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Official Report

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Wednesday 7 November 2012

Session 4

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CONTENTS

	Col.
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	13115
RURAL AFFAIRS AND THE ENVIRONMENT	13115
Peatlands Restoration (Emissions Reductions)	13115
National Marine Plan	13116
Recycling Rates (Improvement)	13117
Land Action Scotland	13118
Schmallenberg Virus	13119
Report on Proposals and Policies	13120
Air Quality in Cities	13121
Private Drinking Water Supplies (Quality Improvement Grants)	13122
Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010	13123
JUSTICE AND LAW OFFICERS	13124
North Ayrshire (Crime Levels)	13124
Review of Expenses and Funding of Civil Litigation in Scotland (Report)	13125
Prison Estate (West of Scotland)	13126
European Arrest Warrant (Timescales)	13127
Sexual Exploitation of Children	13128
European Union Membership (Legal Advice)	13130
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (Priorities)	13131
SCOTLAND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MALAWI	13133
<i>Motion moved—[Humza Yousaf].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Patricia Ferguson].</i>	
The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf)	13133
Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)	13139
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	13143
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)	13144
Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)	13146
Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP)	13149
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)	13152
Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)	13154
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	13156
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)	13158
Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)	13161
James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab)	13164
Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)	13165
John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	13167
Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)	13169
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	13171
Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab)	13173
The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell)	13177
BUSINESS MOTIONS	13182
<i>Motions moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	13185
<i>Motions moved—[Joe FitzPatrick].</i>	
DECISION TIME	13186
LIVING WAGE WEEK	13187
<i>Motion debated—[John Park].</i>	
John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	13187
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)	13190
Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)	13191
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)	13193
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	13194
Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab)	13196
John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)	13197

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)	13199
Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)	13200
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)	13202
James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab)	13203
The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay)	13204

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 7 November 2012

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

Portfolio Question Time

Rural Affairs and the Environment

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is portfolio questions on rural affairs and the environment. I would be grateful if questions and answers were succinct.

Peatlands Restoration (Emissions Reductions)

1. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to realise the potential of peatland restoration for emissions reduction purposes. (S4O-01426)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): We are working with Scottish Natural Heritage to develop a peatland plan for Scotland. In support of that, on 22 October I announced funding of £1.7 million over three years for peatland restoration. The commitment is in recognition of the multiple benefits that peatland restoration and maintenance can provide. We have provided funding for restoration, in particular in the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland.

Graeme Dey: I draw the minister's attention to evidence given to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee in April that an average spend of £12 million per year over 10 years might be required if we are fully to grasp the opportunity. The sum might be arrived at by drawing down funding from a variety of sources, such as the common agricultural policy, the LIFE+ programme and Scottish Water, as well as the Scottish Government. What work is being done to determine how sufficient moneys can be amassed from such sources, to ensure that we fully restore Scotland's peatlands and maximise their contribution to combating climate change?

Paul Wheelhouse: The funding that is being provided will be used to develop and implement a peatland plan and will support physical restoration activity.

I endorse the committee's view that peatlands provide a number of benefits. Peatland restoration projects have the potential to be supported by a number of funding streams. I assure the member that as part of the development of the peatland plan we will consider how funding streams might be utilised, as well as opportunities for drawing on

private sector support. I am pleased to note the positive progress of the joint bid by SNH and RSPB Scotland to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has advanced through the first stage for further consideration.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):

What is being done to educate the public and involve communities and schools, such as the school in which I used to work near Braehead Moss, in relation to lowland raised bog conservation? Lowland raised bogs are a rare and threatened habitat and their management helps with flood prevention and in many other areas, including biodiversity and carbon storage.

Paul Wheelhouse: I acknowledge the point that Claudia Beamish made. I have met the Scottish Wildlife Trust, for whom raised bogs, particularly in lowland and central Scotland, are a key area of concern. I will shortly have a discussion with Michael Russell on how we can incorporate biodiversity and environmental messages into curriculum for excellence, and I will take forward the point that Claudia Beamish made.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Does the Government think that farm support schemes should recognise and reflect the value and public good of peatlands on farms and crofts?

Paul Wheelhouse: I acknowledge the point that Jamie McGrigor made. It is true to say that we are still evolving our understanding of the impact of peatland in the context of abatement of climate change and sequestration of carbon. I will take on board the member's message.

National Marine Plan

2. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government on what date it will publish its national marine plan. (S4O-01427)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): As is set out in the revised statement of public participation, it is expected that the national marine plan will be adopted towards the end of 2014. We will formally consult on a draft plan next summer. The timing allows for an integrated consultation that includes marine renewable sectoral plans and proposals for marine protected areas.

Sarah Boyack: I thank the cabinet secretary for the timetable. The fast pace of development in the marine environment, including in the renewables and aquaculture sectors, was a key reason why the Parliament legislated for a marine plan in the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Is there scope to prioritise and bring forward the plan, so that it can provide certainty for industry and lead developments in such sectors, rather than being led by them?

Richard Lochhead: One reason why we want to take a little more time before we consult on the draft national marine plan is that, in discussions with us, stakeholders said that they want everything to be looked at in the same context, in an integrated way. The plan will influence developments in Scotland's waters for the next few decades, so we must get it right. We must look at all the issues in the round.

I am confident that we will end up with a regime that balances all interests in the way that our waters require, and that the developments that go ahead in the meantime are taking account of environmental and other considerations.

Recycling Rates (Improvement)

3. Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to improve recycling rates. (S4O-01428)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): Prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, Scotland's recycling rate was under 5 per cent. Today our recycling rate exceeds 40 per cent and the zero waste plan has set Scotland on a path to 70 per cent.

This year, zero waste Scotland is providing funding to help roll out household food waste collections. The Scottish Government has also made available a further £1.2 million to support improvements to household waste recycling centres and to improve other measures, such as glass collections.

Those are only highlights of the broad programme of support that zero waste Scotland is providing to businesses and local authorities.

Kevin Stewart: Can the cabinet secretary expand on what is being done to encourage a cut in food waste and say what is happening across the country to expand food waste collections?

Richard Lochhead: If the member is able to grab the occasional spare moment, he might see the good television advertising campaign that is currently under way and which encourages people to cut down on their food waste, given that one fifth of our household food ends up in the bucket, which is a cost to the budgets of homes across Scotland and to the environment.

It is also worth saying that zero waste Scotland is making £5 million available to local authorities to help them to roll out household food waste collections. That will help to ensure that, by the end of the year, an additional 485,000 households will have their food waste collected, with more to follow over the next two years. Given that, only a couple of years ago, virtually no home anywhere in Scotland was part of a food waste collection

scheme, I hope that the chamber will recognise that that is significant progress in addressing the scandal that has developed over many years of how much food we waste as a society. We take the challenge seriously.

Land Action Scotland

4. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the aims of land action Scotland. (S4O-01429)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): The Scottish Government supports community involvement in the local management and ownership of land, and Patrick Harvie will be aware that the Scottish Government has established the land reform review group with a view to understanding how land reform can support sustainable development.

Patrick Harvie: I hoped for a slightly more ringing endorsement of the campaign's objectives. It aims to

"challenge landed power in Scotland and the concentrated pattern of private landownership"

and to

"democratise land and allow the people of Scotland to reclaim a stake in their own country."

I hope that the Government strongly endorses the aims of the campaign and that the minister will confirm that he will keep open the option of reviewing legislation if the campaign finds that those aims cannot be achieved in the current context.

Paul Wheelhouse: Approaches by land action Scotland to specific charitable organisations might result in specific changes, such as the Mount Stuart Trust's decision to change its memorandum and articles of association to democratise the organisation and the similar moves in Applecross.

We recognise the issues that are involved, but I repeat that the Scottish Government remains committed to the land reform review group, which we have charged with a radical review of land reform issues. I trust that that will address the points that the member raises.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): Does the land review group intend its meetings with land action Scotland to be undertaken in a similar format to the ones that it has had with Scottish Land & Estates, Community Land Scotland, the Development Trusts Association Scotland and the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association?

Paul Wheelhouse: The land reform review group is independent of Government in terms of its choices on the gathering of evidence, although we are kept informed of what it is doing. If the

member wishes land action Scotland to participate in the process, she should encourage it to write to the chair of the land reform review group and ask for a meeting.

Schmallenberg Virus

5. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken to minimise the impact on agriculture of the Schmallenberg virus. (S4O-01430)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): The Schmallenberg virus is a relatively low impact disease spread by midges, although infection during particular stages of pregnancy can lead to problems around lambing or calving time. Helping producers to make informed management decisions is key to minimising the impact of the Schmallenberg virus. The Scottish Government has therefore funded enhanced surveillance and delivery of guidance to veterinary practices, and it has worked with the industry to facilitate the testing of animals that are imported from affected areas.

Angus MacDonald: Although no acute cases have been recorded in Scotland, it is clear that farmers who have recently imported livestock from high-risk SBV areas must be extra vigilant and ensure that introduced breeding stock are tested for the virus. I am aware that work is going on to produce a vaccine. Does the cabinet secretary have any detail on progress regarding an SBV vaccine and whether there is an estimated timescale for its introduction?

Richard Lochhead: I should point out for the record that, so far, four premises in Scotland have been confirmed as having the virus, which compares with about 300 south of the border. Clearly, we must pay close attention to the issue.

A vaccine could offer a solution to the issue for livestock keepers. As the member might be aware, vaccines are usually developed by commercial enterprises, which must seek a licence from the United Kingdom Government before they make a vaccine commercially available.

As things stand, no vaccine has yet been approved for use on these islands, but I understand that a submission has been made to the UK Government's veterinary medicines directorate for a provisional licence for a vaccine. The uncertainties that are associated with vaccine licences as a result of the rigorous nature of the testing that is required before they are put on the market mean that it is difficult to say exactly what the timescale will be for making that available. However, we hope that a vaccine will be available in the near future.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am sure that the cabinet secretary will agree that, in the case of any disease such as Schmallenberg, rapid reporting is important for its control. Where has the cabinet secretary got to in his consideration of the Kinnaird review, which recommended the closure of a number of Scotland's veterinary investigation centres?

Richard Lochhead: As the member might be aware, no decisions have yet been taken on the recommendations of the review, which we will consider in the months that lie ahead. Cases such as the outbreak of Schmallenberg virus—no doubt, that is the context of the member's question—highlight the importance of our surveillance infrastructure in Scotland and why we have to get those decisions right.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Has the Scottish Government considered testing milk tankers for the virus rather than the more laborious method of testing individual farms, so as to identify potential sources more efficiently?

Richard Lochhead: I highlight the point that the virus is midge borne, but I am happy to speak to our scientists to investigate Iain Gray's point. I will perhaps drop him a note to explain the background on the suggestion that he makes.

Report on Proposals and Policies

6. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish the second report on proposals and policies. (S4O-01431)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): That is a complex and wide-ranging project, and work is on-going to ensure that the draft report is sufficiently robust to remain relevant for at least the next five years. Our intention is to lay the draft report on proposals and policies, or RPP 2, in the Parliament by the end of 2012 and to ensure that there is adequate time for consultation. We will of course keep Parliament up to date.

Malcolm Chisholm: Given that the first emissions target under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was missed, how will the revised RPP for 2010 to 2022 ensure that Scotland meets all the future legally binding climate targets that the Parliament has set? Does the minister agree that an important part of that will be shifting as many proposals as possible into the realm of policies?

Paul Wheelhouse: Malcolm Chisholm rightly points out that it is essential for Scotland to convert as many proposals in the RPP into policies as possible. Obviously, we will take that forward in the publication of RPP 2, the main focus

of which is the period from 2022 to 2027. However, we will refresh the analysis that is presented in relation to the objectives that are set out in the RPP. The Government will certainly work hard to meet the legally binding annual emissions targets and the overall targets that have been set. The Government is determined to meet those targets.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): Can the minister give me an assurance that, given the importance of RPP 2, the Government will focus on getting it right and that Parliament will be given adequate time to consider the document?

Paul Wheelhouse: Angus MacDonald is absolutely right to ask that. We are conscious of the view in the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee and more widely in the Parliament that members are keen to ensure that they have adequate time to give feedback on the draft RPP 2 and ensure that it is a robust document. Given that there is considerable global attention on the document, it is important that it is robust and absolutely correct.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Committees in the Parliament are currently completing their budget scrutiny. How are any of us to have the faintest clue whether the Government's climate change policies are adequately funded when we do not know how those policies will be changed to make up the lost ground from the missed target?

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise Patrick Harvie's point—he has raised the concern about the tie-in to the budget on a number of occasions and did so again when we met recently. As I said in response to Angus MacDonald and Malcolm Chisholm, we will ensure that the document is robust.

As we promised, we have presented information to committees on the detail of current spending on measures that have an impact on meeting our climate change targets. I hope that that will inform discussion of the Government's proposals by subject committees and the Finance Committee.

Air Quality in Cities

7. Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made on improving air quality in cities. (S4O-01432)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): The Scottish Government is working closely with local authorities, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and other partners to improve air quality in cities. We support a number of local and national measures to tackle air pollution successfully. They include the establishment of a statutory framework and clear strategic aims for air quality and

transport; providing grant funding for local authority actions; and providing advice and information through the Scottish air quality website and Scotland's environment web.

Colin Keir: Queensferry Road at Barnton and St John's Road in Corstorphine in my constituency have some of the highest air pollution levels in the city of Edinburgh. What action is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that local authorities comply with carbon monoxide targets, to mitigate the health effects of air pollution?

Paul Wheelhouse: As a former resident of the area to which Colin Keir refers, I recognise the issue that he raises.

Addressing local air quality issues is a matter for local authorities. The Scottish Government provides technical support and funding to monitor and, when appropriate, support actions. We maintain regular contact with the City of Edinburgh Council and other local authorities to give them help and advice in fulfilling their statutory air quality responsibilities.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Given that the failure to meet the European Union air quality directive targets can result in fines, what consequences does the Scottish Government believe that it will face if we continue to miss the targets?

Paul Wheelhouse: I agree with Claire Baker that it is important that we meet our targets under the air quality directive. In partnership with Transport Scotland, SEPA, local authorities, the United Kingdom Government and others, the Scottish Government is working on a range of measures to ensure full compliance as soon as possible. Those measures are set out in detail in the UK's application to the European Commission for a time extension to adapt to the targets.

Private Drinking Water Supplies (Quality Improvement Grants)

8. Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the take-up rate of grants for improving the quality of private drinking water supplies has been in the last three years. (S4O-01433)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): A total of 995, or 5 per cent, of Scotland's 19,886 registered private water supplies have been improved in the past three years. Grants totalling £5,121,590 have been received.

Stewart Maxwell: Given the relatively low take-up rate, what policies and practices is the minister pursuing to advertise the grants and ensure that take-up improves in this particularly important area for public health?

Paul Wheelhouse: The member raises an important point. Local authorities administer the private water supplies grant system on the Scottish ministers' behalf. Many local authorities actively promote the system. For example, information is available on local authority websites and, when samples that are taken from private water supplies fail to meet standards, letters and leaflets are sent to owners and users.

Some local authorities have advertised the grant system at farming events, in journals that are aimed at landlords, in radio interviews and even on the side of council vans. The grant scheme is also promoted on the Scottish Government's website and by the drinking water quality regulator for Scotland on its website and in its annual report.

Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

9. Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made on implementing the provisions of the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. (S4O-01434)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): Excellent progress has been made towards implementing the 2010 act. The Crofting Commission has been established with a firm focus on becoming an effective regulator. It has become more democratic and, as the member is no doubt aware, I recently appointed Susan Walker as its convener. In addition, secondary legislation is almost complete, and instruments that relate to the implementation of the crofting register were recently laid before the Scottish Parliament.

Dave Thompson: The not unreasonable requirement for reports on how crofts are being used has caused some concern among crofters, who are not sure exactly what is required. What guidance has been or will be provided to grazings clerks and common grazings committees on the production of such reports on crofting activities in their areas?

Paul Wheelhouse: The commission is discussing and consulting on how best to ensure that the obligation is met by all concerned. That will feature at the crofting assessors conference in Inverness on 21 and 22 November, which is one vehicle for ensuring that people are aware of the requirements.

The commission hopes to develop a user-friendly duty report form for grazings committees to complete, which will highlight issues that the commission might consider addressing. Guidance will be provided in due course, once that process is completed.

Justice and Law Officers

North Ayrshire (Crime Levels)

1. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the level of crime in North Ayrshire was in 2007 and what it is now. (S4O-01436)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Recorded crime in North Ayrshire has decreased by 5 per cent since 2007. In 2006-07, 9,871 crimes were recorded in North Ayrshire; in 2011-12, 9,378 crimes were recorded there. That welcome reduction is helping to contribute to the lowest levels of recorded crime in Scotland for 37 years.

Kenneth Gibson: To what extent does the cabinet secretary believe that the focus on innovative community policing, which has seen the number of community officers in North Ayrshire increase from 30 to 140 under the Scottish National Party, has contributed to the impressive fall in crime, which continues to decline?

Kenny MacAskill: Police officers throughout Scotland do a fantastic job, and the innovative work in North Ayrshire is simply a part of that. The Government believes that a visible police presence correlates with our having the lowest recorded crime in 37 years. The visible police presence reassures good citizens and deters those who would be bad. That is why we are delighted that we have maintained the 1,000 additional officers that we committed to: we have delivered them and they are working in our communities.

Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): Given the high incidence of domestic abuse in North Ayrshire, the 7 per cent rise in domestic abuse incidents, the fact that "*Third Force News*" reports that two in three women are being turned away from refuges, and the fact that 30 per cent of domestic abuse charities are finding a funding deficit in 2011-12, what additional resources can the Scottish Government offer those vital services so that women who experience domestic abuse get the support that they need?

Kenny MacAskill: Significant and record funding is being put in to tackle domestic abuse. Much of the funding for dealing with the victims, apart from the support for Victim Support Scotland, comes through other portfolios. I have no doubt that my Cabinet colleagues would be able to comment on that.

The member is right to raise the issue. It is a matter that the former chief constable of Strathclyde, who is now the chief constable of the new police service of Scotland, has commented on. It is clear that domestic abuse is part of the

culture of violence that we have in Scotland, and it is an issue that we have to address. When that is allied to the abuse of alcohol, significant problems are experienced, although it is not always dependent on alcohol.

I give the member an absolute assurance that the current police services and the new single service will continue to prioritise the issue, and my colleagues in other departments will continue to address the victims' needs. Equally, we will continue to work with Victim Support Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and all the other agencies, which do a remarkably good job in tackling what is in many instances a cultural problem that needs to be addressed by each and every one of us, especially males.

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of much of the comment surrounding the introduction of a single police service. Will the move to a single service impact on police numbers in Ayrshire?

