Angela Constance: I am in my final minute; the Presiding Officer is eyeing me up.

A lot has been said about the modern apprenticeship scheme. I make this point in all seriousness: this is Scotland's Parliament, and our words have consequences. If members talk down the modern apprenticeship scheme, which is highly successful, they talk down Scotland's young people. I will not stand by and let anyone talk down our young, talented and energetic Scots, who have their whole lives in front of them and for whom we must provide hope and opportunity.

Let us work together. My door is always open to people who have constructive ideas and suggestions—we began to hear a few of those today, for the first time, after a week of nonsense—but let us not talk down young Scots, because our young people are the future of this country and they will help us to grow our economy and to grow as a nation.

Point of Order

17:15

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):
On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

At First Minister's question time today, the First Minister said:

"Under contracts that were drawn up during the years of the Labour and Liberal Administration, Lena Wilson has a contractual entitlement to a public sector bonus".

That simply cannot be true. The chief executive was appointed in 2009, her contract was drawn up in 2009 and her bonus was agreed in 2009. It is a chronological impossibility that any previous Government is responsible for Lena Wilson's bonus.

Presiding Officer, will you give the First Minister, who is sitting in the chamber, an opportunity to correct the record and accept that the contract was drawn up under his Administration?

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I thank Mr Rennie for the advance notice of his point. He will recognise that that was not a point of order. The accuracy of statements that are made in the chamber is not a matter for the Presiding Officers. However, Mr Rennie's point is now a matter of record.

Decision Time

17:16

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-03289.1, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S4M-03289, in the name of Jenny Marra, on women's representation, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)

Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Abstentions

MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 73, Against 40, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-03289, in the name of Jenny Marra, on women's representation, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 81, Against 34, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that women and men play an equal role in Scotland's public sector; notes with concern that women continue to be underrepresented on the boards of Scotland's public sector organisations; understands that barriers continue to exist for women gaining a place on such boards; welcomes the steps that the Scottish Government has taken to address this imbalance through the Diversity Delivers strategy, including the establishment of the public appointments and diversity centre of expertise to advise on and administer the public

appointments process across the Scottish Government; recognises the work that has been undertaken to increase the application and appointment rates for underrepresented groups, including women in public appointments, resulting in 34% of public appointments in 2011-12 being held by women; recognises that, while there has been progress on some strands of diversity, further work is required, and therefore agrees that there should be an open event hosted by the Scottish Government and supported by the Public Appointments Commissioner to review the progress of the Diversity Delivers strategy in relation to gender equality and to consider further actions to make sure that there is further progress toward improved women's representation in public life.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-03294.1, in the name of Michael Matheson, which seeks to amend motion S4M-03294, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on women's health, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)

Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 80, Against 1, Abstentions 34.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-03294, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on women's health, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed? [*Interruption.*]

The motion is agreed to. [*Interruption.*] Members really need to speak up. If the answer is no, you should shout no loudly. I am prepared to rerun the vote, but I give warning that in future you really do need to be louder than you are at the moment.

The question is—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps if there was a bit of silence in the chamber we could hear it when people shout no.

The question is, that motion S4M-03294, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on women's health, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)

Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 80, Against 0, Abstentions 35.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes that an estimated 4,000 women in Scotland are believed to have received breast implants manufactured by Poly Implant Prothèse (PiP); supports the ongoing criminal investigation in France into the former owner of PiP, Jean Claude Mas, for his role in the manufacture and distribution of the substandard implants containing industrial grade silicone; notes that the Scottish Government is working with the UK Government on the three UK-wide reviews; welcomes the findings of the report, *Poly Implant Prothèse (PiP) silicone breast implants: Review of the actions of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Department of Health*, which found that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority took appropriate action based on the information made available to it; looks forward to the outcome of the expert group looking at the rupture rate data and toxicology testing led by Sir Bruce Keogh, which is due to report later this month, and the review looking at the regulation of the cosmetic industry also being led by Sir Bruce Keogh, which will report by March 2013, and commends NHSScotland for the action taken by it to ensure that it responded appropriately by making information and advice available to women and ensuring that, where the private healthcare sector was unable or unwilling to provide a clinically appropriate package of care, NHSScotland provided appropriate care.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-03295.2, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, which seeks to amend motion S4M-03295, in the name of Angela Constance, on young people and economic growth, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)

Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 40, Against 61, Abstentions 14.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-03295.3, in the name of Mary Scanlon, which seeks to amend motion S4M-03295, in the name of Angela Constance, on young people and economic growth, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)

MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)

McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 52, Against 63, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-03295, in the name of Angela Constance, on young people and economic growth, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that recruiting young people makes good business sense and is crucial to sustainable economic growth; notes that the employers' survey carried out by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills showed that the majority of employers in Scotland that recruited a young person straight from school, college or university were satisfied with their skills; welcomes the £25 million of European Structural Funds announced on 9 May 2012 to support youth employment over the next two years, and agrees that this should be focused on supporting young people into work in small and medium-sized businesses.

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-02988, in the name of John Park, on celebrating Fife's outdoor education centre. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament warmly welcomes the reopening of Ardroy outdoor education centre in Lochgoilhead; congratulates the Ardroy Ambassadors group, which ran what it considers to be an excellent campaign to reopen the centre after its closure in July 2011; notes that many school groups have already enjoyed adventures at Ardroy since its reopening and that it is already fully booked until the end of the summer school term; recognises that the Ardroy centre is now run as a charity; understands that the Ardroy team hopes to raise enough funds in the short term to upgrade the facility and in the long term to purchase the building from Fife Council, and celebrates what it considers the significant and valuable contribution that outdoor education centres like Ardroy make across the whole of Scotland through the diverse programmes that they run for children, young people and adults.

17:26

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The more observant members in the chamber will be aware that Lochgoilhead and Argyll are not part of Mid Scotland and Fife, which is a big region that stretches quite far over to the west but not as far west and north as Argyll. However, I am pleased that Michael Russell is here as the constituency MSP and as the minister who will respond to the debate.

The reason why Ardroy outdoor education centre has featured so heavily in my interests over the past year or so is the service that it has provided to schools in Fife since 1969 as the outdoor education centre of choice for young boys and girls, particularly of primary school age, going on outward bound and outward education courses. The centre has played a huge part in shaping their lives.

I will provide some background to give colleagues a bit of an understanding of what we have been doing over the past couple of years and an appreciation of why I am optimistic about the centre's future. Sadly, at the end of July 2011, the centre closed as a result of a decision by Fife Council that related to the budget pressures at that time. Previously, it was apparent that there were many people in and around Fife—not just teachers but many young people who had attended the centre as pupils—who wanted to be part of a campaign to ensure that it had a future. I became involved in supporting the save Ardroy campaign by raising issues in Parliament and, more

important, by helping the group to find a solution to ensure that the centre stayed open. I will say a bit about the people who have been involved in that later in my speech.

I am pleased that, because of the work done by the Ardroy ambassadors group—which came out of the save Ardroy campaign—and its support, dedication and activities, the centre reopened as a social enterprise at the end of last year and is once again welcoming school groups from Fife. I am in a minority in Fife—members will not hear me say that often in the chamber—as I did not get the opportunity to go to Ardroy, which was because my school did not take that opportunity, rather than because of anything that I did.

My elder daughter has been to the centre and my younger daughter is going next year. I know from the experience that my elder daughter had what it means for a young person to go away overnight, with their peer group and their teachers, to an environment where they learn to work together as a team, develop their relationships with their friends and start to develop adult thinking and relationships. The work that is carried out there is hugely important. I would not say that I saw my daughter develop into a completely different person overnight but, from her experience and from hearing what her teachers have to say about it, I know that the work of the centre is valuable and we cannot put a price on that sort of experience and activity.

It was fortuitous that we talked about youth unemployment and opportunities during our debate earlier today. Centres such as Ardroy are where many young people take their first steps towards gaining what we in Parliament might describe as softer skills but which might be described in the real world outside Parliament as real skills or life skills, so that they can continue in their schooling and go into the workplace with some understanding of what it means to be part of a team and how relationships with friends and colleagues really matter.

I would like to highlight the campaign to save Ardroy. The forced closure in summer 2011 was obviously not good for Ardroy, but what arose out of it was good. I am talking about the work of the Ardroy ambassadors, and of George Bruce, who has driven much of the partnership working to ensure that the centre can open again. George has had regular conversations with Michael Russell, and he has my mobile phone number—that is all I will say—so he has been on to me quite a lot.

These things do not happen by chance. They happen because people in our communities, such as George, are prepared to work hard, to work across political boundaries, and to work in partnership with a range of people to make sure

that there is a service for young people to enjoy. That is why the reopening of Ardroy has been a huge success.