Kenny MacAskill: No, I do not believe that it will. The deployment of officers will always be a matter for the chief constable, but as I said in response to Kenneth Gibson, we believe that it is the visible police presence that has got us to a 37-year low in recorded crime, together with the significant progress that we have made across other areas of crime. The whole purpose of reform is to ensure that we do not go down the route that is being taken south of the border, where almost 16,000 officers are to be lost. That is almost as many officers as currently serve—and will continue to serve—in Scotland.

Review of Expenses and Funding of Civil Litigation in Scotland (Report)

2. Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when Sheriff Principal Taylor's report on the review of expenses and funding of civil litigation in Scotland will be published. (S4O-01437)

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham): It is hoped that the report of the review of expenses and funding of civil litigation in Scotland will be published before the Scottish Parliament's summer recess, which, as members will know, is set to begin on 29 June 2013.

Roderick Campbell: Does the minister agree that the expenses and funding of civil litigation cannot be considered in isolation from the funding and operation of the courts? Accordingly, can the minister confirm that the Scottish Government will take account of Sheriff Principal Taylor's findings before final views are formed on the future court structures project?

Roseanna Cunningham: Although the Government does not implement anything in isolation, the Taylor review is independent and any recommendations will be a matter for Sheriff Principal Taylor. Ensuring that people can exercise their individual and collective rights and helping to resolve disputes fairly and swiftly are important pillars in creating a flourishing economy, and the Scottish Government has embarked on a series of national programmes that will deliver the most radical set of reforms to our courts and tribunals in more than a century and which must all be taken together. The making justice work programme will improve Scotland's civil and criminal justice system by improving procedures and case management, which will widen access to justice and will also significantly change court structures on the basis of the proposals of the Lord President, Lord Gill. The findings of Sheriff Principal Taylor's independent review, too, will be integrated into the making justice work programme.

Of course, we cannot reform the structure of our courts without reviewing the court estate. The Scottish Court Service has issued a consultation that is also independent of Government and on which responses are invited from interested parties by 21 December. It will be for the Lord President to decide on the basis of that consultation which of the proposals should be pursued, and they will come before the Scottish Government and Parliament. I assure the member that all these matters will be looked at together.

Prison Estate (West of Scotland)

3. Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve the prison estate in the west of Scotland. (S4O-01438)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): On 29 October 2012, I wrote to the Justice Committee advising that I had agreed the Scottish Prison Service chief executive's recommendation that the SPS proceed to develop Her Majesty's prison Inverclyde as a custom-made national prison for women offenders, with both the regime and the building fully meeting the aspirations and recommendations of the commission on women offenders. In order to facilitate that change of use for the planned HMP Inverclyde, HMP Greenock will be retained in the medium term as a local prison for male prisoners.

Stuart McMillan: Is the cabinet secretary able to provide any information on the estimated economic benefits to Inverclyde of the building of the new prison in addition to HMP Greenock's being kept open? Can he assure the chamber that when contracts are being considered Inverclyde-based companies have the opportunity to tender

to ensure that Inverclyde itself can gain the maximum economic benefit?

Kenny MacAskill: Absolutely. The member makes a fair point. In addition to benefits from the building of the new prison, there will be economic benefits from the continuing operation of HMP Greenock, which will retain around 180 employees with an annual wage bill of £5.2 million. HMP Greenock also incurs expenditure of circa £2.31 million on a range of goods, services and utilities. The construction of the new 300-cell prison in Inverclyde, which will cost in the region of £60 million, should create substantial economic benefits; after all, a large project of that nature requires many different skills and will create employment opportunities.

The public service contracts for HMP Inverclyde will be procured in accordance with the necessary European Union legislation to ensure that the facility is fit for purpose and provides value for money. That said, the Scottish Prison Service and the appointed construction contractor will liaise with Inverclyde Council on economic development issues and the opportunities that the project presents for local employment and for local businesses, to build on the current significant input by and contribution of HMP Greenock in relation to employment.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Aside from the construction of the new prison at Inverclyde, which is long overdue, and dealing with the situation at Cornton Vale, what other initiatives have been introduced as a result of the recommendations made by Elish Angiolini's commission?

Kenny MacAskill: We are taking a variety of measures. As we cannot move immediately to HMP Inverclyde, work is on-going at Cornton Vale to ensure that it is fit for purpose, that various issues are addressed and that there is investment in mental health services and so on. In addition, the first allocations are being made from the reducing reoffending change fund to support mentoring programmes for women offenders across Scotland. That was one of the clear measures identified by Dame Elish Angiolini's commission to help to address reoffending and to keep women on the straight and narrow once they are released. I give the member my full commitment that the outstanding work of the Angiolini commission is being delivered and that we are seeking to work towards delivering the outcomes that the commission thought necessary and on which we concur.

European Arrest Warrant (Timescales)

4. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the average timescale is in

which a European arrest warrant issued in Scotland results in an arrest. (S4O-01439)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Analysis of the six arrests in the past 12 months in respect of European arrest warrants that were issued in Scotland shows that three suspects were arrested within hours or a matter of days. One of those cases involved an accusation of murder, and an arrest was made in five hours.

Arrests were made in a further two cases in four months and nine months respectively. The final case involved a period of six years and five months between the warrant being issued and an arrest being made.

Christina McKelvie: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the European arrest warrant has been used successfully in my area to return alleged perpetrators to face justice for very serious crimes. However, is he as worried as I am that the United Kingdom Government is not only putting that at risk by withdrawing from European arrest warrants, but putting Scotland at risk by withdrawing completely from Europe?

Kenny MacAskill: I totally agree. I disagree with the way in which the matter has been handled by the Home Secretary, and we have registered our objections. The decision was made without any intimation to us, at a time when Strathclyde Police was actively making it clear that it was seeking to arrest an individual or individuals in Spain in respect of a very serious crime that had taken place in Scotland. Such a decision would not be helpful in promoting the interests of justice in Scotland.

Sexual Exploitation of Children

5. Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what further measures it will take to prevent the sexual exploitation of children, to support its victims and bring the perpetrators to justice. (S4O-01440)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Essential work continues to be undertaken to ensure that that abhorrent form of child abuse is prevented and that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

We are refreshing the national guidance on child protection and have set up a working group to develop multi-agency local protocols on a number of child protection issues, including child sexual exploitation, for all parts of Scotland.

Following my recent visit to the child exploitation and online protection centre in London and the recent publication of the report "Exploring the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland", which the Scottish Government

commissioned, officials will soon meet key stakeholders to discuss what further action needs to be taken.

Adam Ingram: The research that the cabinet secretary mentions indicates that there is a lack of robust evidence with regard to the numbers of children and young people who experience sexual exploitation in Scotland. We have, of course, all been scandalised by the disgraceful Savile affair and the failure by the BBC and others to reveal systematic child sexual abuse.

How will the Government ensure that all incidents of sexual exploitation are properly recorded and that data are properly collected so that we can build a more accurate picture of the nature and scale of the problem in Scotland for the future?

Kenny MacAskill: Adam Ingram makes a fair and valid point. As the report that I mentioned highlights, it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in Scotland, just as it has been in the rest of the United Kingdom. The problem is not visible, and investigation is hindered by the differences in how the issue is defined, but action needs to be taken.

As the national child protection guidance has been reviewed, the collection of national child protection statistics will change from next year. That will lead to the publication of more robust statistics, including more detailed information on child exploitation and sexual abuse.

The Scottish Government will explore options to improve local data collection in Scotland on child sexual exploitation, which will potentially include working further with the University of Bedfordshire on piloting a data monitoring tool with a local authority in Scotland.

We will take the action that we think is appropriate and work with partner agencies, law enforcement, the Government south of the border and stakeholders in Scotland to ensure that children are protected. It would be fair to say that it is also the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure that the children in our communities who are vulnerable are protected. Law enforcement will do its bit, but equally we must work together to protect the most vulnerable.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): With the best will in the world—and I mean that—how can anyone truly support the long-term victims of child abuse and bring the perpetrators to justice when there continues to be a time bar in place for prosecution?

Kenny MacAskill: Rebuttals can be made, and such issues can be addressed. It is clear that we deal with civil matters and criminal matters differently. We are considering how to address

those issues, and I assure Alex Fergusson that those who represent law enforcement will do their utmost in that regard.

As Cabinet Secretary for Justice, I am aware of the number of people who are now spending time in prison—rightly so—for historical offences. The offences may have been perpetrated many years ago, but those people took the innocence and childhood away from many innocent vulnerable people, and they will be punished.

In respect of other matters, it is appropriate that we seek to provide assurances, and those matters are being worked on by myself and governmental colleagues to ensure that we address the on-going problems faced by individuals who have suffered trauma. However, in light of the member's interest, I am happy to discuss matters with him outside the chamber to give him confirmation as to what work is on-going.

European Union Membership (Legal Advice)

6. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government on what date the “exceptional circumstances” arose that the Lord Advocate refers to in his letter to Ruth Davidson of 30 October 2012 relating to legal advice on an independent Scotland's membership of the European Union. (S4O-01441)

The Lord Advocate (Frank Mulholland): As the Deputy First Minister said in her statement on 23 October, following the Edinburgh agreement on 15 October ministers considered that the conditions existed to seek specific legal advice from the law officers on EU membership. That request was formally made to me on 23 October along with a request to disclose that fact. I gave my consent to the release of that information on 23 October, when the Deputy First Minister made her announcement to the Parliament.

Mark Griffin: I thank the Lord Advocate for that answer.

What was the legal barrier to allowing the Scottish Government to reveal to Parliament that no legal advice had been sought on continued EU membership, given that the agreement that he mentions has no legal basis and that no legislation has been passed in either Parliament? In legal terms, how did the signing of the agreement create the “exceptional circumstances” outlined in the letter to Ruth Davidson? Does the Lord Advocate agree that the three points stated in his letter to Ruth Davidson were valid on 4 March this year and that, on that basis, if asked, he would have been able to give the Scottish Government permission to disclose that no legal advice had been sought on continued membership of the EU?

The Lord Advocate: Let me deal first with whether the exceptional circumstances existed prior to consent being given on 23 October.

First, it is for ministers to judge the appropriate point at which to seek specific legal advice from the law officers. As a general principle, paragraph 2.31 of the ministerial code provides that law officers should be

“consulted in good time before the Government is committed to significant decisions involving legal considerations.”

The Deputy First Minister has explained to Parliament that the Edinburgh agreement, in laying out an agreed route to independence, provided the basis upon which specific legal advice could be sought. Further, up until that point, it was possible that the referendum could be the subject of court proceedings, with all the uncertainty that that entails. It was possible that the court would rule that this Parliament did not have the power to hold a referendum, in which case the issue would be academic. Following the signing of the Edinburgh agreement, there will be a lawful referendum, so that uncertainty has been removed. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

The Lord Advocate: The member may also want to look at a letter from the Attorney General of the United Kingdom Government, dated 22 January 2011, to the shadow leader of the House of Lords. The Attorney General referred to the fact that it should be for Government to determine how to use the law officer resource, which legal advisers to engage in a given situation and at what stage to employ them.

Further, the very important law officers convention allows legal advice to be given in private and to be given candidly because it is private. That allows Government the space in which to develop policy without that legal advice being made public. That very important convention is recognised by the UK Government. In fact, the UK Government successfully defended that convention in 2009. The convention applies in Scotland, it has applied since 1865 and it is enshrined in the ministerial code.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (Priorities)

7. Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what the Lord Advocate's priorities are for the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service for the next two years. (S4O-01442)

The Solicitor General (Lesley Thomson): Both the Lord Advocate and I are clear that the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service plays a pivotal part in the delivery of justice in Scotland

and we support the aims in the Scottish Government document “The Strategy for Justice in Scotland”. We have stated that our main priority for COPFS in relation to prosecutions and the investigation of deaths is to achieve operational effectiveness to ensure appropriate and proportionate action is taken in all cases.

However, we recognise that we must give priority to the most serious crimes, due to their nature and their impact on victims and communities. Therefore, the casework priorities for COPFS over the next two years include domestic abuse, hate crime, knife crime, serious and organised crime, the proceeds of crime, unresolved homicides, sexual crime and violent crime. As well as setting those priorities, we recognise the benefit of specialism and will continue that beyond the specialties that are already established in health and safety crime, serious and organised crime, wildlife crime and sexual crime. The public interest is at the heart of the decisions that we make and we take into account the needs of victims, witnesses and the communities that we serve.

Hanzala Malik: I thank the Solicitor General for a very detailed response.

Given that the Lord Advocate is likely to be asked his advice on a range of issues that relate to independence, how will balance be achieved in how the priorities will be met? For example, how do his comments to Ruth Davidson on 30 October—that the Government documents that state that an independent Scotland would continue to be a member of the European Union were “underpinned by legal advice”—tally with Nicola Sturgeon's comments on 23 October that the Scottish Government had

“not sought specific legal advice”?—*[Official Report, 23 October 2012; c 12408.]*

The Solicitor General: Perhaps it would be helpful if I made it clear that the role of the law officers as legal advisers to the Scottish Government is entirely separate to the role of the law officers in the independent criminal prosecution service. In my first answer, I was indicating the priorities for the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service over the next two years.

Scotland's Relationship with Malawi

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-04694, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on Scotland's relationship with Malawi. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons and I call Humza Yousaf to speak to and move the motion.

14:42

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): It is a great pleasure to lead my first debate in the Scottish Parliament in my new role as Minister for—[*Applause.*]. That was the easiest applause I have ever had in this chamber. It is a great pleasure to do so, in my new role as Minister for External Affairs and International Development. I welcome the opportunity to highlight our work on international development—in particular, our relationship with Malawi.

At the outset, I record my appreciation of and admiration for the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs for being, in effect, a one-woman culture department, department for international development and foreign and commonwealth office, which proves most certainly that the cliché about women and multitasking is very true.

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Hear, hear!

Humza Yousaf: That was the second-easiest applause I have ever had in this chamber.

The incredibly hard work of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs has not only sustained the historic relationship with Malawi, but has very much enhanced it and taken it to the next level.

I recognise that many members across the chamber—including Maureen Watt, Sarah Boyack, Patrick Harvie, Christina McKelvie, Liam McArthur, Murdo Fraser and Margo MacDonald—have a real and deep passion for international development, especially regarding Malawi.

The timing of the debate is especially appropriate, given the recent visit to Malawi by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. His meeting with Her Excellency President Banda and the coming together of various elements of our work during that visit heralded the next phase of our relationship with Malawi.

Scotland should, of course, be an active player in the world as a good global citizen that is

committed to playing its part in addressing the challenges that the world faces. The creation of my role as Minister for External Affairs and International Development confirms our determination to see that as a key priority for this Government and our determination to drive progress.

We know that it is the poorest people who are hit hardest at times of economic difficulties such as we face today. It is therefore more important than ever that we demonstrate our commitment to helping the world's most vulnerable people. Unfortunately, there are from some quarters calls to roll back on our international aid obligations because of our economic circumstances. However, this Government believes that it is precisely in such times that we should continue to give to the world's poorest—not abandon them at the first hint of difficulty. I am therefore pleased that the Scottish Government—I believe with the support of the whole Parliament—has not only resisted such calls but has increased our capacity in that important area.

We have demonstrated our commitment to development work and have secured a tripling of the baseline budget from £3 million in 2007-08 to £9 million in 2010-11. Despite budgetary pressures, we are committed to maintaining the fund at £9 million for the duration of the current spending review period. We made a commitment to spend at least £3 million per annum in Malawi. This year, more than £5 million has been allocated to Malawi, and that figure includes neither the soon to be announced climate justice fund projects in Malawi, nor the culture and heritage focused David Livingstone projects.

Among the most heartening aspects of our relationship with Malawi are the thousands of individual links that have been developed between ordinary Scots and the people in Malawi through churches, schools, hospitals and local authorities. I will talk about those links later on. I am amazed not only by how many people from all those sectors are involved, but at how far and wide the relationship stretches across the country. A couple of weeks into my new role, I had the great pleasure of meeting a delegation from the presbytery and schools in Thyolo, who have a link with the community of Westray in Orkney. The meeting was arranged by Liam McArthur MSP. I felt for the two young Malawian children, Pilirani and Alice, who probably thought that they were going to have a holiday in Scotland for a couple of weeks and would spend their time relaxing and seeing the sights. Instead, they spent much of their time in Westray school in Orkney. It is a lovely school, I am sure, but their visit was perhaps different from the holiday that they expected.

I am also taken aback by how many different types of people are involved in this great friendship with Malawi. Doctors, nurses, teachers and others throughout Scotland give of their time, money and expertise to work with the people of Malawi. I pay tribute to the role that is played by those individuals. Their work often goes unreported and unrecognised, but does a huge amount to build relationships between the peoples of our two nations.

The Scotland Malawi Partnership plays a vital role in helping to foster and develop those links, and I thank those who are involved in it for their hard work and dedication. Patricia Ferguson's amendment, which the Government is minded to accept, appropriately recognises that hard work. We recently gave our support for the Scotland Malawi Partnership's sister organisation in Malawi, the Malawi Scotland Partnership, which will play a similar galvanising role in Malawian society, and marks the establishment of a more equal and balanced partnership between our two countries at the level of civic society, to match that which exists at the level of our Governments.

I recently announced the opening in 2013 of a small grants scheme. That scheme is intended to support exactly such long-term partnerships and relationships. I am also pleased to announce that, through Scottish Government funding, a substantial grant from the European Commission to raise in Scottish schools awareness of global issues will soon be awarded. That funding will support young people's understanding—as part of the curriculum for excellence—of issues including poverty and the effects of climate change on the developing world.

Scotland's relationship with Malawi is different from any other partnership of its kind. It is not just about Government-to-Government engagement or about simply working through established non-governmental organisations—although we recognise the power of fantastic work that they do. The relationship is about people and communities. It is about the schools in our constituencies, the churches that—I hope—we go to every Sunday and many more people working together at grass-roots level to further develop the strong civic bond that exists between our two countries. We have developed a unique model that works to foster and enhance civic society's links, and which recognises those links as being a key and unique strength that is to be built on.

Politicians often have a bad habit of taking all the credit for achievements for themselves. However, let that never be said of ministers in the Scottish Government. It is only right to record our thanks to the previous Scottish Administrations and to those who paved the way for our historic co-operation agreement with the Government of

Malawi in 2005. In particular, it is important to record our thanks to Lord McConnell for his vision in forging the partnership with the Malawian Government. This Administration has built on the work of Lord McConnell and we are now collectively taking the relationship to the next stage.

Today, our partnership with the Malawian Government is stronger than ever. The Scottish Government's Malawi development programme builds on the strengths of our unique relationship and provides a focused contribution in the areas that are set out in the co-operation agreement: health, education, sustainable economic development and civic society development and governance. Our approach remains one of supporting communities and organisations through an open and transparent process. We currently support in Malawi more than 40 projects that make a real difference to the lives of people in that country. I am pleased to announce that, today, I have opened the next Malawi programme funding round. I look forward to receiving applications for what will undoubtedly be some fantastically innovative projects.