I had the great opportunity of visiting Touch primary school in Dunfermline recently. One of its classes had had to leave Ardroy early because of the high winds that we had earlier this year. I met the pupils on the Friday and heard first-hand from primary 6 and primary 7 about what the experience had been like for them. I know quite a lot of their mums and dads as well because we are of a similar age, so I had a little bit of a reminder of that. I spoke to those young people, but it is difficult to put into words what the experience meant to them. They can put their experiences into words much better than I can.

Looking back, I know a number of people who went to Ardroy. It was quite funny to have a look at the save Ardroy website, which had a lot of personal testimony from individuals who had been there, and I have a quote that I want to share with members because I think it is important to get these experiences on the record:

“I went to Ardroy as a P7 pupil and had an amazing time. Last year, I took my own Primary 7 pupils to Ardroy for a week in October 2010. It was unbelievable how much they learned and benefitted from the great opportunities available to them at Ardroy. It would be a tremendous loss for future children for Ardroy to be closed. We will all be writing letters and encouraging as many people as possible to sign this petition.”

That is what happened. George Bruce deserves a lot of credit for the work that he has done, and the people who campaigned to save Ardroy also deserve credit. It is fantastic to have the opportunity here today in Parliament to recognise the work and to wish Ardroy all the best for its future.

17:34

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I welcome the chance to take part in this debate on celebrating Fife's outdoor education centre, and I wish Ardroy a successful future that builds on its reputation for delivering an excellent programme of outdoor activities. I congratulate the Ardroy ambassadors on the transfer of the provision of outdoor education at Ardroy from Fife Council to the new charitable trust, and I recognise the efforts of Fife Council staff and the previous Fife Council administration for all their work in helping to make this possible.

Ardroy reopened on Monday 14 November last year when the first schoolchildren visited the new centre. Since then, hundreds of Fife children and others have followed them, and the centre is now fully booked until the end of summer.

Outdoor centres such as Ardroy play an important part in outdoor education and the introduction of new activities to the many who participate, introducing them to exciting challenges and the benefits of a wide range of pursuits.

At a young age and at another centre in Lochgoilhead, I was introduced to various activities that influenced me greatly in my young teenage life. The introduction to canoeing and sailing encouraged me to pursue those activities throughout my teenage years, gaining many qualifications—particularly in canoeing—and going on to train four times a week and compete all over Scotland. Later on, after gaining my qualifications in skiing, canoeing, sailing and archery, I decided to go into full-time employment teaching outdoor pursuits to various age groups of all abilities. If it had not been for centres like Ardroy, my passion for outdoor sport would probably never have been fulfilled to its potential.

The work that is done by the staff at Ardroy must be praised. In many cases, children attending the centre would never have had the chance to try out such a wide range of activities, which are delivered with skill, dedication and passion. That makes the whole experience enjoyable for youngsters, allowing them to develop their skills; encouraging them to do their best and be inclusive instead of exclusive; and developing communication and team-building skills—all of which are greatly needed in later life—while enjoying the outdoors.

Ardroy's motto that you are only as good as your last performance shows the high standard and the quality of the activities that are delivered. The centre is audited annually by the Adventure Activities Licensing Service and it is a Scottish Canoe Association-approved centre. Its wide-ranging programme and national initiatives have resulted in its being only the second centre in Scotland to achieve the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom quality mark. The centre's themed programme also fits in with the new curriculum for excellence in being focused on the adventurous discovery and exploration of wild places, which allows pupils to complete the John Muir award. The woodland activities, outdoor sports and scenario-based courses that are delivered by Ardroy help children from all over Scotland to learn how to overcome adversity, enhance personal and social development and develop a deeper relationship with nature. What better values can we try to develop in our adults of the future?

I wish the Ardroy centre all the best for the future and hope that it continues to build on its success, as such facilities are greatly needed to develop impressionable youngsters by offering them organised learning in an outdoor setting,

which is probably one of the best ways to learn and to enjoy education.

17:37

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I congratulate John Park on the motion. I am delighted that Ardroy outdoor education centre has reopened and I add my congratulations to all those who fought extraordinarily hard to ensure that that was the end result, particularly as they had to fight against some very difficult financial circumstances.

John Park made clear the valuable role that Ardroy has played over a long period of time in helping young people in Fife to develop their skills, confidence and environmental awareness. He also made plain the strength of positive feeling towards the centre among many who have experienced its programmes. The fact that the centre is already fully booked until well into next year, whichever of the 17 different outdoor activities is being pursued, speaks volumes about the need for Ardroy. It would be unacceptable for so many Fife primary school children to lose the opportunity of attending this wonderful facility. I have no doubt at all, especially during the implementation of the curriculum for excellence, that the wider educational experience that such centres can bring will be an increasingly important part of any young person's school career. John Park is absolutely right to say that it is appropriate that this debate comes just after the important debate that we had this afternoon about the skills that are required.

The benefits of outdoor education are well known. It enhances the self-esteem, the self-discipline and the confidence of the young person and it gives children the teamwork skills that are essential for the workplace and in later life. It gives them a healthier and more active outlook on life, makes them more aware of a different environment, in some cases, and it gives them—especially at the end of their primary school career—a new independence and self-reliance that helps them to mature into young adults. As David Torrance said, it can also help to lay the foundations for the Duke of Edinburgh's award or the John Muir award, which is immensely valuable. However, I would argue strongly that it is the residential aspect of the experiences that can be the most powerful, especially if they can be enjoyed over a week or two weeks and in locations that are far removed from the young person's home environment. Those are the best learning situations.

There are other lessons to be learned from the Ardroy experience—lessons that were part of an interesting discussion that took place at this week's Education and Culture Committee when, in the presence of some expert witnesses, we

debated how best to ensure that there was much better strategic planning of local government and a much better understanding of how the public, voluntary and private sectors could work more effectively together to lay on diverse qualitative educational experiences for our young people.

It is not exaggerating things too much to say that there was considerable concern among some of the witnesses that, although we have some marvellous facilities on offer in Scotland, we do not always get the strategic planning right. There are some serious issues to do with how we could try to improve that co-operation in partnership between the different sectors.

It was pointed out in a written submission to the committee from Scottish Outdoor Education Centres that unless there is a different, broader approach to those issues, the future of some outdoor education centres, including Ardroy, could be under threat. SOEC pointed out the need to involve more stakeholders in the early strategic decision making. Sometimes our approach to the need for those facilities is a bit short term, and there can be a lack of transparency about how local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors could come together.

It is excellent news that Ardroy is back in business—I am delighted that John Park has highlighted that—but there are other messages, too, and a wider perspective that we need to address.

17:41

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I congratulate John Park on securing this worthwhile debate. I congratulate, too, George Bruce, the other Ardroy ambassadors and the wider community for working so hard, raising funds and reopening the centre, which has benefited many people in the past and will continue to do so in future. I should say to John Park that Ardroy is in my constituency, the Highlands and Islands, which is far larger than Mid Scotland and Fife. However, if he wants a competition on that, maybe this is not the time to mention it.

I am really pleased that the centre has reopened, because it provides jobs for the local community. The Highlands and Islands is quite sparsely populated and it is difficult to find employment opportunities. The centre is part of a cluster of outdoor education activity centres in the area. A cluster is good for all its component outdoor activity centres, because they can work together and attract people into an area.

It is often said that someone who goes to a place as a child will come back as a young adult, then with their children and then maybe even with

their grandchildren. That can only be of benefit to the area. Of course, the centre's biggest benefit is for the young people who go there and enjoy their time there.

I was lucky enough to be brought up in a rural community and I had loads of time outdoors. It is great for young children to get out and about in a safe environment in which they can really let their imaginations go and enjoy themselves without being constantly under surveillance. Such surveillance happens a lot because parents are so afraid of the harm that may come to their children, and I have sympathy for parents in that position. However, outdoor activities help to broaden horizons and build confidence. Children taking part in outdoor activities have to become more self-reliant and therefore they become more self-assured and build the skills that do them well into adulthood.

Outdoor activities are good for children's education—Ardroy is looking at curriculum for excellence—and for health because they allow children to do physical activity rather than being inside, as they often are, playing computer games and the like.

Fife Council has supported the centre in the past, has supported the reopening of the centre, and is obviously looking to continue that support, albeit in a different way, probably because of cuts in funding. I know that the group is considering purchasing the centre. It would be good if Fife Council could transfer ownership at a cost that would not be prohibitive to the group so that the centre can be secured into the future. Not only will the centre benefit Fife's young people, but it has the ability to benefit young people from all other areas. I wish it every success in future.

17:45

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): I congratulate John Park on securing the debate. It has been a constructive and positive debate, and so it should be, because the story of Ardroy and the way in which it has come through a period of considerable difficulty to its present situation is a positive one.