The Malawi development programme is just one element of our engagement with Malawi. For example, we also recognise the new challenges in Malawi as a result of climate change. The injustice of climate change is, of course, that those who have done least to cause the problem are hardest hit by its impacts while, perversely, those who have done and contribute most will feel the effects least. The £3 million climate justice fund, which was launched earlier this year by the First Minister and Mary Robinson, is part of our commitment to taking responsibility and providing funding to help to mitigate the impact of climate change.

As members may be aware, Ban Ki-moon recently wrote to the First Minister seeking information on how Scotland could use its expertise in renewable energy to support the sustainable energy for all agenda. One way in which we are already doing that is through support of the University of Strathclyde's Malawi renewable energy acceleration programme—MREAP—to the tune of £1.7 million.

At a meeting that was hosted by the MREAP team in Malawi last week, the Government of Malawi agreed that it will take the lead in development of a comprehensive renewable energy strategy for Malawi. That was welcomed by large donors around the table, including the UK Department for International Development, the United Nations development programme and Norwegian and Japanese development agencies. That is a tremendous step forward, and our work acted as a catalyst and was absolutely central to that progress.

Water is another area in which Scottish expertise can play a useful role in development work. Last week, the Government of Malawi indicated that it is keen to discuss Scottish Water and what support it might offer, particularly in training and mentoring of managers and in appropriate policy development on the future structure and form of regulation in Malawi, to achieve the best outcomes. That is an example of how the hydro nation concept can respond to the needs of our partners. The development of such institutional links is important and, along with civic society links, is perhaps where Scotland can add genuine value through long-term partnerships for institutional development.

2013 is a special year for our relationship with Malawi, as we mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dr David Livingstone. From humble beginnings working in the cotton mills of Lanarkshire, he rose to become Scotland's most famous explorer, missionary and humanitarian. His medical knowledge helped to save the lives of many people in Malawi, and he played a pivotal role in bringing an end to the east African slave trade. Today he is held in high regard, both in Malawi and in Scotland, and continues to be an example of the impact and change that one individual can make.

Plans are under way for next year's celebrations. We have funded the National Trust for Scotland to co-ordinate much of that activity, which is focused on the David Livingstone centre in Blantyre. We have funded National Museums of Scotland to work with its partner the Museums of Malawi, to develop the "Dr Livingstone, I presume" exhibition which will open in Scotland shortly, and in Malawi thereafter. We have also provided resource for Historic Scotland to carry out an initial visit and a scoping study for work to support the preservation of Malawi's important built heritage, some of which is a shared Scottish and Malawian heritage.

I am very pleased to announce that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning presented Her Excellency President Banda with an invitation from the First Minister to join us in Scotland for the bicentenary celebrations. We look forward to her response and we hope to welcome her to Scotland.

It is an incredible testament to David Livingstone's work that today, almost 200 years after his birth, his legacy is being continued by none other than a young nine-year-old girl, Martha Payne. If ever we were worried about the future of the historic friendship between our two countries, then let us cast aside those anxieties. The example of Martha gives us all assurances that the relationship is in very safe hands indeed.

We are all aware of the constitutional debate in which Scotland is engaged. At its core is the discussion about the kind of Scotland that we want in the future. My vision of Scotland is encapsulated in our international development work in Malawi. The relationship is born of our joint history—200 years old next year—but that legacy will be continued by our children. With a relatively modest budget, we are pushing ahead with some of the most groundbreaking sustainable energy projects that the international development community has seen, which continues the thread of innovation that has run throughout the history of our nation.

It fills me with great excitement to think about the change that we could make in alleviating poverty across the world if, in the future, we have an international development budget not of millions, but of hundreds of millions of pounds.

Since I took up my post, I have been asked by many people how I find the new role; I always say that it is an incredible honour to serve one's country at the highest political level. I can imagine only that it is akin to the feeling that a footballer has when he is asked to play for his national team. Those who have seen my footballing prowess, or lack thereof—Mr McArthur is one of them—will know that this is the closest I will ever get to experiencing such a feeling. To be able to represent the Scottish Government and to serve in a post in which the potential to do so much good and to push forward Scotland's agenda as a contributor to a fairer and more just world only makes me feel even luckier to be where I am today.

I hope that I have demonstrated that our partnership with Malawi is growing ever stronger at the level of civic society and Government, and that real prospects exist for further institutional links. The day after the US presidential election, it is only appropriate to quote one of that country's founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, who said:

"Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are."

Therefore, it is the duty of every one of us to be outraged that 75 per cent of Malawi's population live on less than \$1.25 a day. We also have a duty to be outraged that 40 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line; that maternal mortality remains high, with 10 women in Malawi dying in childbirth every day; and that 3 million people have no access to clean drinking water.

In that vein, I look forward very much to working with everyone in Parliament as we progress the agenda and continue to strengthen the historic relationship that we have with our friends in Malawi.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that, as a good global citizen, Scotland is demonstrating its commitment to international development through the maintenance of the International Development Fund; notes that the Scottish Government's international development policy and its engagement with Malawi draws on Scottish expertise, historically in relation to health and education, as well as in response to new challenges, notably climate change and renewable energy; recognises and welcomes the role of individuals and organisations across Scotland in supporting and developing Scotland's special relationship with Malawi and the opportunity that the Livingstone bicentenary provides to celebrate that partnership, and further welcomes the next funding round for Malawi.

14:56

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to debate our relationship with Malawi and to have an update from the Scottish Government on progress. In welcoming Mr Yousaf to his new role, I congratulate him on his wise choice of subject for the first of what I am sure will be many speeches as a minister.

Like Mr Yousaf, I never cease to be amazed at just how many links and connections our country has with Malawi. There are schools and churches that are twinned with others in Malawi, and there are professional organisations and individuals for whom Malawi is a very special place. As we have heard, next year we have the opportunity to celebrate those links along with the anniversary of David Livingstone's birth. Mr Yousaf mentioned a list of organisations that will be involved. I hope that he has not forgotten the National Library of Scotland, which has an extensive collection of David Livingstone's papers. I am sure that they are just as interesting today as they were at the time.

It is sensible to consider the range and depth of our links. Only today, my colleague Dr Richard Simpson told me of an initiative that is being undertaken by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which is raising funds for and is actively working with the small number of members of its profession who practise in Malawi.

Yesterday, school pupils from Caldercuilt primary school in my constituency visited Parliament and excitedly told me that an important visitor had been to their school just last week—a teacher from Malawi whose name is Tom. He had explained to the pupils what school is like for young Malawians and had obviously inspired them with his stories. Tom is in Scotland because of a project that Glasgow City Council's education department is running. Called the Malawi leaders of learning project, it helps to upskill classroom teachers and promotes a sense of civic responsibility among young people from both countries. In addition to Tom, there are five other Malawian teachers in Glasgow at the moment. I

understand that they will attend the reception in Parliament tonight, and I look forward to meeting them there.

It is clear to me from reading the evaluation report for the first tranche of the programme that it is doing great work and has great potential. In its first year, it has enabled 15 education professionals—not all of whom are teachers; I was delighted that the party also included active schools co-ordinators—to work in Malawi for five weeks. It is clear from the evaluation report that there have been teething problems, which was to be expected. However, it is also clear that all the staff—Malawians and Scots—learned and benefited from the experience and plan to continue the initiative in the years to come.

A spin-off from that project has been the Malawi young leaders of learning project, in which 15 young people from schools across Glasgow have been selected and matched with 15 young people at Blantyre secondary school in Malawi. The young Glaswegians will go out to Malawi in September 2013 and are currently working with their Malawian peers to shape the project. Such projects have the advantage of being true partnerships, in which Scots can learn just as much from their counterparts in Malawi as our Malawian colleagues can learn from us.

I think that it is fair to say that anyone who has had the good fortune to have visited Malawi will never forget it and that the experience will stay with them and probably influence them in ways that they never imagined. However, it is not just the beauty of the landscape or the friendliness of the people that stay in the memory—although stay they do—it is the contrasts. It is the lack of a reliable electricity supply but the determination of parents to try to ensure that their children are educated; the sheer ingenuity and hard work of the people in spite of the lack of a clean and affordable supply of drinking water. All those elements contribute to making a visit to that amazing country so memorable.

In recent years Malawi, with the help of its donors and friends, has made great strides towards resolving some of the issues that had plagued it in recent years. When I visited in 2006, I was struck by the number of small shops that were selling coffins. They were on every street corner and were a graphic demonstration of the ravages of HIV/AIDS. Now, with the help of donors, that situation is not quite as bad as it was in 2006, with antiretroviral drugs gradually becoming available and education and awareness-raising projects helping to prevent people from contracting the virus in the first place.

Similarly, the maternal mortality rate has reduced from the frighteningly high numbers that I heard about. Unfortunately, however, one in 36

mothers still dies in pregnancy or childbirth—a number that is approximately 58 times greater than the figure in the United Kingdom. The minister is absolutely right to say that we should be outraged about that—I believe that we are. The maternal mortality rate is an issue that has been particularly close to the heart of President Banda and to many of us here in Parliament, and it has resonated with the Scottish public. The dedication of Scottish midwives and doctors in going to work in Malawi—often during their holidays or on sabbaticals—is a tribute to them as individuals and to their professions.

Credit is also due to all the organisations—charities and non-governmental organisations—that do sterling work in Malawi, including Oxfam, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, our own Scottish Fair Trade Forum and many others. However, I want, in its 10th anniversary year, to make special mention of Mary's Meals. At the last count, Mary's Meals was feeding more than 700,000 children throughout the world, including a total of 562,403 children in Malawi every day. That is a staggering statistic, but the reality is so distressing because that means that there are currently 562,403 children in Malawi who at worst would go hungry and at best would not be able to go to school without that daily mug of porridge. For most of those children, that is their one meal of the day, but it enables them to go to school and to have the energy to concentrate and to learn.

We should be proud of that Scottish charity and of all the other charities and NGOs working in Malawi but, more than that, we should support them, for all is not yet well in Malawi. The new President, Joyce Banda, has inherited a very difficult economic situation. She has made great strides in her short period in office to begin to put the country back on a straight course, but in recent months the kwacha has been devalued and the fragility of the economy has been exposed. The cost of living has soared and food prices have risen. There are fuel shortages and real food shortages in the south and central areas of the country—so much so that the World Food Programme estimates that some 2 million people are facing hunger over the next six months. The Government under President Banda is working extremely hard to resolve the food shortages but it is vitally important that Malawi's friends continue to work with the President if she is to avert a crisis.

We all know that the poorest are the worst affected by climate change, so I very much welcome the effort that the Scottish Government is supporting in that regard and in regard to renewable energy.

On the economic development of the area, we can see the progress that some of Malawi's near neighbours in Africa are making, but Malawi is not

strong in that area of work, because she does not have the natural resources that some of her neighbours have. Consequently, Malawi has no real history of international trade. I understand and accept that the Scottish Government funds projects that assist Malawi and does not offer direct assistance to the Government. I very much support that stance, but wonder whether the time has come when the Scottish Government might consider what additional help it could offer in that specific regard. Could Scottish Enterprise's skills and know-how be used to assist Malawi in the same way that the skills and know-how of experts in renewable energy are to be used? Could the Scottish Government encourage the UK Government to focus some of its agencies on the development of Malawi?

I recall that Professor John Lennon of Glasgow Caledonian University carried out important work that looked at how Malawi might develop its tourism industry in a sustainable way without jeopardising its natural beauty, but I am not sure whether his suggestions were followed through. Can the minister or the cabinet secretary tell members about that in the closing speech? I encourage the minister and the cabinet secretary to consider whether the report might still be relevant and might help Malawi to make good use of its title of "The warm heart of Africa" by encouraging tourists to visit the country.

A special mention must be made of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, which keeps us all informed about Malawi and does much to promote the country here. I understand that its sister organisation—the Malawi Scotland Partnership—is also increasingly becoming a force for good in Malawi. Having launched that project in 2006, I take great pleasure in wishing it well.

Earlier in my speech, I mentioned President Banda, who took over in April. Even those with the loftiest of political ambitions would not envy her the task that is before her, but she has demonstrated courage and common sense in her role so far, as well as compassion and grit. She is a strong leader and a strong woman, and I hope that history will recognise her strengths and will be able to record that great social and economic change occurred during her presidency with help from the international community and with Scotland playing its part.

I move amendment S4M-04694.2, to insert at end:

"; congratulates President Banda on the strong stance that she has taken since coming to office on a wide range of equality issues including women's representation and the education of women and girls; recognises the work of the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the contribution that it has made to developing relationships between the two countries, and believes that the partnership between Malawi and Scotland will continue to grow".

15:07

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to open for the Scottish Conservatives in the debate. I, too, congratulate Humza Yousaf on his new ministerial role and the Government on its choice of subject for the debate.

I thank the organisations that have provided useful briefings for the debate, including Oxfam Scotland. My colleague Murdo Fraser will reflect on his experience of visiting Malawi when he speaks later.

Like all parties, the Scottish Conservative Party recognises Scotland's strong and historic links with Malawi. Scots have helped the people there for at least 150 years through missionary work and aiding the development of basic health and education systems. We also recognise the good work that is being achieved thanks to Scotland's financial support in that nation and the substantial support from the UK Government, which will average £93 million a year until 2015.

We are aware of the significant challenges that are currently faced by Malawi, which is among the very poorest countries in the world—it ranks 171st out of 187, according to the latest United Nations human development index report—and we are aware of the potential for ever-increasing challenges in the future due to climate change, projected significant population growth, and the impact of HIV/AIDS. Scottish and UK Government support is very important. Oxfam Scotland made a strong point in its briefing in saying that it is imperative that projects that are funded by Government are sustainable so that they can carry on when that funding comes to an end, if it ever does.

I am happy to support the Government's motion and Labour's amendment, but I want to use the opportunity that is provided by the debate to highlight the contribution of Scotland-based charities. I was slightly disappointed that my amendment was not accepted, but I take this opportunity to praise in the most positive terms—as Patricia Ferguson did—the truly amazing work that the charity Mary's Meals does in Malawi. Mary's Meals is based near my home village of Dalmally in Argyll and Bute, and was founded by my inspirational constituent Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow. Malawi is where the work of Mary's Meals began in 2002 and where it now provides daily meals for more than 500,000 children who attend primary schools or under-six centres. We should all be proud that that means that a Scotland-based charity currently feeds 20 per cent of the primary school population in Malawi.

The key to Mary's Meals' success is its close work with local communities when establishing

school feeding projects. Everyone including chiefs, teachers, parents and church leaders is involved in the process, with teachers and parents organising a pool of volunteers who take turns cooking and serving meals, and Mary's Meals providing the kitchen, cooking equipment, training, on-going support and, of course, regular supplies of likuni phala—the nutrient-rich maize-based porridge. Each project is monitored by Mary's Meals' staff to support the volunteers and to ensure that all is going as it should. Mary's Meals knows how to achieve excellent value for money—it costs just £7 for it to feed a child for a whole school year. I am delighted that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell, recently visited some of the school projects in Malawi.

The work that Mary's Meals' under-six centres do is equally important. Many of the Malawi children who attend those centres are orphans. The children stay until around 3 pm and receive two meals: porridge in the morning, and a maize and vegetable stew before they leave. Two meals are provided because their young age makes them more vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition. The volunteers teach them songs and rhymes, and introduce them to counting and the alphabet. The aim of that early introduction to education is to encourage later enrolment in primary school. The children are also regularly visited by a Mary's Meals nurse, who provides treatment for parasite infection.

I commend my nine-year-old constituent Martha Payne from Lochgilphead, whose blog recently helped to raise about £115,000 for Mary's Meals. As members will have seen from the media, Martha recently returned from visiting Lirangwe primary school in Malawi, which will benefit from a new kitchen thanks to her fundraising. I hope that Martha's example will encourage many others to raise funds for Mary's Meals and other third-sector organisations that make such a difference.

This debate is useful and welcome, and I look forward to Scotland and Scottish charities continuing to play a positive role in Malawi.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): We move to the open debate. I call Maureen Watt, to be followed by Siobhan McMahon. You have six minutes.

15:13

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I very much welcome this debate and I welcome the minister to his new post. I am sure that Malawi will be safe in his hands. I look forward to hearing the cabinet secretary's summing up and his impressions from his first visit

to Malawi last week. I hope that the country captivated him as much as it did me.

The debate is timely, given that we are in the run-up to the bicentenary of David Livingstone's birth next year and that preparations for that are under way. I will leave my colleagues to say more about that, as they are much more involved geographically. Suffice it to say that Malawian children are much more aware of David Livingstone than children here are. Perhaps we can improve on that in Scotland next year, not only because it is part of our rich heritage, but because it is the reason why there are such strong bonds between our two countries.

Indeed, an analysis by the University of Edinburgh in 2010 highlighted the value of inputs by members of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, stating that Scotland's civic society links with Malawi were worth at least £30 million over the previous 12-month period. The study also indicated that at least 1.3 million Malawians and 280,000 Scots have benefited from participating in those activities over the same period.

However, Malawi remains a desperately poor country. As Patricia Ferguson said, it ranks 171st out of 180 countries in the most recent UN human development index report. Some 10 per cent of school-age children do not attend primary school, and according to UNICEF only 26 per cent of school-age children complete their primary school cycle, of whom—perhaps not surprising—only 16 per cent are female.

AIDS remains the leading cause of death among adults, and water-borne diseases cause many more deaths among children. It is little wonder that much of the aid from other countries is spent on health and education. Like Jamie McGrigor, I am grateful for Oxfam's briefing, which highlights, among other things that the charity does, awareness raising on the treatment and support that people can expect—and how they can get it—if they are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

There have been many improvements. As Patricia Ferguson said, the rate of HIV deaths has reduced. When I went to Malawi in 2010, I was struck by Ted Brocklebank's observation that there were far fewer coffin makers on the roadside than there had been when he visited the country in 2006. We saw hardly any coffin makers in 2010.

A privilege of chairing the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on Malawi is that I hear about many projects in the country that have benefited from Scottish Government funding as well as other funding, including many donations. Projects are not just in health and education. I am increasingly struck by the huge variety of work that is done in Malawi through partnership working by Scottish institutions.

For example, Scottish higher education institutions, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Malawi Government and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources are working together to establish a veterinary school in Malawi, in an effort to combat epidemic transboundary zoonotic diseases and to improve food quality, food security and animal welfare. We heard that apps are being given to farmers, to alert them to when they should feed and milk their animals and dose them for mastitis. Advice on breeding matters, for example, is also offered. It might seem strange to hear about the use of apps in rural Malawi, but that is happening. It is vital that we use the most up-to-date technology to drive forward sustainable development in the country.

Organisations are helping Malawi to use its abundant solar energy to power homes, hospitals and schools. The minister talked about the University of Strathclyde's energy programme.

The minister is a lawyer and has been a member of the Justice Committee, so I implore him to look sympathetically on funding bids for advocacy in Malawi. I will never forget my visit to Chichiri prison in Blantyre, and in particular the women's unit there. I saw women with children and women who had been on remand for as long as seven years without coming to trial. I commend the work that Sister Anna Tommasi does, but she needs a great deal of funding.

On the change of Government, Malawi must be congratulated on the smooth transition of power following President Mutharika's death. It is much to Malawi's credit that the transition to Vice-president Joyce Banda was smooth, but she has inherited a much-maligned regime. She does not have her problems to seek, as members have said. It is to her credit that she has sold the controversial presidential jet that the previous president purchased, which had annual running costs of £220,000. She has also sold the Government's fleet of 60 Mercedes-Benz limousines. She is doing great work but she has a high disapproval rating. I hope that when she comes here she sits down with our First Minister, to improve that.

15:20

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab):

I, too, welcome Humza Yousaf to his post. I hope that, like me, he will still be smiling at half past nine this evening.

In 1841, David Livingstone—Scotsman, missionary, doctor and philanthropist—travelled to central Africa. He went on to play a major role in improving the health and education of the indigenous population and freeing them from the

scourge of slavery. Livingstone was both internationalist and philanthropist. Born in Blantyre to a working class family, he received his medical training in Glasgow and London and used his skills to improve life for people in a country thousands of miles from his own. His body now rests in Westminster Abbey, but his spirit endures in Africa.

I was fortunate enough to visit Malawi this June in the company of pupils and teachers from St Andrew's, St Margaret's and Coatbridge high schools in North Lanarkshire. The trip was organised by Charles Fawcett of the North Lanarkshire healthy lifestyle project, as part of the girls go for health initiative. That initiative was established in 2009 as part of a formal partnership agreement between North Lanarkshire Council and the Forum for African Women Educationalists in Malawi.

The primary aim of the agreement is to end the marginalisation of women in Malawian society by engaging with partner schools in Malawi to facilitate greater access for women to education and healthcare, and working to end harmful practices such as initiation ceremonies, female circumcision and early marriages. It therefore continues a proud tradition of Scottish involvement in the health and education systems in Malawi, which is as vital now as it was in Livingstone's time.

Although the prevalence of AIDS is well documented, malnutrition remains the single biggest killer and, as in most third-world countries, women and children are the disproportionate victims of chronic poverty.

In Malawi the status of women, and particularly girls, is fundamentally subordinate to that of their male counterparts. That inferiority manifests itself most visibly in health, education and the justice system. Although HIV and AIDS is a problem for the whole population, affecting 10,000 Malawians every year, 58 per cent of those infected are girls and women aged between 15 and 24, many of whom are forced into the sex trade. In more rural areas, the incidence of HIV and AIDS is six times higher among women than men.

The discrimination that is experienced by women is deeply ingrained in Malawian culture. Until the early 1960s, Malawian girls were not allowed to attend school. Today, female education is still viewed by many as irrelevant. Far fewer girls than boys complete primary education and female literacy levels are substantially inferior to male. Put simply, many Malawians see no value in female education. Women's role is largely confined to traditional domestic duties such as cooking and tending crops.

Scottish-funded projects like the mother groups and the girls go for health initiative have been working hard to cultivate a more enlightened view of women and their role in society. The mother groups encourage more women to attend school, and the girls go for health initiative strives to keep them there, providing them with hygiene and sanitary products, and financial aid for school fees and educational materials, and organising workshops to encourage male pupils to respect and value their female peers. Considering that many schools that I visited did not even have proper buildings or stationery, such assistance is an invaluable means of helping girls to transcend the gender handicap.

Another area in which women suffer disproportionately is the justice system. There were aspects of my visit to Malawi that I will always treasure—not for nothing is it called the warm heart of Africa—but they are countered by some dark and distressing experiences. The plight of women in one prison that we visited was particularly harrowing. Interred for no ostensible reason and for an undefined period—guilt and accusation being generally interchangeable, and the justice system being somewhat sluggish—more than 40 women and children were crammed into narrow and claustrophobic cells. They shared one toilet and a kitchen that consisted of a boiler encased by bricks. There they were left, abandoned and largely forgotten, to while away their days with little prospect of reprieve. No doubt they are there still.

Last year, the North Lanarkshire healthy lifestyle project applied for Scottish Government funding for a project concerning the education and empowerment of female prisoners, which was to be centred on three prisons—Chichiri, Zomba and Mulanje. The programme aspires to provide legal advocacy to women who are accused of murder, and representation for those who are accused of lesser crimes. In addition, the programme will support the children of female prisoners—in and out of the prison system—and work to rehabilitate prisoners who are released back into the community.

Despite the undoubted need for such a programme, the initial application was unsuccessful. Having seen the conditions of female prisoners in Malawi, like Maureen Watt, I urge the Scottish Government to strongly consider allocating funding in the next round of awards, to which the minister referred earlier. David Livingstone campaigned against the iniquity of slavery. The women in Malawi's prison system live in terrible conditions with few rights and scant prospect of justice. Allocating money that would help to end that modern abuse of human rights would be a fitting way in which to mark Livingstone's enduring legacy.

I will end on a personal note. Since returning from Malawi, I have been asked on countless occasions whether I enjoyed my trip. The only way that I can answer that is by posing a few questions of my own. How could I not enjoy the sheer enthusiasm of all those whom we met in Malawi and their desire to learn about us, our language, our culture and our country? How could I not be inspired by the fact that all the young people whom we met seemed to be smiling? They smiled when they said hello, they smiled when they said goodbye and they smiled as they ran alongside our bus as we departed from their village. How could I not have enjoyed the generous hospitality that I experienced in the hotel where we stayed and in the many schools that we visited, as well as the dancing and, of course, the food?

I forged many friendships, including with Velia, Jacqueline, George, Lackson and Hudson in Malawi, and with the staff and pupils with whom I travelled. Those young people were a testament to their parents, their school and, most important, their country. They gave up the chance to attend their school prom to go to Malawi to help others. They chose to continue the good work of David Livingstone, and I know that the Scottish Government will want to do the same.

15:26

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I, too, welcome the minister to his new role and congratulate him on his first speech in the Parliament in that role. I know that he recognises the honour and privilege of being a minister in the Scottish Government and I wish him all the best in future.

As other members have done, I will talk about David Livingstone. As has been said, on 19 March next year, we celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth. That explorer, missionary, medic and anti-slavery campaigner rose from humble beginnings in a tenement in Lanarkshire to become one of Scotland's national heroes and one of her most famous sons.

When Livingstone visited Lake Malawi in the late 1850s, many of the lakeside towns there were Arab slave centres. That is what drove him. He was appalled by slavery and he became an important campaigner against the trade, publicising its horrors back in Britain. Livingstone's association with the area was an important factor in drawing the British to Malawi. The establishment of missions by Scottish churches led the UK Government in 1893 to declare Malawi and the area around it a British protectorate, which lasted in various forms until 1964, when Malawi gained independence from the UK.

Malawi celebrates its national day by raising the flag every year about 6 July—it is not always exactly on that date. I like the story of the Malawi national flag, which has three horizontal stripes, of red, black and green, with a sun in the centre. The red represents the blood of those who fought for African freedom; the black represents the people of the African continent; the green represents the land and its natural resources; and the white sun represents the friendliness, peace and prosperity of Malawians.

Livingstone's legacy in Malawi makes it entirely understandable that Scotland has retained such strong and close associations with Malawi and her people. However, I wonder what Livingstone would make of modern Malawi when compared with the three Cs, as he saw them, of Christianity, commerce and civilisation. On the face of it, Malawi remains predominantly Christian, with more than 80 per cent of the population still said to follow that faith. The economy remains predominantly agriculture based. However, there is no doubt that Malawi has inherent difficulties and needs investment. The extended credit facilities that it received from the International Monetary Fund have probably caused even more difficulties than might have been expected at the beginning of that process.

Even the simple things cause difficulties. For example, the price of concrete in Malawi is extortionate because of the weakness of the economy and the lack of ability to get credit. That means that building infrastructure is more expensive in Malawi than in modern western economies. The fragility of the Malawian economy is obviously a real worry. It is worth considering the plight in which the new president, Joyce Banda, whom members have mentioned, finds herself.

This morning, I happened to speak to a friend who has been involved in Malawi. Although I did not meet him to talk about that, he told me a moving story from when he had done some work there. He said that, when children are starving and in a famine situation, their eyes are blank and staring, but if we can start to feed them, after only a few weeks, the sparkle returns. My friend is concerned about some of the issues that Patricia Ferguson touched on to do with the impact of poverty, the lack of food and the current potential for famine in Malawi.

Malawi's main products for trade are tobacco, sugar, cotton and tea. Is it not incongruous that, while Malawi struggles to export those products, its exports are often rendered unviable by subsidies that are given to western farmers here in the developed world? Malawi's fledgling manufacturing sector struggles to deal with countries such as China, which can mass produce

goods at cheaper rates. At the same time, the Chinese are buying up tracts of land in Malawi. Contradictions exist in the struggle of the Malawian people.

Malawi remains one of the 10 poorest countries on the planet. More than 40 per cent of Malawians—the majority in female-headed households—live in poverty. We know of issues of human rights and press freedom; people also talk about corruption. We cannot ignore that, but we should not let it affect the warmth of the relationship between Scotland and Malawi.

It is right that we continue to build a civic coalition with Malawi, so that we can fight poverty and contribute positively to the economic situation there. People from Scotland have worked with the people of Malawi for many years to develop basic education and health systems. I will not go over some of the ground that other members touched on. David Livingstone may be long gone, but his work continues through the David Livingstone centre for sustainability at the University of Strathclyde.

Since the Scottish Parliament came into being, many initiatives have been developed and strengthened to help the Scotland and Malawi relationship, which others have described well. That co-operation continues. I was particularly interested in Mike Russell's recent announcement of more support for Malawi to deal with the fact that people there have no access to a reliable electricity supply. People are working on the ground to help Malawians with renewable energy needs. I think that 93 per cent of people there have no access to a reliable electricity supply.

My constituency of Stirling has made a significant contribution through Balfron high school, Kincardine-in-Menteith primary school and Doune primary school, as well as the active friends of Malawi group that operates in Killearn. The subject touches all of Scotland and everyone is involved where they can be.

Whether support for the Malawian people comes from the Government of Scotland or the communities of Scotland, that support has perhaps never been more important in this globalised world, given the economic conditions in which people find themselves and given that people who are on the margins are finding life tougher and tougher. As the manager of a children's home in Malawi said to the journalist John Knox,

"Every child deserves a safe home to live in, food to eat, a school to go to, and a clinic for when they are ill ... is that too much to ask?"

That is why we must keep trying for Malawi.

15:33

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I, too, wish the new minister well in what will be a challenging role.

I am pleased that members of the Parliament have gathered to discuss the important issue of Malawian development. I am a member of the cross-party group on Malawi, although I have not yet had the opportunity to visit the country; I hope to do that in the future.

I draw attention to the good work that the Scottish Government has done to help Malawi to achieve its millennium development goals. As the minister and many members here will know, the Malawi development programme, which forms part of the international development fund, has been instrumental in improving the quality of life in communities around Malawi. I am sure that ministers would agree that such vital initiatives should continue to be supported, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. I was pleased to hear the minister's announcements today in that regard.

As a member of the Scottish Co-operative parliamentary group, I draw attention to the almost £400,000 that has been allocated to the Co-operative College's work to support co-operatives in Malawi. That will undoubtedly continue to help small-scale farmers to work together to forge a better living for themselves and their families in challenging conditions.

The co-operative model is vital for groups of women who are setting up businesses in Malawi. I am pleased to say that there are prime examples of women-run co-operatives, which I hope can be replicated throughout Malawi, possibly with Scottish Government support. For example, the Angelo Goveya community co-operative—I hope that I pronounced that correctly—helps women to build their own low-cost houses by providing them with the loans that they need for work to begin. So far, it has been able to help with the building of 465 new houses, and it aims to expand the project. I also highlight the issue of microfinance in Malawi more generally, and the possibilities for that.

There are a number of co-ops that focus on the production of goods, such as Mbawemi, which sells honey produced by its own bees, and Kwitha, which produces textiles. Indeed, much of Kwitha's profits go towards supporting orphans. I am sure that members will be pleased to hear that.

I welcome the financial support that is being directed towards helping women to become more involved in leadership roles throughout Malawi. The Active Learning Centre's empowering women as local leaders project, which aims to equip Malawian women with the skills and knowledge that they will need to be successful candidates in

2014, should act as an example for further investment.

As we all know, Joyce Banda recently became Malawi's first woman president. As Patricia Ferguson said, her support for maternity access has done much to improve the care that pregnant mothers receive. That is just one example of how much she has done for women's issues over the years. However, there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that women in Malawi can enjoy the same rights and privileges as their male counterparts.

This time last year, I attended and spoke at an inspiring event on gender equality and female empowerment that was part of the global community links series funded by DFID. The event highlighted the challenges that are faced both in Scotland and in Malawi by women who want to represent their communities. That opportunity to share experiences was valued by Scottish and Malawian women alike.

To further promote equality, the Scotland Malawi Partnership gender equality forum was established earlier this year. It aims to raise the profile of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme across Scotland-Malawi links. At its first meeting, it was agreed that the most important equality issues in Malawi centre on education, leadership and economic empowerment. Although the situation is gradually improving, consultations by the SMP have found that there are still significant obstacles to equality. It has been found that cultural values as well as religion have been drastically holding back progress towards gender equality.

Maureen Watt highlighted the educational challenges that are faced by women in Malawi. I have been made aware of a number of troubling statistics through the research of Lucy Philpott, a masters student who has been working on gender-related policy in Malawi. According to her research, girls make up 51 per cent of primary enrolments, but few girls make the transition to secondary school. According to the World Bank, only 27 per cent make it to secondary school and even fewer access tertiary education. Sadly, only 5 per cent of Malawian women have passed the Malawi school certificate of education or MSCE, which is the national end-of-school exam.

According to that research, there are a number of factors that act as barriers to girls entering education. Siobhan McMahon highlighted some of them from her personal experience, but the research shows that they include poverty, the lack of girl-friendly spaces, harassment, gender-based violence, parental attitudes and the lack of female role models, although I am sure that the presidency of Joyce Banda will help with the last of those. I stress the importance of sensitivity in

tackling those often cultural hindrances in projects that are carried out by the Scottish Government. I hope that the cabinet secretary will say something about the cultural barriers in his closing speech.

I make a final point on equality issues. Of course, gender is not the only aspect of equality, and I welcome the news that Malawi has suspended its laws against same-sex relationships pending a decision on whether to repeal the law.

Lastly, I touch briefly on climate justice. I welcome the Scottish Government's call for funding, which focuses on African countries including Malawi. As members have pointed out, Malawi has few natural resources of its own, so it is vital that opportunities for communities to develop renewable energy are supported. I hope that the cabinet secretary can reassure me that the two secondees whom the Scottish Government has funded recently will support small-scale community projects for empowerment for Malawians in every sense of the word.

Our partnership with Malawi is strong. The continuing focus on Malawi is essential across civic society, Government and all our communities.

15:39

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I, too, welcome Mr Yousaf to his new role and congratulate him on his first speech as a minister.

Unlike some of my colleagues speaking this afternoon, I have not visited Malawi, but it has been very moving to hear the testimonies of those who have been to the country and have experienced things at first hand. However, coming from Lanarkshire—which I think I have mentioned once or twice in the chamber—I am very familiar with the work of David Livingstone. Indeed, I first visited the David Livingstone centre as a primary school pupil.

However, I recently—and very unexpectedly—found myself having a conversation about David Livingstone during a cross-party group visit to Taiwan that I was lucky enough to be part of. We visited the Changhua Christian hospital, which was founded in 1896 by Dr David Landsborough, who was born in Kilmarnock. A Church of Scotland missionary, Dr Landsborough founded both the church and medical centre on the island of Formosa, beginning two generations of dedicated service by the Landsborough family to the Taiwanese people's medical needs. When we talk of the selfless help and dedication of aid workers and missionaries, I think that few can match the incredible efforts of Mrs Landsborough who donated skin grafts to save a seriously ill child. That act of kindness and love is remembered to this day by the people of Taiwan.

On the visit, we also heard how Changhua Christian hospital is one of Taiwan's largest and foremost medical centres, providing medical services, outreach patient work, telesystems and research facilities. Indeed, a large proportion of the country's medical services funded through the insurance system are provided at the hospital.

I mention the hospital because it also provides an overseas medical mission, delivering long and short-term medical services in the Congo and Kenya and covering Swaziland, as well as south Pacific and Caribbean regions, including Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu. Not only is it interested in delivering general surgical and medical services in developing countries, but it encourages medical personnel to volunteer abroad and to deliver clinical services and public health education programmes as well as free medical services in rural areas. It wants to strengthen the technologies and share new knowledge of healthcare in those areas, and has hosted in Taiwan trainees from developing countries on short-term courses in, for example, emergency paediatrics, nursing and biomedical engineering.

That kind of modern capacity-building approach to aid and helping developing countries sparked the conversation about David Livingstone, because it was very similar to some of the work that we in Scotland are doing. I was very proud to see this work being carried out and, frankly, was in awe of the status that Scotland and the Landsborough family in particular had among the people of Taiwan and the medical community. The Landsboroughs are perhaps not greatly known in Scotland, but the similarities with David Livingstone were poignant and prompted the conversation about Scotland's relationship with Malawi, which is so firm today, having been built on those early Christian missionary endeavours. I believe that Scotland should be very proud of that and was glad that the Taiwanese people had taken on those initial acts of international aid and propagated a commitment to international aid and development throughout the world. It was good to see modern nations taking on the Scottish tradition of helping those less able than ourselves and that such a prominent commitment to international aid had Scottish roots.

When I saw some of the medical work being carried out at Changhua Christian hospital, I was very struck by similarities with the approach taken at the Hamilton campus of the University of the West of Scotland, where I have seen Malawian midwives being trained and gaining qualifications through telelearning and distance learning. Our shared history with Malawi is what makes the partnership work so well. That partnership has been built not on the old style of giving aid, but on a prevalent modern approach that is based on capacity building and a focus on education

systems and which I think is working very well in our partnerships with Malawi.

I was delighted last week to attend, along with Christina McKelvie, the opening of the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland exhibition on Scotland and poverty, which was held at the GLO centre in Motherwell. The exhibition highlights the work that is being undertaken by some of the NIDOS members and Scottish charities in the area of international aid. Of course, Malawi featured on the boards more than once. The exhibition was wonderful, and I hope that it will come to the Parliament at some point next year.

I was particularly interested to see a demonstration of a water filter by Jim Rae of Waterforall Africa. I saw dirty water going through a filter, and was presented with a glass of it at the end and asked if I wanted to taste it, having been assured that the filter removed E coli, cryptosporidium and all those other nasty diseases that people can get from water. The very fact that I paused brought home to me the importance of water security, which we take for granted. I hope that the exhibition will inspire other people, as it inspired me, to understand those issues.

15:46

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): It is a great privilege for me to speak in the debate. When I demitted office as a minister in September this year and Humza Yousaf was appointed, it was a bit of a wake-up call for me to discover that he is 40 years younger than I am.

The debate offers us a good opportunity to consider the achievements of previous members of this Parliament. Lord McConnell—or Jack McConnell, as we knew him when he was here—has two major achievements to his name: developing our relationship with Malawi in the form that it now takes, and Scotland's anti-smoking legislation.

It is, therefore, somewhat ironic that tobacco is one of Malawi's largest exports. The value of tobacco is falling, and the proportion of the country's exports that it constitutes is rising. If nothing else, we owe Malawi a debt because we are trying to eliminate the market for one of its biggest exports, which I hope that we will succeed in doing at some point in the future.

It was my great privilege and pleasure to chair the meeting in May this year at which the First Minister and Mary Robinson announced the launch of the climate justice fund. Mary Robinson has a relationship with Malawi and with its President, Joyce Banda. In 2010, Joyce Banda joined the global leaders council for reproductive

health, which Mary Robinson chairs. Many of the connections that matter to us and to Malawi are multistranded and familiar to us, and it is our job to support and sustain as many of them as possible.

When I was in Rio for the Rio+20 conference, I was able to meet people from Malawi to talk with them about the support that we are giving. To highlight the interest that exists among our young people in Scotland, I will tell the chamber that I took part in a teleconference through the glow network in Scotland's schools and one of the topics that came up was Malawi. I was sitting in South America, talking about Malawi in Africa to schoolchildren in Scotland. That illustrates how interdependent and small the modern world is.

As other members have, I commend the work of Martha Payne, who has fabulously illustrated the potential of those who are so young—which, of course, includes the minister, who is 40 years younger than I am.

Humza Yousaf: Only 40.

Stewart Stevenson: Only 40, but for me it sometimes feels much more.

The issue of women in Malawi has been a strand running through much of today's debate. In *Forbes* magazine's list of the 100 women who run the world, Joyce Banda, the president of Malawi, is number 71. Fine, but how many people from the British isles are on that list? The answer is only two. One of those is the Queen, at number 26, and the other is J K Rowling, at number 76. Therefore, that international recognition of the position of Joyce Banda is quite significant.

Joyce Banda is, of course, no relation to Hastings Banda, who was the first president of Malawi. In 1941, he got his second medical degree at the University of Edinburgh and—I say this so as not to disappoint my fans—my father was at university with Hastings Banda and was doing his medical degree and was president of the union at that time. A further connection—I know that members want more—is that David Livingstone's grandson was a gentleman called Dr Wilson, who lived in St Fillan's. He came and did my father's locum so that we could go on holiday each year. As a youngster, therefore, I remember that we talked about not Malawi, but Nyasaland and its predecessors.

Returning to the subject of women, I think that climate change—incidentally, Donald Trump says that climate change has been invented by the Chinese, but if he says that it merely proves that we should believe in it utterly and sincerely—is an issue that differentially affects women. In countries such as Malawi, women are the water gatherers, and they have to go further for water because aridity is an increasing problem. They have to go further for firewood, because there is less of it as

trees are being burned. The output of agricultural industries in Malawi and much of sub-Saharan Africa is greatly reduced as the climate changes, and that differentially affects women in particular.

Therefore, it is right in our climate change work and in our support for Malawi that we have a whole series of projects to support women: we are empowering women as local leaders; we are supporting a midwifery model; we are involved with Mary's Meals, as has been talked about; and we are supporting a maternal health project. All of that is absolutely excellent. It is part of our moral duty to support people who have been affected by what we have benefited from on climate change. Malawi is our current focus; we can do much more in the future and I hope that we do so.

Ultimately, the future belongs to the young, in particular the young of Malawi. Let us make sure that the young of Malawi benefit from much of what we do.

15:52

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I, too, warmly welcome Humza Yousaf to a role for which he is clearly tailor made. Not only is he the new kid on the ministerial block, but—as Stewart Stevenson has observed with wry resignation—he is doubtless, as noted by *The Herald*, “one to watch”. I am sure that Mr Yousaf is treating that nomination as a mixed blessing, given what has happened to previous winners of that dubious accolade. Nevertheless, I welcome his promotion, and his speech. From the meeting that I held with him almost immediately after his appointment, it is abundantly clear to me that, like many in the chamber across all parties, he believes passionately in the issues that we are discussing.

At that meeting, I was able to introduce the minister not just to Malawian pupils who have benefited from a good Orkney education, but to the remarkable Kester Chiwalo. Kester, who runs a tea plantation in Thyolo, is one of those individuals who humbles and inspires in equal measure. His inexhaustible drive and energy have helped to establish, sustain and extend all sorts of ties between schools, churches and communities in Thyolo and their counterparts in my constituency.

On that occasion, the message from Kester and his colleagues was about the tangible benefits that are delivered through the fair trade movement. Hearing first-hand about how that initiative is putting much-needed money into the pockets of small farmers in some of the poorest parts of Malawi had a real impact among the audiences in the islands. I hope that the lasting legacy of that will be Orkney and Scotland's move to fair trade status in the very near future.

I very much support the Government's motion and I welcome in particular the minister's acknowledgement of the role that the myriad individuals and organisations across Scotland play in enriching the relationship that our country has enjoyed with the warm heart of Africa over the course of two centuries. There is perhaps no part of the country where that is more in evidence than in Orkney. Many of those bonds have grown organically and are often the result of a personal connection or chance encounter, but nevertheless the signals and support that Government and ministers provide have been, and continue to be, vital in allowing these relationships to flourish.

That is why I welcome the maintenance of the international development fund and the Government's strategy of engagement with Malawi. Spread too thinly, there is a risk that we dilute the impact that we can have anywhere, but the historic, cultural and other links that we have with Malawi make a compelling case for focusing much of our effort on that particular country. In that regard, Humza Yousaf was absolutely right to acknowledge the roles played by not just the previous Labour-Lib Dem coalition but, in particular, the former First Minister, Jack McConnell. He developed a passion for deepening and strengthening our ties with Malawi that at times almost bordered on obsession.

Here I should declare an interest in that my former school, Sanday junior high, won a competition that was run to coincide with the launch of the co-operation agreement that was signed with Malawi back in 2005. As a result, there have been regular exchanges between staff and pupils from that small school in one of the most northerly parts in Orkney and their counterparts in Minga, which is a rural community on the outskirts of Lilongwe. Both sides have benefited immeasurably from the relationship.

One of my highlights since being elected as Orkney's MSP was the chance to travel to Malawi three years ago and visit Minga school. To stand in front of a classroom that was packed to the rafters with enthusiastic young learners and see their reaction to my very modest attempt at speaking Chichewa was truly unforgettable. Who would have thought that just saying "mulu bwanji" could bring the house down?

I also acknowledge the significant contribution made by our former colleague Karen Gillon not just in leading that particular trip, which Maureen Watt, Ted Brocklebank and I were on, but in the personal commitment that she showed over many years to improving the links between Scotland and Malawi in many ways. Karen managed to source a set of Rangers and Celtic football strips, which were handed out to the members of Minga school's team. I only hope that she did not

succeed in sowing the seeds of potential conflict in that part of Malawi; I also hope that at least half of Minga will be dancing in the streets at some point later this evening.

At that time, of course, Malawi was under the control of President Bingu, and there was undoubtedly unease among many of those we spoke to. As things transpired, and with the breakdown in diplomatic relations between the UK and Malawi, that unease appeared justified. Thankfully, that has given way to greater hope and optimism with Joyce Banda's elevation to the presidency. However, the challenges that she faces are, as others have mentioned, truly enormous in a patriarchal society—Siobhan McMahon alluded to that—where religious and cultural norms still too often inhibit progress on health and other issues and where poverty is absolutely crushing.

However, as Patricia Ferguson's amendment rightly affirms, the initial signs are positive, and not just in relation to the rights of women in Malawi, important though they are. A moratorium on enforcing anti-gay laws is also welcome—Claudia Beamish alluded to that—and I hope that we will also see the media, which was unacceptably restricted during President Bingu's latter years, freed up to do the job that any democracy requires it to perform.

That visit to Malawi brought home to me the challenges faced by that wonderful country and the marked improvements that can be made through often relatively modest interventions and support. Help in building schools and classrooms has undoubtedly expanded opportunities for many more Malawians to access education. There is so much more to do, but progress has been made.

Access to clean water has been provided through support to dig wells, including the one in Chitungu that was funded through the efforts of pupils at Westray junior high in my constituency. At a national level, the UK Government's fertiliser programme has clearly made a difference in ensuring wider availability of food in Malawi, while the antiretroviral programme has made inroads in tackling Malawi's all-too-grotesque record on HIV/AIDS. Of course more needs to be done, and, as Maureen Watt pointed out, a continued focus on education and health is essential.

However, it makes sense to look at opportunities in other areas, including renewables. Again in my constituency, an initiative led by Bobby Mathieson is exploring small-scale solar panel options for providing electricity in the remote community of Ntchisi in the north, for many of the reasons highlighted by Maureen Watt. That seems like just the sort of project that would benefit from the welcome small grants initiative that was announced by the Government. Incidentally,

Kester Chiwalo still thinks that the minister announced that because I had set up a meeting with him.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would be grateful if you would draw to a close, please.

Liam McArthur: I am confident that that scheme can help sustain and support the efforts of individuals and communities across Scotland, who are finding things tough after years of fundraising.

I welcome today's debate and, with David Livingstone's bicentenary fast approaching, I look forward to further opportunities to celebrate Scotland's relationship with the warm heart of Africa.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Liam McArthur: It is a relationship from which we all benefit in so many ways and one that we must carefully nurture and properly value.

15:59

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Presiding Officer, if I say, "Zikomo," do not be alarmed—I am simply saying "Thank you" in Bantu languages. I offer my congratulations and support to Humza Yousaf in his new ministerial role. As members have said, it is made to measure.

Scotland is a nation of adventurers. We like to travel, we love to learn and we definitely like to make new friends. It is not a new concept; we have been pioneers and inventors since time began, and that thirst for knowledge and adventure has taken us around the world and has gathered us, as a nation, many friends. It brought us the enlightenment and, the jewel in our crown, our universal education system.

I spoke earlier to Clare Adamson, who visited the David Livingstone centre in Blantyre with her primary school. I did so, too, and I was regaled with stories of the search for the source of the Nile, of wild beasts and of exotic animals and plants. I came back from that visit filled with wonder, which led me to take a keen interest in the natural world. I read about and sketched many exotic animals, and I became a big fan of big cats. However, that visit also confused and upset me—I must have been about nine or 10 at the time—when I learned that people had to face the traffickers of the time who sold human beings into slavery. I wonder whether that sadness as a child built in me the sense that slavery should not be tolerated—not then and not today—because I have maintained that belief and have campaigned on the issue all my life.

When, in 2008, I had the great honour to visit Malawi as part of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy programme to encourage underrepresented groups such as women to get involved in the 2009 elections, I was very pleased to go there. I was glad to hear Claudia Beamish discuss the preparations for the 2014 elections in Malawi. My visit realised a lifelong dream to see the heart of Africa. I knew that the romantic view that I held as a child was far removed from the reality of life in Africa, but I felt that the work that the Westminster Foundation was doing chimed well with my belief that everyone in this world should have a chance to shape and build democracy in their land.

I absolutely fell in love with the land and its people, and I was delighted when I heard that the new president of Malawi would be Joyce Banda. Many members have commended her today. Joyce has always campaigned for equal rights, health and education for all, but especially for women in Malawi. She wants young women to be able to stay on at school, she has highlighted the risks of early motherhood and she has championed the progress towards dealing with the root cause of bad maternal health. She has also, as we have heard, started the process of repealing some of the discriminatory laws that were introduced by Bingu.

I am delighted to support Patricia Ferguson's amendment, and I add my commendation of the Scotland Malawi Partnership. As Clare Adamson mentioned, last week in Lanarkshire I was honoured to open the NIDOS exhibition of charitable work that is being done in Malawi and across Africa.

I travelled from Lilongwe to Nkhata Bay South, which took me almost the entire length of Lake Nyasa. The landscape was absolutely fantastic and the spirit of the people was breathtaking. That spirit carried me along, and it is in the same good spirit that the Malawian people hold us in high regard. The minute that we said we were Scottish, they mentioned David Livingstone. It was the spirit of equality, fairness and justice that took David Livingstone to Africa in 1840. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Herald*, Livingstone wrote:

"And if my disclosures regarding the terrible Ujijan slavery should lead to the suppression of the East Coast slave trade, I shall regard that as a greater matter by far than the discovery of all the Nile sources together."

His great passion was to discover the source of the Nile, but he would gladly have given that up to end slavery. What a powerful reason to write to a newspaper, to raise awareness of the inhumanity of the slave trade.

Livingstone is remembered fondly in Malawi for his endeavours to end the trade in human beings.

Things that are worth fighting for are never easy. At the time, Livingstone wrote:

"If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

That shows that, in the face of adversity, he took the courageous road.

Over the course of his first 12 years in Africa, Livingstone developed a strong anger against slavery, refusing even to follow the same paths as the slave traders. He wrote:

"it is so undesirable to travel in a path once trodden by slave-traders that I preferred to find out another line of march."

If a person visits David Livingstone's tomb in Westminster Abbey, they will see the following inscription written on it:

"Brought by faithful hands over land and sea here rests David Livingstone, missionary, traveller, philanthropist, born March 19. 1813 at Blantyre, Lanarkshire, died May 1, 1873 at Chitambo's Village, Ulala. For 30 years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, to abolish the desolating slave trade, of central Africa, where with his last words he wrote 'All I can add in my solitude, is, may heaven's rich blessing come down on every one, American, English, or Turk, who will help to heal this open sore of the world'".

That is a great testimony.

The David Livingstone centre is a jewel in Lanarkshire's crown. I am delighted that future generations of Scots and visitors from across the world will continue to learn and gain the same inspiration that I gained from Livingstone's life and legacy. That is the reason why I put my heart and soul into securing the centre's future when it was under threat in 2009.

I am delighted that the Scottish Government has committed to celebrating David Livingstone's 200th anniversary. I am equally delighted that the Government has continued, and will continue, the good work started by Jack McConnell and his many colleagues over the past 12 years.

David Livingstone died in Ilala in the centre of Africa in May 1873. His heart was buried under an mpundu tree, but his faithful attendants enclosed his embalmed body in a cylinder of bark, which was wrapped in sailcloth, and carried it to the coast and then sailed it to London, where it arrived the following year.

David Livingstone belonged to Scotland, but his heart belonged to Africa. Scotland's heart belongs with the people of Malawi, too. Many members across the chamber have acknowledged that eloquently. Livingstone's values of the 1840s were values of justice, equality and fairness—those are still the values of Scotland. If we stay true to those values, our future, and that of our partnership with Malawi, is sound.

16:07

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): I am delighted to take part in a debate that celebrates Scotland's relationship with Malawi. Like other members, I welcome the new minister, Humza Yousaf, to his post, and I compliment him on his speech, which I am sure will be the first of many on the Government's front bench.

It is important that the Parliament comes together on Malawi. It is clear from the speeches across the chamber that members feel strongly about Malawi and that they want to celebrate the contribution that the current and previous Governments have made to improve the quality of life in Malawi.

The debate particularly resonates with me as the constituency MSP for Blantyre. From that point of view, I look forward to next year's bicentenary celebration of David Livingstone's birth.

Many members concentrated on the story of David Livingstone and his contribution. However, it is worth reflecting a bit more on his early life in Blantyre in order to look at the inspiration that that life gives not only to those trailblazers in Malawi, but to young people throughout Scotland and in Blantyre and Lanarkshire in particular.

As Siobhan McMahon noted, David Livingstone grew up with his family in a one-bedroom house next to the Blantyre mill where he and his family worked. He went to work at that mill from the age of 10, where he worked 14 hours a day. It says a lot for the commitment of his family, and particularly of his father that, when he came from work, he taught his son how to read and write. At quite a young age, David Livingstone taught himself Latin, which shows the quality of that young man.

When David Livingstone was 19, his family had saved enough to enrol him at Anderson's University in Glasgow to study medicine. One story about him that has always interested me is that every Monday morning he walked 8 miles from Blantyre to the university, where he stayed in digs for the week. That shows how determined he was to learn and better himself. After gaining his medical qualification, he went on—as other members have pointed out—to make a major contribution as a missionary, a campaigner against slavery and a philanthropist.

I think that that story can act as an inspiration to schoolchildren throughout Scotland. In Blantyre, there is a primary school that is named after David Livingstone. As Clare Adamson and Christina McKelvie said, pupils from many of the schools in Lanarkshire visit the David Livingstone centre. Next year's bicentenary will provide a great opportunity for focus on the centre and on the story of David Livingstone. Many schoolchildren

do not know a lot about that story when they go there, but it is an excellent centre that has a great story to tell.

The issue now is how we can use that legacy to tackle the problems that Malawi has faced and to make it a better country. Poverty remains a major issue. Claudia Beamish highlighted the Co-operative College's initiative, which 10,000 people will have the opportunity to come into contact with, 2,700 of whom will receive training in modern farming techniques and how to run a farming co-operative. That will help to lift many people out of poverty. The same can be said of the NIDOS project that Clare Adamson and Christina McKelvie mentioned, which came to Rutherglen. I was extremely interested in the fact that the water purification system—which was developed in Glasgow—had saved around 800 lives.

Those are schemes that tackle poverty and improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Malawi. When such improvements are made in a country, they are followed by improvements in its political infrastructure. That is highlighted in the Labour amendment, which mentions some of the initiatives that have been progressed in recent years, particularly in relation to women.

It has been an excellent debate. I welcome the opportunity to recognise the work that has been done in Malawi, and I look forward to the celebration of the David Livingstone bicentenary. I believe that that work can play a trailblazing role in tackling ill health and poverty in Malawi and in improving the wellbeing of the country's people, so that they can make a contribution on the international stage in the way that David Livingstone did.

16:13

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I warmly welcome Humza Yousaf to his role as Minister for External Affairs and International Development and wish him well; I know that he will do very well in it. I have known Humza from the very beginning, and I know that his heart is in the right place. A role in external affairs and international development is made for him.

I thank the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning for his announcement of £100,000 for postgraduate scholarships in Malawi. We all know that education is knowledge and that, through knowledge, people can evolve. I think that it is an excellent initiative, which I look forward to reading more about, and I congratulate the Government and the education secretary on it.

I pay tribute to all those organisations and individuals who have been involved in the partnership with Malawi—they include schools, Mary's Meals and politicians from every party.

Lord McConnell has been mentioned, and I congratulate him on his work. However, like Liam McArthur and others, I think that Karen Gillon deserves a special mention. Along with Ted Brocklebank, she was a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, whose executive committee I am a member of. Throughout her time on the CPA, she had a special interest in Malawi, which extended to her personal life. I put on record my thanks to her and Ted Brocklebank for the excellent work that they carried out on behalf of the CPA and the Parliament.

I have mentioned the CPA because I want to base my remarks on the involvement of the CPA with Malawi and what we gain from that involvement. It is not just about the contribution of the members of the Scottish Parliament—those whom I have mentioned and others—but also about the contribution of the Scottish Parliament staff. Not a lot has been said about the involvement of the Scottish Parliament staff with Malawi through the CPA. I will name a couple of projects that went through the CPA—there were study visits by Malawi committee clerks to the Scottish Parliament, who learned from that experience, and Scottish Parliament committee clerks have held workshops in Malawi to show what we do here and to share their expertise. There has also been a successful internship programme when a Malawian clerk came over here and shadowed and worked closely with the Parliament staff. That is partnership working.

Engagement with Malawi has provided a direct international perspective for MSPs and Parliament staff and has allowed them to work with people in Malawi as equal partners—that is an important point—to share knowledge and experience. The CPA Scotland branch and its members are keen to ensure that that special relationship between our two countries continues for many years to come. I am sure that under Humza Yousaf's stewardship it will.

Arrangements are being put in place to invite two Malawian officials to the Scottish Parliament for an intensive work-study visit early next year. We also have a group of MSPs who are paired with members of the National Assembly of Malawi—Maureen Watt, Sarah Boyack, Patricia Ferguson, me and others. We believe that working together on that initiative will strengthen democracy in both Parliaments.

In May 2010, Annie Lennox, the musician and campaigner, became the special envoy for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Scotland branch for Africa, focusing on women—

Patricia Ferguson: I am sorry to interrupt Mrs White's flow, but would she, like me, welcome any other colleagues who might wish to take part in the

pairing initiative to join us and help us to spread the word and make more connections with our colleagues in Malawi than we can at the moment?

Sandra White: I welcome that intervention from Patricia Ferguson and I agree with her suggestion. Perhaps this can be a free advert for any interested colleagues to contact Margaret Neal, who is secretary to the CPA. They are more than welcome to join us.

I think that everyone knows that Annie Lennox became a special envoy, but what I am very proud of is that it was the CPA Scotland branch that initiated that. Annie Lennox gladly got involved and is now famous, not just in her own right, but as a special envoy for the CPA and for the Scottish Parliament. She takes that good will throughout Africa, and particularly in Malawi.

Annie Lennox has embarked on a campaign to tackle HIV and AIDS issues across Africa. Her role as a special envoy for the CPA Scotland branch is to report back on those issues regularly, with a particular focus on Malawi. Annie visited Malawi in February 2011 with the former presiding officer, Alex Fergusson. They met the Speaker of the National Assembly, politicians who were involved in the Scottish Parliament pairing initiative and the Malawian Parliament's women's caucus. They came back to the Scottish Parliament a month later and reported on that visit.

It is important to let people know that, although we do not always agree on things in this Parliament—sometimes we think that some things are being done wrong—on this particular issue we all agree. We should be particularly proud of that. Yes, there is work to be done, but it has been started and we should be particularly proud that this Parliament has such a close mutual link with Malawi and the people who live there.

16:19

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing about all the experiences that MSPs have had in Malawi and about their constituents' involvement in Malawi. Most of my speech will be about an excellent example of an organisation in my constituency that has taken something forward in Malawi.

I, too, welcome Humza Yousaf to his new role and wish him the best of luck. I am sure that he will enjoy the role, no matter what.

In that spirit, I compliment members on their contributions. Previous Governments and the continuity of the work on Malawi have been recognised. The spirit of the debate has shown the Parliament in a good light. The debate has also shown the consistency that we can sometimes get

on issues if there is wide parliamentary support, which there has always been on Malawi. That shows us in a good light not just in parliamentary time. It is also about how the Scottish Government and the previous Scottish Executive can be viewed in a positive light. The debate has therefore been auspicious, and we should all be quite proud of that.

I have learned quite a lot about David Livingstone. To be honest, I did not know a lot about him prior to the debate. Obviously, I knew who he was and I knew about him broadly, but I did not fully appreciate what he did and achieved in Malawi and more widely across the world. I certainly appreciate that now.

I want to talk a little bit about a project that has been taken forward by Inglis veterinary hospital in Dunfermline. In May this year, four people from that hospital travelled to Malawi to convert a clinic that was run by the country's only animal welfare organisation into a state-of-the-art veterinary centre. That was a voluntary effort by Inglis veterinary hospital. The practice funded it itself, although it managed to get support from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals clinic in a box initiative, which provided nearly £100,000-worth of veterinary equipment to the Lilongwe Society for the Protection and Care of Animals to get the project off the ground. Over the course of its 10-day visit, the team, which was headed by Adam Tjolle, the managing director, helped to install equipment, some of which had been directly provided by the RSPCA—that was as well as the funding—and some of which came from Inglis veterinary hospital. The end result of the hospital's mission to Malawi was the transformation of a fairly rudimentary set-up to probably the best-equipped vets practice in central Africa.

The project manager of Lilongwe SPCA, Richard Ssuna, summed things up perfectly when he said:

"I am over the moon with this new clinic—it is going to make such a difference to us and so many more animals' lives can now be saved.

We had absolutely nothing in our rooms before. We had to make do with basic supplies and no x-ray or blood machines."

He added:

"It is a groundbreaking and exciting new era for animal welfare in Malawi".

Such interventions sometimes happen in isolation. The key thing that I have learned from this debate is that sustainability is needed. People need to go back and support such initiatives to ensure that they continue.

Dr Ssuna has travelled back to Britain to receive an award from the RSPCA. When he was in the

UK, he visited Fife to seal a twinning relationship. I know that the relationship with Inglis veterinary hospital will continue and make a real difference. Under the arrangement, staff from the hospital in Fife will continue to go over to Malawi and work with the staff there to ensure that the equipment that was put in place is used effectively, and that capacity continues to be built in the area to ensure that the work that has been done and the investment that has been put in have a long-lasting effect.

Such initiatives help significantly, of course, but it is obvious that there are on-going problems in Malawi, which we have heard about. One of those problems is increasing the capacity of the veterinary services provision. I had not realised that Malawi, with a population of 14 million, has only nine registered vets. Inglis veterinary hospital, which has a surgery in Cowdenbeath, a hospital in Dunfermline and a surgery in Inverkeithing, covers quite a small geographic area and population, but it has 16 vets, which is almost twice the Malawian number.

That type of activity and the work that we have done to educate our younger people about the opportunities that exist in Malawi and the problems there reflect well on us as politicians. When I entered Parliament, I never thought that I would have an opportunity to talk about a veterinary hospital in Malawi. That opportunity says one thing, which is that when good works happen in our constituencies and people are taking forward initiatives and we have built the capacity for that to happen, it is a great privilege to come to the chamber and tell members about it. I hope that the project will continue to be a success and to expand across the country.

16:25

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): I thank the Scottish Government for bringing this issue forward for debate and I congratulate Humza Yousaf on leading what I am sure will be the first of many debates as a minister.

Unlike other members, I have not had the privilege of visiting Malawi, nor have I had the opportunity—I say this with some trepidation—to visit the David Livingstone centre. However, that does not lessen my interest in the debate in any way. It was said earlier that the debate is timely because of the upcoming bicentenary of David Livingstone's birth. I suppose that that is correct, but I suggest that debates on Malawi will always be important.

If we look at some key statistics, we can understand why we are working with Malawi. For example, life expectancy in Malawi is 51.5 years for men and 53.13 years for women, whereas in

our country it is 76.1 years for men and 80.6 years for women. The literacy rate in Malawi is 81.1 per cent for men and 68.5 per cent for women. As was said earlier, Malawi is one of the poorest countries on the planet, with some 75 per cent of the population living on less than \$1, or 60p, a day, and 460 women dying in childbirth for every 100,000 births. We also know about Malawi's HIV/AIDS problem.

The minister was right to say that we should be outraged by those statistics. If a person cannot be outraged by such statistics, I do not know what would outrage them. In our relative comfort here in the west, we must be ready to question what has contributed to those statistics for modern-day Malawi. We are ready—rightly so—to talk of Scotland's positive historic links with Malawi, and David Livingstone is the shining example in that regard. However, we should also be prepared to face up to our negative historic links with Africa. I thought that Christina McKelvie spoke eloquently about David Livingstone's commendable righteous indignation about the slave trade. However, the target of his ire reminds us of that part of our relationship with Africa, which was largely one of imperial domination and exploitation of the continent's people and resources. It is especially right, therefore, that we focus some of our efforts on helping the people of Malawi to help themselves.

The links with Malawi that Scotland has forged are perhaps one of the greatest successes of devolution. It is right to place on record our thanks to the previous Administration in that regard. The links demonstrate what Scotland can do to play its part as a global actor. They remind us that we are not only citizens of Scotland but citizens of the world, and they are a reminder of our common humanity. Indeed, I was reminded of the words of Senator Robert Kennedy of 5 April 1968, when he said:

"We can perhaps remember, even if only for a time, that those who live with us are our brothers; that they share with us the same short moment of life; that they seek, as we do, nothing but the chance to live out their lives in purpose and happiness, winning what satisfaction and fulfilment they can."

Members will forgive the gender-specific language of that statement, but it certainly resonated with me with regard to this debate. Indeed, the minister reminded us that this is about the connection with people as brothers and sisters.

The connections in our communities vividly demonstrate that. I am always delighted to visit the many primary schools in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth that engage with Scotland's historic and on-going links with Malawi. In my constituency, an extremely positive link has been established between St Maurice's high school in Cumbernauld and two schools in Nkhomenya. People from the

schools in Nkhamenya have visited Scotland and I was delighted to host their visit to the Scottish Parliament. In the previous school year, about 10 pupils from St Maurice's went to Malawi. Pupils had to raise £1,000 for each participating pupil. They raised funds not only to get the pupils to Malawi but for the partner schools. The tremendous dedication of the young people demonstrates the positive links between our countries. If anything keeps the flame burning between Scotland and Malawi, it will be the links that young people of the two countries forge.

Of course, links go beyond schools. When I visit churches in my constituency, I am impressed by the relationships that have been built up with Malawi. There are also many links through the great work of non-governmental organisations on the ground, funded by the Scottish Government. We heard about such work during the debate. I suppose that, when we talk about such work, we do so not to commend the Scottish Government for its funding efforts—although it should be congratulated in that regard—but to commend people who are directly involved, whose example will ensure that links between Scotland and Malawi remain worth while.

I support the amendment in Patricia Ferguson's name. Joyce Banda is challenging some of the ingrained discrimination that women and gay people face in Malawi and she deserves our support in her efforts, which underline the importance of our continued engagement with Malawi and all the efforts to help people there. I am delighted that we have had the chance to have this debate.

16:32

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I declare an interest: I am a member of the Scotland Malawi Partnership.

This has been a good debate, with excellent speeches from members of all parties. The debate has been consensual and was none the worse for that.

Like other members, I welcome Humza Yousaf to his new post and congratulate him on his debate debut as a minister. My only regret is that now that he is a minister he seems to have less time to tweet as regularly as he used to do, which I am sure is a great disappointment to his many followers.

As the minister and several members said, next year is the 200th anniversary of the birth of David Livingstone. Bruce Crawford, Christina McKelvie, James Kelly and other members talked about David Livingstone's legacy in Malawi. David Livingstone was a childhood hero of mine for his exploits in and exploration of Africa. He was the

first European to see the Victoria falls, which of course he named for the queen of the day. I had the pleasure of spending part of my honeymoon at the falls many years ago, although not quite as long ago as when David Livingstone visited them.

What is interesting about David Livingstone's legacy, as a number of members said, is that he is still revered in Malawi, more than 150 years after he visited the area. That is unusual in the context of the European legacy in sub-Saharan Africa. He had two great passions: the promotion of Christianity, and opposition to the slave trade. Anyone who goes to Malawi, as the minister said, will recognise the huge importance of Christianity to people in the country. People in Malawi trace that back to David Livingstone and the missionaries who followed him, whose contribution they very much value. He also led his crusade against what was then the Arab slave trade, which was ravaging the population in that part of central Africa. It is that unique dual contribution that has led to him still being celebrated in Malawi today.

In the post-colonial period, many African states were changing the European names that had been given to their towns and settlements to African names. It is striking, and tells its own story, that, in Malawi, the name of the principal city—Blantyre, named after David Livingstone's birthplace—was preserved as a European name, as was the name of the town of Livingstonia. That demonstrates the affection that modern Malawians still have for David Livingstone.

Of course, that connection continues today on many different levels, not least in the links between the Church of Scotland and the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian in Malawi. When I was in Malawi in 2006, I had the privilege of attending two CCAP services. Apart from the much more enthusiastic singing that one hears in Malawi, I could almost have been at a Presbyterian Church of Scotland service back home.

A number of members referred to the various groups, charities and churches in civic society in Scotland that are involved in developing links with groups in Malawi. Jamie McGrigor and others referred to the excellent work that is done by Mary's Meals.

Patricia Ferguson, Claudia Beamish and others referred to some of the political changes in Malawi, in particular those that have happened since the inauguration of Joyce Banda as the new President. Joyce Banda has made it her goal to increase economic prosperity by developing trade, not aid, as the long-term goal. We should think about how Scotland can increase its role as a trade partner, even if, like Stewart Stevenson, we want to purchase less tobacco from Malawi.

When I visited Malawi in 2006, the shortage of teachers at primary and secondary levels was striking. At that time, twinning links with Scottish colleges, schools and universities were being mooted as a means of increasing the transfer of knowledge to Malawi. That is a positive move, and one that we want to develop further. I am aware of a number of Scottish teachers who have gone on secondment to Malawi, taking their skills with them and helping to raise the standard of teaching there. We have a lot to learn from one another.

Jamie McGrigor and others referred to malnutrition. Apart from education, that is one of the biggest challenges facing children in Malawi. Up to 47 per cent of Malawi's children suffer from stunted growth. That is an appalling statistic. In itself, malnutrition prevents many children from developing in education as fully as they should.

Given the time available to me, I will close by offering some thoughts on international aid. A lively debate is going on about the level of international aid that we in the UK provide and whether we can afford that these difficult times. My view is that the UK Government is to be applauded for, at a time of great budget stringency, ring fencing and preserving the international aid budget.

I accept that there are always issues about how that spending is allocated, and there is a big debate going on right now about the allocation to India. However, the principle of preserving the level of help that we give to other countries is absolutely vital. No matter how bad things are for people in this country in these difficult times, even the poorest people in our society have a standard of living that is the envy of many people in countries such as Malawi.

Just as we are global citizens, as the motion says, we have a responsibility that goes beyond our own borders and into the wider world.

The Scottish Government's contribution to Malawi and to countries further afield might be a modest one, even on a UK scale, but it is worth while. It makes a real difference on the ground and should be applauded.

I am pleased to support the motion.

16:39

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I also welcome Humza Yousaf to his first debate as minister. I have seen him at so many events recently that I am almost surprised that this is his first actual debate.

The subject of the debate is a good choice of topic, and the timing of the debate is good. It is appropriate that, given the forthcoming celebrations of David Livingstone's bicentenary,

we reflect on the special relationship between Scotland and Malawi. However, we should reflect on not only what has been achieved but what more can be done in the future, and I want to do both in my speech today.

As part of a Scottish Parliament visit to Malawi several years ago, I saw for myself the practical impact of support from the Scottish Government, civic organisations and charities that are based in Scotland. I was also struck by the contribution of individuals. Maureen Watt mentioned research on the contribution of Scottish civic society. It is important that that point is on the record, as civic society is not only a phenomenal financial resource but an incredible human resource. A phenomenal number of retired teachers and medics have gone to Malawi and basically put their life experiences and finances into helping out small communities. We should record that.

A welcome part of the Scottish Government's motion is that it reflects the importance of what we can do on climate change and renewables. That is important. If we are to make a contribution to tackling the extreme poverty in Malawi and to helping Malawi to develop a fairer and more environmentally sustainable economy, it is crucial that we do not ignore climate change and renewable energy. There are big opportunities there.

Patricia Ferguson's amendment will strengthen the Government's motion. It highlights the importance of the Malawi Government and of civic and governmental work. It is particularly important to welcome the new leadership of President Joyce Banda. In our work as a Parliament, we must acknowledge that the delivery of the millennium development goals is absolutely dependent on ensuring that a gender analysis underpins that work. We will not achieve the goals unless women's equality is at the heart and an explicit part of development work. I therefore welcome the comments that Siobhan McMahon and Claudia Beamish made about the importance of the culture challenge in Malawi and the need to provide our support for educational opportunities for girls. That is absolutely crucial if the country is to move forward.

Another issue is about strengthening the role of the Malawian Parliament. The work of the CPA has been highlighted effectively. Sandra White was right to point to that. It is long-term work, and it is important that we strengthen and deepen it. The pairing system that Patricia Ferguson mentioned is a good practical approach. Nothing concentrates the mind more than realising the complete absence of resources that Malawian parliamentarians have to carry out their work. Speaking off the record, probably all members will moan about the resources that we have, but if we

compared our experience with that of Malawian parliamentarians we would find that it is another world—they do not have anything like the resources that we have. We take so many things for granted, so it was important for members to make that point.

How do we move forward? We need to continue to provide educational opportunities and, as Patricia Ferguson highlighted, to support the work on HIV and maternal health projects. One of my memories of Malawi is of seeing the joy of people in a small village when they were given a pushbike with a flatbed trailer attached. That was their ambulance for getting pregnant women to hospital to give birth in a safer environment. That was shocking to me at the time, and the joy of those people showed how far apart we are. Other members have talked about the complete difference between the countries.

In the past, we have talked about co-operative and fair trade movements helping to ensure that Malawian farmers get a fair deal for their crops and adding value through processing in Malawi. That has been mentioned again today.

The climate change agenda poses a massive threat to health and farming in Malawi. Clean water, which we again take for granted, is vital. The water supply and the maintenance of it are crucial. It is about not just establishing boreholes but keeping them working; it is about not just installing water pumps but mending them when they break. One thing that Scotland could do is to transfer engineering skills. That must be part of our assistance, and I hope that ministers will reflect on the possibility of technical training as well as academic support.

Energy is a key issue. Bruce Crawford gave the stark statistic that 93 per cent of Malawi's population do not have access to electricity. We could do much to support Malawi on that: there are appropriate and available technologies that are small scale and relatively straightforward and which could work without the need to build a grid. However, the challenge is that they are far too expensive.

In this country, we support the use of such technologies with significant subsidies. Members can imagine how much harder that is in Malawi. Another issue is the skills base for developing renewables. I hope that ministers will reflect on the support that the Government and Scottish Enterprise could give.

We could encourage some of our big energy companies in Scotland, which are global players, to take some of their corporate social responsibility activities in the direction of Malawi. I saw a project for Scottish and Southern Energy—a steel birthing unit that was powered by solar energy. That is a

straightforward thing to do and it would not involve a huge amount for a big company. A strategy to bring that effort into play would be good.

There are a number of practical options for supporting Malawi. Scholarships are good. As for technical colleges, the skills that are needed are not readily available in Malawi. We have enough of a problem with such skills in Scotland; members can imagine the challenge in Malawi. Helping with business start-ups and adding value to farmers' work are practical things that we could do.

The percentage of people who do not have access to electricity in Malawi means that people chop down trees for firewood. They use it to cook and to sell, which is a double whammy: it is bad for Malawi in climate change terms, because it removes the carbon sink, and it is incredibly bad for people's health. Cooking inside with firewood leads to massive numbers of respiratory problems. There is every reason in the world for us to support renewables, but we must do so not only by helping with the technology transfer but by thinking about the funding to support renewables.

There have been fantastic speeches in the debate, which has shown the Parliament at its best. It has been great for MSPs to be able to talk about projects in their regions, such as schools that are doing fantastic work. In my region, we have seen the Malawi Underprivileged Mothers—MUMs—initiative, in which Linda McDonald has done fantastic work to raise money for meals in Malawi.

We are talking about exchanging expertise and the benefits that Malawi and Scotland receive. Liam McArthur and John Park talked about the sustained contribution that we have made over the years. That is something that the Parliament has done, and I hope that we keep the priority for Malawi. The relationship has deepened and is real, and it lets us go beneath the surface, which is important.

The relationship is massively valued in Malawi. As we look to the bicentenary of David Livingstone's birth, we should see it not just as a historical relationship but as a relationship for the future in education and training, health and clean water, and a fairer, stronger economy in Malawi. We could all be proud of that.

The debate has demonstrated the massive support across the Parliament for doing more and for building on what has been done not just by the Government but by civic society and individuals. By working together, all of us can make an impact and a contribution. That is what the debate is all about—how the Parliament makes a contribution to global justice and climate justice. Doing our bit means doing our bit in Scotland and helping in Malawi, too.

16:48

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): I add my voice to the welcome to Humza Yousaf in his new role. He paid tribute to his cabinet secretary for having performed a one-woman role. I have performed a similar one-man role, and I know that Humza Yousaf's appointment is an important sign of progress in the Scottish Government towards fulfilling our many aims for international development and international relations. His enthusiasm and—I even echo Mr Stevenson in saying this—his youth are important in driving forward our desire for a better world.

Humza Yousaf's announcement today that the new funding round for Malawi is now open will be followed with enormous interest in Malawi, as the debate will be. I spoke about the debate to a number of people whom I met last week, including Her Excellency the President, and all were interested in the work that we are doing.

The debate has been excellent. As Sarah Boyack said, it has shown the Parliament at its best. Members have paid warm tribute to those who started the work that has been undertaken. Members have talked about those who are not with us for one reason or another, including Karen Gillon, who took the work forward. The debate has involved the whole Parliament and its experience in looking at and deciding how we should move forward. I think that all of us will reflect on this afternoon as one of the better afternoons that we have spent in the chamber.

I want to answer as many of the specific points that were raised in the debate as I can but, before I do that, let me give three snapshots from the recent visit that I made to Malawi. I regard myself as incredibly fortunate to have visited Malawi. It was also the first time that I had visited Africa, and everybody I met in Malawi said, "How wonderful—you have chosen to come here first." I have to say that I cannot imagine going anywhere else now, so great was the experience in the warm heart of Africa.

My first snapshot is of sitting in a field by a school in the Dedza highlands surrounded by the whole school and most of the local community. The school has a couple of brick-built buildings, but most of its classrooms are made from straw and reeds, with straw-and-reed roofs, and the floors are mud, upon which most of the children sit for their lessons. It was the most exciting demonstration of a school that I have seen in a long time. In addition to the mothers who sang, we heard a mock debate by some of the pupils. The subject that they debated was an extraordinary one, and one that I had not even thought of. They debated whether children who dropped out of school should be allowed to come back. They did

that because the drop-out rate is enormous: the proportion of children who finish primary school is less than 35 per cent, and it is well below that for girls alone. They said that there has to be a cost involved in dropping out, but that there has to be an opportunity for every child to learn. It was a wonderfully well-balanced debate.

There was a programme that listed the people who would contribute. I did not know that I was meant to say something until I saw the programme five minutes before I sat down. When I got up to speak, I did something simple. I told the story of Bruce and the spider, because the culture is based on story, legend and tradition. The purpose of doing that was to talk about the determination of each child in that school to come to school every day and the determination of the community to hold that school to itself. I have scarcely ever been as impressed as I was by the desire to learn and to drive forward in that school. Sitting among those pupils and that community and looking at the mountains around me, I realised how much people want to move forward.

My second snapshot is the meeting that I had with Her Excellency Joyce Banda. She has quite a set of problems to solve. I remind members that the population of Malawi is growing exponentially. It is 15.5 million now and it will reach 23 million by 2025 and perhaps 37 million by 2050 if families continue to have, on average, six children. Poverty has increased in the past decades, and 20 per cent of people are at risk of suffering multiple deprivation. Malawi is number 171 out of the 187 countries in the world in terms of development. Its income per capita is \$750 and the Government has just £80 per person to spend on all services. Maternal mortality remains very high. Some 3 million people have no access to clean drinking water and only 7 per cent of people have access to electricity. As I said, only 35 per cent of children finish primary school and less than 10 per cent go to secondary school. The rate of university access is 0.4 per cent, which is the lowest rate in Africa and the second lowest in the world.

In the face of that, I met a president and her ministers who are absolutely focused on and enthused by the job that they have to do. She was utterly passionate about the issues of gender and particularly the issue of female education, and we talked about it for a great deal of our time. She wants to see progress on early years education. She is keen on the Livingstone bicentenary and on celebrating the links that we have. She was utterly intrigued by the concept of village-level renewables and how those would be taken forward. She recommended to me a book called "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind", which some members will know. It features the story of William Kamkwamba, who invented a windmill in his community in order to light it. It tells us a great

deal about the nature of the society, but also a great deal about individual passion.

My third snapshot is the story of Mary's Meals, which Mr McGrigor mentioned, and the wonderful work that that charity is doing throughout the country. As Patricia Ferguson said, the act of feeding children each day works miracles. It makes them want to go to school because they will be fed. It makes them able to study and to do better, and it retains them in school because they are not so hungry that they have to leave school and go somewhere else to find food. It is a wonderful thing that is being done efficiently by a Scottish charity based in Argyll; indeed, Martha Payne, who has done so much for it, has been shortlisted for the *Herald* campaigner of the year award.

I could have talked about the absolutely inspirational permaculture project that I visited, which is teaching people how to grow crops two or three times a year in a country that still thinks there is only one annual harvest; the education round table; my visit to the University of Malawi; and my discussions with agencies about the potential of renewables. However, what I want to mention is the joint permanent commission, which met in Zomba at the end of the week and which I co-chaired with the Malawian foreign minister the Hon Ephraim Chiume.

I felt very much at home in Zomba—the mist was so thick, it reminded me of Tighnabruaich. However, despite the mist that came down on the hills, our discussions had incredible focus and clarity. We talked about the same web of relationships that members have been talking about this afternoon and the range of organisations that are working together: not just the Scottish Government—although that is a catalyst—but Scottish Water, Education Scotland, the Scottish Prison Service, the Scottish Police College, National Museums Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Scotland and, as Patricia Ferguson mentioned, the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Malawi is a country that has only one psychiatrist who is licensed to practise and provide such assistance.

Of course, we must not forget the work of charities and NGOs, the inspirational work by Ann Gloag among others, and the contributions made by ordinary people in Scotland. As the *Official Report* will show, almost everyone who spoke in this debate mentioned a charity, church or school in their constituency that has links with Malawi. The idea, after all, is to link together two nations and create a web of relationships in order to support each other. We have huge opportunities and responsibilities, and this afternoon we have all talked about how we take up those opportunities and meet those responsibilities.

I want briefly to touch on some of the important points that have been raised. The issue of tourism, which was raised by Patricia Ferguson, is certainly important, and the work that Historic Scotland is carrying out with the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture might assist in that respect. However, a great deal of infrastructure needs to be built.

Patricia Ferguson also mentioned the Scottish Prison Service, which is actively considering the support that it can provide the Malawi prison service. Through its grants programme, the Scottish Government supports the Venture Trust, which is doing amazing work in Kachere juvenile prison, where the experience is exactly as members, particularly Siobhan McMahon, described. People can simply be abandoned for ever in the system.

Maureen Watt highlighted the issue of mobile phone applications. It sounds counterintuitive but when, as is currently happening, apps are used on iPads in schools they can provide teaching and a consistent standard of education either where there are no teachers or where the pupil to teacher ratio might be, and is, 90 or 100:1.

Maureen Watt also talked about the use of modern technology. I understand that when the first mobile phones reached Kenya 20 years ago they were regarded as ridiculous and people believed that they would never catch on. However, I have to say that the mobile phone reception in Blantyre is better than it is in mid-Argyll. Sometimes we need to leap over existing technological barriers if we are going to do things.

Many members mentioned David Livingstone and the fondness with which he is regarded in the country. We should remember that the remarkable things that he did in Malawi and Africa have not been forgotten, as we will make clear in the joint celebrations that we will have next year. However, we have to build on his work and ensure that that relationship continues to grow.

Many other issues were highlighted in the debate. Clare Adamson, for example, mentioned modern capacity building. In response to Claudia Beamish, I am sorry that I do not have the time to fill out what the President said about gender issues, but I can say that she and her Government are very focused on them. Secondees from the Scottish Government are working in renewables, and the climate change fund is regarded as one of the great innovations that we have introduced both in that country and in our work.

The most profound speech this afternoon came from my friend Bruce Crawford, who when he talked about the relationship between the two countries mentioned, first of all, the Malawian flag. Of course, the flag has three strands, including black for the population of Malawi and red for work

and struggle, with the sun rising on it, too. It is the sun rising in Malawi that matters. At the end of his speech, Mr Crawford said that we should keep trying for Malawi.

The opening of the co-operation agreement between Malawi and Scotland says that we

“have a long history of collaboration ... Both countries share a wish to build upon this history ... This is a reciprocal partnership based upon sharing experiences and skills. It is an opportunity to learn from each other”.

Those are the words of the co-operation agreement, and they describe the nature of this debate. It has been wonderful to see Parliament and the Government united in taking forward that approach.

Business Motions

17:00

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04702, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 13 November 2012

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Universal Benefits

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 14 November 2012

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Health and Wellbeing

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist
Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 15 November 2012

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body
Questions

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Freedom of Information
(Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 20 November 2012

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 21 November 2012
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Culture and External Affairs;
 Infrastructure, Investment and Cities
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 22 November 2012

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
 12.30 pm Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Scottish Government Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04703, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 1 March 2013—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04704, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the High Hedges (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the High Hedges (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 8 February 2013—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04706, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a

stage 2 timetable for the Scottish Civil Justice Council and Criminal Legal Assistance Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish Civil Justice Council and Criminal Legal Assistance Bill at stage 2 be completed by 20 November 2012—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:03

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-04707, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, and motion S4M-04708, on the office of the clerk.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Fishing Boats (Satellite-tracking Devices) (Scotland) Scheme 2012 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Office of the Clerk be closed on Thursday 27, Friday 28 and Monday 31 December 2012—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

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

Decision Time

17:03

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The first question is, that amendment S4M-04694.2, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04694, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on Scotland's relationship with Malawi, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04694, on Scotland's relationship with Malawi, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that, as a good global citizen, Scotland is demonstrating its commitment to international development through the maintenance of the International Development Fund; notes that the Scottish Government's international development policy and its engagement with Malawi draws on Scottish expertise, historically in relation to health and education, as well as in response to new challenges, notably climate change and renewable energy; recognises and welcomes the role of individuals and organisations across Scotland in supporting and developing Scotland's special relationship with Malawi and the opportunity that the Livingstone bicentenary provides to celebrate that partnership, and further welcomes the next funding round for Malawi; congratulates President Banda on the strong stance that she has taken since coming to office on a wide range of equality issues including women's representation and the education of women and girls; recognises the work of the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the contribution that it has made to developing relationships between the two countries, and believes that the partnership between Malawi and Scotland will continue to grow.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04707, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Fishing Boats (Satellite-tracking Devices) (Scotland) Scheme 2012 be approved.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04708, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on the office of the clerk, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Office of the Clerk be closed on Thursday 27, Friday 28 and Monday 31 December 2012.

Living Wage Week

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-04549, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on living wage week. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. For understandable reasons, Kezia Dugdale is unable to be here today, so I call on John Park to open the debate. Mr Park, you have seven minutes.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament is committed to promoting a society where work pays; finds it unacceptable that in-work poverty continues to be a scourge, perpetuating societal ills such as poor health and child poverty, with six out of 10 children in poverty from families where at least one parent is in work; welcomes recent analysis, which it considers encouraging, by the IPPR and the Resolution Foundation, which estimated for the first time the wage bill for UK companies listed on the London Stock Exchange when paying staff a living wage; acknowledges what it considers the tireless work of the Scottish Living Wage Campaign and the trade union movement to make a living wage a reality for many public sector workers in Scotland; welcomes the advent of the annual Living Wage Week, taking place from 4 to 10 November, and looks forward to events promoting the benefits and ideals of a living wage for all; congratulates those local authorities that have delivered a living wage to their employees and notes the commitment of other councils, including the City of Edinburgh Council, to do so; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to maintaining the relevance of a living wage for staff covered by its pay policy by uprating it; understands that it has committed to continuing to do so and notes the work outstanding to make the living wage a reality for all public sector employees, and hopes that the tide of support for the living wage will set a precedent too strong for private employers to ignore.

17:05

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

Unfortunately, Kezia Dugdale is unwell and has apparently lost her voice—there is a joke in there that I am not prepared to make—so I will say a bit about Kez's work. In the *Official Report* tomorrow, she will have a chance to read all the nice words that I will say about her in the next little while.

If we had had this debate two or three years ago, anyone who was opening the debate would have had to spend some time explaining exactly what the living wage is. It is testament to the Scottish living wage campaign, and perhaps a recognition of the work that we have done here in the Scottish Parliament to advance the issue, that the living wage is now fully understood by people not just in this Parliament but in our communities throughout Scotland. Living wage week is a big part of ensuring that that understanding is acted upon and that it mobilises people in communities and workplaces, as well as here in the Scottish Parliament, to ensure that the living wage—and,

indeed, the existence of living wage employers—becomes more prevalent over the coming years.

The campaign has perhaps unparalleled political support. Who would have thought that this week we would see the Scottish Government announce a significant rise in the living wage? The living wage is supported by many local authorities, by Boris Johnson and by Ed Miliband—support for it cuts across the political divide—and even David Cameron has described it as an idea whose time has come.

That support is due not just to the campaign but to the strong and solid business case that sits behind the living wage. Living wage employers now recognise that it is beneficial to their business. Let me quote from work that has been done for the Greater London Authority, which cites:

- Significantly lower rates of staff turnover
- Substantial cost savings on recruitment and induction training
- Employees more likely to stay with organisation
- Increased tenure of workers and continuity of workforce".

All those are things that contribute to successful businesses.

More recently, the Trust for London produced an analysis of the London living wage that showed:

- Over half of employees (54%) felt more positive about their workplace once the LW was introduced and 52% felt more loyal.
- Staff leaving rates fell by 25%.
- Almost a third (32%) of workers felt it benefitted their family life by allowing them to do things like spend more time with family.
- Almost 4 in 10 (38%) workers reported financial benefits such as being able to buy more goods and save more."

The living wage has brought business benefits, but it has also brought benefits to individuals and made them play a much greater and more significant part in their workplace.

For me, that is the high road to success for businesses here in Scotland. Although those figures come from work that has been done on the London living wage, I feel that it would be beneficial for the Scottish Government to think about how it might analyse the great work that has been done here and the work that will be done over the next few months as the living wage is rolled out across local government. Perhaps the Government could also start to examine how employers in the private sector and the public sector are benefiting from the living wage here in Scotland.

The vast majority of local authorities have now indicated that they will introduce the living wage in some shape or another. Kezia Dugdale's motion mentions the City of Edinburgh Council's policy commitment to make that happen. This week, my local authority in Fife announced that more than

2,000 employees would benefit from an increase to ensure that they are paid the living wage.

That will address some of the key issues that people who are in work face when they are struggling to make ends meet and manage family budgets. Such decisions and commitments, which we politicians make in elections and follow through on, can make a huge difference to people. I am very pleased to see that all those commitments that were made in the local government elections are starting to be delivered on.

A main aim of the living wage campaign and one of the main aims of living wage week is to ensure that the campaign will have a next stage. Yes, there are political decisions that can be taken but there are wider resources that could be put into communities and local groups to ensure that there is an understanding and a mobilisation of people who support the living wage.

Another issue is the huge amount of Scottish Government spend: the £9 billion, £10 billion or £11 billion-worth of goods and services that we procure. We have considered that in a couple of debates, and the Local Government and Regeneration Committee has also looked at the opportunities that exist in that regard. Standing in for Kezia Dugdale today, I have the opportunity to talk about my proposals. I hope that there will be the chance for those proposals to be debated properly in the Scottish Parliament.

I would like all public sector bodies to be able to state in their contracts that if an employer is to benefit from a public sector contract, it should pay its staff the living wage. One of the main asks of the living wage campaign in Scotland, which I want to address in my proposals, is for the Scottish Government to have a duty in place to establish a living wage unit. The examples that I gave of what has happened down south could ensure that the business case for the living wage is recognised as solid. We need a living wage unit in Scotland that would highlight those examples, encourage private sector employers and share best practice across the Scottish employment network. In that way, the living wage could become not only something that people aspire to, but something that could actually be delivered. The Scottish Government should promote the practical examples that are out there and support employers to make that happen.

Finally, I want to mention Kezia Dugdale's contribution. Not only has she driven forward the living wage since her election in May 2011 and played a key part in ensuring that it has been a priority for the City of Edinburgh Council, but she has done work around paid internships. That is another issue that affects us as employers in the Scottish Parliament and, more widely, affects

Scottish society. Those things make a difference to individuals and their families.

Kez is also working on a policy on something that many of us deal with day-to-day as politicians: some of the exorbitant rates of interest that are being forced upon some of the lowest-paid and lowest-income families in Scotland through payday loans, and how people grapple with them. Kez is trying to find ways in which the Scottish Government could make legislative change here; again that would make a huge difference to those families.

Kez is not here today to take the credit for those things, but it is important that I put that credit on the record. It is great that we have had this debate about the living wage week. The week has been a success so far and I am very positive about what the living wage campaign might do in Scotland in the future.

17:14

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I join John Park in paying tribute to the work that Kezia Dugdale has done on a range of issues and, for the purposes of this debate, her work on the living wage. She certainly took that up as one of her major campaigning activities when she was elected to Parliament and I recognise the enormous contribution that she has made. I join others in wishing her all the best and I hope that she is back, fully recovered, very soon.

Given that John Park has taken Kezia's place in the debate, it is also appropriate to pay tribute to the work that he has done. I hope that members will hear more about that as his proposed bill progresses. The idea that he has put forward in the bill, about using procurement as a way of spreading the living wage into the private sector, is one that I support and which I believe is fully compatible with European law. I wish him all the best for his bill as it progresses through the Parliament.

For me, the debate on the living wage is reminiscent of the debates that we had in the House of Commons in the 1990s on the minimum wage. Without being too party political, it is fair to say that the Conservative Party in particular was totally opposed to that proposal from Labour on the grounds that it would lead to more unemployment. However, we know that that has not happened. I welcome the fact that there is now a broader coalition of forces supporting the idea of a living wage than there was in those days supporting the proposal of a minimum wage.

I was particularly struck by an editorial in *The Scotsman* yesterday, the headline for which was "A living wage is nothing to be afraid of". If I were to recommend one piece of writing to someone

who was not particularly on the left in politics, it would be that editorial. It shows passionate support for a policy that certainly would not have been supported by *The Scotsman* in the 1990s or even a bit more recently.

John Park gave some reasons for that coalition when he quoted the research from London about the benefits that the London living wage has brought for employers. I will not repeat the details, but the London living wage has reduced staff turnover and improved the morale of workers. Many employers in London and now elsewhere, including in Scotland, will testify to the benefits that the living wage brings them. That is an important part of persuading the wider population to support the policy.

For me, the cornerstone of the policy must be that it helps to combat low pay and poverty. It is a staggering fact that is often forgotten—the motion reminds us of it—that 60 per cent of children living in poverty live in a family in which at least one person is in work. Therefore, we cannot address the issues of child poverty and poverty more generally without doing something about low pay. Apparently, only 12p of any pound of United Kingdom gross domestic product goes to the 50 per cent of people in this country who earn the lowest pay. That is considerably less than a few decades ago. We therefore have a problem with how much income is taken by low-paid people, which leads not only to poverty but to economic problems.

The other argument for a living wage is that it helps to improve demand in local economies, and perhaps the fundamental problem that our economy has faced over the past three or four years is the lack of demand in the economy. The more that the living wage spreads through the public and private sectors, the more it will help people living in poverty, the wider economy and employers.

There is a comprehensive story to be told about the benefits of the living wage and we can support it on a broad basis going forward. I thank Kezia Dugdale and John Park for the work that they have done, and I commend the Scottish living wage campaign and the trade unions Unison and Unite the Union, which have been particularly active in supporting the campaign.

17:18

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): I welcome the debate and hope that Labour colleagues will pass on to Kezia Dugdale my best wishes for a speedy recovery. There is nothing worse than a politician with no voice, because we all need to use our voices to represent our constituents. I thank John Park for

eloquently opening the debate, which is timely during living wage week. It is right to highlight and promote a policy that mitigates the worst ravages of poverty, as Malcolm Chisholm has just explained.

In this day and age, it is a travesty that some people who are in full-time work are below the poverty line. Not only is that completely unfair, it is also bad for the economy. John Park made a clear argument and explained very well the impact on the economy of better-paid, happier staff and people having a wee bit more money in their pockets.

I was delighted to hear on Monday that the Scottish Government had raised the living wage to £7.45 an hour for people who work in the Government, its agencies and the national health service. That affects about 6,000 staff members, and it is the second time that the Government has raised the living wage since it introduced it to those agencies more than a year ago. When the Scottish National Party came to power in 2007, the minimum Scottish Government wage was about £5.63 an hour, which means that the wage has jumped by 32 per cent. I am sure that we all agree that that is a great achievement in what are very tough economic circumstances, and that we all support the policy. However, the United Kingdom minimum wage for over 21s is £6.19 an hour, and for 18 to 20-year-olds, it is £4.98 an hour. I am sure that that contrast is not missed by anyone.

This week, Peter Kelly of the Scottish living wage campaign said:

“With the problem of in-work poverty continuing to increase, the Scottish Government’s continued support for the Living Wage must be congratulated. Today’s announcement will ensure that some of the lowest-paid workers in the public sector will receive a wage increase that will provide real help in these difficult times.

We look forward to working with the Scottish Government to ensure that more employees across Scotland can get the benefit of the living wage.”

I am sure that everyone in the chamber could not agree more.

Last year, South Lanarkshire Council stepped up to the plate and implemented the living wage, for which I roundly congratulated it. That policy was supported by all councillors, which just goes to show the breadth of support for it. The policy impacted on 8,000 of the lowest-paid council employees. Of the 1,800 employees who were paid less than £7.20 an hour, 87 per cent were women; of the 8,400 employees who were paid less than £21,000 a year, 76 per cent were women. South Lanarkshire Council’s brave decision to follow the Government in implementing the living wage is very welcome—not least to families in which women are out there as the

breadwinners. A number of those women are still fighting equal pay cases.

Not all councils have implemented the living wage, so I urge the rest to follow South Lanarkshire Council's lead. We have a commitment that all SNP councils will introduce a living wage. If we reach consensus that everyone should do that, I am sure that the whole nation will benefit.

There is nothing more honourable than earning your own crust and supporting your family with dignity. In supporting living wage week, I hope that we have gone a little way towards maintaining that dignity. I congratulate the living wage campaign and everyone across the chamber who has been involved in the campaign.

17:22

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I add my good wishes to Kez Dugdale and I congratulate her in her absence on securing the debate. I also congratulate John Park, who has worked tirelessly on the issue for some years and, in particular, on the work on his proposed living wage bill, which we look forward to debating in the chamber.

The real congratulations, when it comes to the living wage, go to campaigners outside Parliament, because this is a grass-roots campaign that was initiated by Citizens UK in London and which has been followed through by bodies in Scotland such as the Poverty Alliance. They are to be congratulated on their persistence in bringing the campaign to the stage that it has reached today.

We have come a long way. Like Malcolm Chisholm, I am old enough to remember the debates about the national minimum wage. It is worth remembering that at that time some workers were paid as little as £1 an hour. I remember instances being discovered of some people working in the security industry for accommodation only and no wage whatever.

There were dire predictions of job losses when the minimum wage came in, but those have been proved to be false. It is so pleasing to see that we have moved beyond the idea of the bare minimum to the idea of a decent quality of life being provided by the living wage.

The policy has been public-sector led. The Scottish Government and the local authorities that have introduced the living wage and made commitments to staff are to be congratulated on that. I am delighted to add to that roll of honour: two weeks ago my council—East Lothian Council—introduced the living wage, and 145 permanent staff and 150 casual or relief staff will benefit. As with Christina McKelvie's South

Lanarkshire Council, most of those staff are women who work part-time. Those numbers might sound small but, for the people concerned, the increase in their wage—which, in some cases, will be as much as 13 per cent—is significant. However, given that they represent only a small proportion of the 500,000 Scots in the public and private sectors who are paid less than the living wage, it is clear that we must do more.

As John Park said, the key task is to push out beyond the public sector and into the private sector by persuasion and procurement. The issue is not just about fairness to individuals; it is about providing a level playing field for people in the third sector. I spent some time chairing an organisation that provides support to people with learning disabilities who live in the community. I am not proud to say that we had to squeeze the conditions of our workforce, because we were bidding for tenders against other organisations that paid the minimum wage and used zero-hour contracts so that they could make lower bids. To me, that seems to be quite pernicious.

In addition, we must be strong on the issue of advice from Europe. I know that the Scottish Government has asked for advice and believes that it is difficult to use procurement to promote the living wage, but I say—without being funny—that the Scottish Government can be quite bullish about European advice when it comes to matters such as minimum unit pricing or even entry to the European Union. If the Government were to be bullish about promotion of the living wage and pushed it through in the procurement bill that is to come before us, that is one area in which we would support it.

The living wage matters to all of us. This week, we have seen it go up—but we have also seen top executive earnings go up by more than 25 per cent. Why do we still have so much stress, anxiety, addiction and family breakdown in our society when, in general terms, we are better off than we have ever been? I think that the reason is to do with the inequalities that we are discussing. The living wage may be only a small step in addressing those inequalities, but it is an important one, which is why I believe that this is one wheel to which, together, we should all put our shoulders, because it is an idea whose time has come.

17:27

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, thank Kezia Dugdale for her energetic campaign and for securing the debate in living wage week.

As the Parliament is an employer with significant spend, I felt that it would be appropriate to put on

the record what the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body—of which I am a member—is doing so that, rather than our simply judging others, we can be judged by what we are doing in the Parliament. The SPCB recognises that the living wage is a matter of great interest to members. Barely a corporate body question time passes without questions being asked about it. Generally speaking, they are asked by Kezia Dugdale; all credit to her for that. As a result of the views that members have expressed, the corporate body has actively considered the implications for it of adopting the living wage and has taken professional advice—something that Iain Gray alluded to—on the matter. The corporate body is highly supportive of the principles of a living wage and, as an employer that pays the living wage, leads by example.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Can Mary Scanlon give an indication of the corporate body's advice concerning contract workers in the Parliament?

Mary Scanlon: That is a very good point, to which I am just coming. I thank the member for prompting me to continue with my speech.

All directly employed parliamentary staff, as well as agency staff who are employed by the corporate body on a temporary basis, are paid above the recently published living wage rate. The Parliament can be proud of our responsible purchasing approach to procurement. Our on-going commitment enables us to bring about positive improvements in our contracts. Where relevant, we seek to include ethical and social considerations in our contracts, provided that they are compatible with EU procurement law.

That brings me on to Iain Gray's point. The European Commission recently confirmed to the Scottish Government that public bodies cannot require contractors to pay their employees a living wage as a condition of participating in a procurement exercise, and that discrimination against suppliers that do not pay the living wage would be in breach of EU treaty principles.

That takes me to the Scottish procurement policy note dated 22 August 2012, which states:

"Public bodies can, if they wish, still encourage contractors to pay their employees a living wage."

It goes on to state:

If public bodies wish to encourage contractors to pay their employees a living wage through procurement processes, this is still possible, although they cannot treat contractors who say that they will pay employees engaged in the delivery of a contract a living wage any more favourably than those contractors that say that they will not."

That is quite clear.

The majority of contracted personnel who are dedicated to the delivery of SPCB onsite services are paid above the living wage. However, at present 19 contracted catering staff are paid 30p below the new living wage and seven contracted cleaning staff are also paid below the new living wage. Those rates are an improvement on the average industry rate for similar positions within the Edinburgh market and, of course this is a subject for on-going review.

I realise that I am running out of time, so I will just say that although I have focused on the Scottish Parliament as an employer and on my own responsibility as a member of the corporate body, I appreciate that we are in difficult financial and economic times and I add that what is right and proper for the public sector can, in these difficult times, undoubtedly present challenges for many in the private sector.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Due to the number of members still wishing to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

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

Motion agreed to.

17:32

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): I wish a speedy recovery to Kezia Dugdale and, in her absence, I thank John Park for stepping up to the plate. As we heard earlier, Kezia Dugdale has worked tirelessly on bringing the subject for debate.

The Scottish Labour Party has consistently championed the living wage, first by implementing the changes for our lowest-paid workers in local government and then by arguing for its application across the public, private and voluntary sectors. I am proud of the changes that were made by the Labour administration in Glasgow City Council, which was the first local authority to introduce the living wage of £7.20 per hour—to be increased to £7.50 per hour—for its lowest-paid employees. That wage increase directly affected 5,000 families and more than 160 businesses in the local area. The impact of that salary increase for households on basic incomes will be immeasurable. Too many families are suffering from in-work poverty; increasing basic wages to about £7.20 per hour can be the difference between meeting the monthly bills and putting food on the table, and falling deeper and deeper into debt.

Despite that reality, there are some people who still argue that now is not the time to introduce this change in the basic wages of our lowest-paid staff.

They argue that the economy is too fragile and too weak to sustain the added pressure on the public purse, yet it is becoming increasingly clear that low wages for workers mean that families have less to spend, and that lower spending too often results in slow growth in the economy. Therefore, I believe that the living wage is a compelling proposition, not just because of the social benefits or because of the impact that it has on the families who are the hardest hit by the recession, but because it makes economic sense. It is right to support our most vulnerable working people through these tough economic times and it is right that we boost our economy by ensuring that our wealth is in the hands of the many—not of the few.

Members have already mentioned that the living wage (Scotland) bill that has been proposed by my colleague John Park MSP would be an important step forward in extending the living wage beyond the boundaries of local government and the public sector. It would also serve to change the destructive culture among some businesses of paying staff as little as possible in order to maximise profit.

Alongside other key measures, the living wage has already provided working families in Scotland with financial security in difficult times, and it will continue to do so. It can be a significant contributing factor in tackling the root causes of poverty and disadvantage in our society.

17:35

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank Kezia Dugdale for lodging the motion and John Park for stepping in. I know his long history of promoting the issue, and look forward to working with him on his member's bill.

Over the years, members and committees of the Parliament have initiated various debates on the living wage. The motion refers to the Institute for Public Policy Research and Resolution Foundation report, which highlights that the

"UK stands out as having one of the highest incidences of low-wage work"

among advanced economies.

The factors that drive poverty are diverse but are still nevertheless more challenging. For far too long, we have relied on hoping that economic growth will trickle down to the poorest in our society or that the various welfare-to-work schemes will solve working-age poverty without a change to the incomes of those who are in or out of employment. The living wage is to be welcomed as part of a policy mix that needs to be flexible but not confused in tackling in-work poverty. As the Local Government and Regeneration Committee stated in its report on the living wage in Scotland in February this year,

"it is not, in itself, a panacea and will not be sufficient, on its own".

The living wage requires better co-ordination. The fact that the Scottish Government is committed to paying those on low incomes a living wage of £7.45 an hour from April next year has to be welcomed as a first step to having a living wage adopted by all employers in Scotland. That is of great assistance to the campaign.

Although some could well have described the public sector's record on the living wage as patchy, the private sector has a real job of work to catch up with the agenda that has been set. The Institute for Public Policy Research and Resolution Foundation report clearly highlights that few companies in retail or food services have been committed to becoming living wage employers. It is worth highlighting that new research by Incomes Data Services suggests that bosses of the FTSE 100 companies made an average of £4 million a year in the 12 months to June this year.

I have stated on numerous occasions in the chamber that there is a requirement that we seriously assess what a citizens or basic income should be. That issue needs to be examined more fully and progressed, as the living wage may not always address the fundamental problems of the economy and individual households.

It is ironic that while the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, made his intention clear in his announcement—which must be welcomed in some respects—that the living wage will be introduced and uprated in London, very few of the London boroughs in which Conservatives are in control have signed up to the living wage. I look forward to the Conservatives signing up to the campaign in London and elsewhere.

That takes us to the essential point that private sector employers—or employers more generally—do not have to endorse the living wage because, unlike the national minimum wage, it has no legal status behind it. Members have debated that in the chamber in the past. If we are serious about a living wage, we must ensure that forcing employers to pay it becomes a legitimate imposition on them. In fact, there is now confusion about the living wage and the national minimum wage and about why the figures vary so much. My colleague Christina McKelvie referred to the uprating of the national minimum wage on 1 October this year, but she did not say that the upratings for 18 to 20-year-olds and for those under 18 never happened; the uprating was only for those over 21.

In welcoming this debate, I take the opportunity to thank the Scottish living wage campaign, among other organisations, and Peter Kelly, who is in the public gallery, for their tireless work on the

issue. Peter has been involved for more years than he would probably care to remember in campaigning on low-wage issues and for the living wage. I look forward to being involved in the wider debate and, as I said earlier, in the debate on John Park's proposed bill when he introduces it to Parliament.

Finally, I have a question for the minister. When looking at Scottish Government contracts, can the minister check with his colleagues on what can be done to uprate the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board's rates of pay? The Government has some responsibility for that body, which currently does not pay the living wage.

I thank the members involved for this debate and I look forward to future debates on the issue.

17:40

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank my colleague Kezia Dugdale for securing this debate on the living wage and I commend the work that both she and John Park have done on the issue.

I am proud to come from the party that introduced the minimum wage, which brought about fundamental change in our society and how we value the workforce in the UK. For many, the minimum wage enhanced living standards, wellbeing and the idea of being a valued member of the workplace. However, the minimum wage only goes so far and, to some extent, it is discriminatory because of the different pay brackets for different ages. Why should a 16 or 17-year-old who does the same job as a 22-year-old colleague be paid less? That situation is why the living wage rightly goes further.

The living wage is not only about improving the standards of living of the lowest-paid workers. It also ensures that they are treated equally and fairly in the workplace. In its inquiry into the living wage in Scotland this year, the Local Government and Regeneration Committee discovered that, where the living wage was introduced by local authorities, more women than men benefited from the change. For example, in East Renfrewshire, 76 per cent of women were affected, of whom 84 per cent were in part-time employment. However, it must be accepted that East Renfrewshire does not have the same socioeconomic problems as parts of Glasgow and other parts of west Scotland.

As a society, we have progressed from the post-war era when women stayed at home to look after house and home, to a society that actively promotes women seeking employment. However, women still face the same barriers as they did then, because they are generally seen as the primary caregivers for their families and they often

have to juggle going to work with looking after their families.

Childcare is a large expense for some families and its cost can negate the income received if both parents work, so a family can be better off if only one parent works while the other stays at home to care for the children, which often comes down to the woman staying at home. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 2011 report on a minimum income standard in the UK showed that, on average, couples with two children aged between two years and primary school age pay around £205 a week for childcare. That means that women working part time with the current minimum wage would have to work 32 hours just to pay for their weekly childcare costs.

When we look at the sectors that are usually low paid, such as catering, clerical, cleaning and childcare, a pattern emerges: it is primarily women who fill positions in those sectors. Given that many private sector companies are involved in those sectors, it is to be hoped that, as the motion indicates, more public sector employees receiving the benefits of the living wage will mean that the living wage becomes the norm rather than the exception in the private sector.

The fact that women are far more likely to be in low-paid jobs than their male counterparts highlights another key issue, which is child poverty. A Scottish Government report on poverty figures shows that around 23 per cent of single working-age women with children live below the poverty line before they even pay for their housing