It is important to recognise that many outdoor centres are situated in my constituency of Argyll and Bute, and I am glad to be speaking here not only as a minister but as a member for that constituency. However, the concentration of those outdoor centres creates problems. As local authorities found it more difficult to support the centres, others have found themselves with a number of commitments to outdoor centres and find it difficult to sustain them for an indefinite period.

A moment ago, off the top of my head, I wrote down the names of some of the outdoor centres that still operate in Argyll. The City of Edinburgh Council has a centre in Benmore. Caol Ruadh used to be an outdoor centre but is now a private house. Perhaps most impressive of all is Kilbowie, which is still run by North Lanarkshire Council. I visited Kilbowie last August and saw young people jumping off a very high cliff into the Sound of Kerrera. They were thoroughly enjoying the experience—I did not do it, but I would like to.

It has been difficult for local authorities to sustain the centres, and the imagination that has gone into ensuring that Ardroy can continue to operate is certainly an outcome of the passionate campaign, as John Park said. However, it is about more than that. It is about the great imagination that George Bruce and his wife—who are in the public gallery today—and a variety of other people brought to this activity. Their extraordinary persistence—I know what John Park means when he says that George Bruce has his number; he has my number, too—their determination to make the centre work, their keenness to negotiate with the local authority, and the willingness of Fife Council, to which I pay tribute, to have that negotiation brought the result that we now have.

The centre is operating again in Lochgoilhead. It has wide support in Fife and in Argyll. Parents, teachers, pupils and the community are all impressed and are keen to support the centre. As members have said, the centre is booked through until next year. I look forward to visiting the centre this summer to see for myself what has been done.

John Park was also right to quote the individual user. I will quote one of them, too—a pupil called Megan, who was quoted in *The Herald* last year in its coverage of Ardroy. She said:

“It’s changed my friends ... I have never seen them in the way I see them now.”

Visiting any outdoor centre for a period of time has a profound effect. That personal experience is backed up by wider research. The Outward Bound Trust’s social impact report in 2011 found that 93 per cent of teachers reported improved personal, social and emotional wellbeing among young people following such a visit and that 60 per cent displayed improved performance on their return to school. That is why the Scottish Government’s social entrepreneurs fund was happy to award almost £25,000 to enable the re-establishment of Ardroy as a sustainable social enterprise.

A number of members have rightly referred to the curriculum for excellence. The publication “Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning” provides national guidance and resources that highlight the value and importance

of progressive outdoor learning experiences, including through residential programmes. Education Scotland is promoting outdoor learning as an approach to learning across the curriculum, supporting local authorities to build capacity and share practice. The national network for outdoor learning includes local authorities, the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, the Scottish Advisory Panel on Outdoor Education and other partners. From August to October, there will be a series of glow meets around the theme, “Building your curriculum—outside and in”, which will all be based at outdoor residential and adventure centres and which will feature discussions of residential experiences in primary and secondary.

In cross-curricular terms, the recommendations of the Scottish studies working group noted the importance of outdoor learning, too, and said that it should be highlighted in guidance and included in professional learning activity. That guidance was published on 21 March, alongside the studying Scotland resource, and professional learning events are planned.

The Scottish Government is supporting the sector more widely. Scottish Outdoor Education Centres was awarded £500,000 through the social investment fund in 2011 to support business development and refurbishment. A social return on investment study calculated that every £1 that is invested in five-day residential outdoor learning programmes has a social return of just over £11, so the £500,000 will produce many outcomes.

We are talking about Ardroy, so I will conclude with Ardroy. People who are lucky enough to know Lochgoilhead know that it is a beautiful small community, but it has been revitalised over the years by the outdoor education centres there, of which there is more than one, as David Torrance pointed out.

Those centres give young people the opportunity to experience wonderful surroundings—sometimes for the first time—and to participate to the full in a range of activities and sports. Young people can go away inspired and excited, with their eyes wide open. They often come back year after year and, as John Park said, people sometimes come back as teachers to take young people to the centres, which is a truly great thing.

I always regard myself as lucky to represent Argyll and Bute, where the opportunities for outdoor education are great.

It gives me the greatest pleasure to know that Ardroy will continue to operate, through the enthusiasm and campaigning of John Park’s constituents, through the vision and commitment

of George Bruce and through the excitement of every child in experiencing something new.

Meeting closed at 17:51.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-4061-9084-7

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-4061-9098-4

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland
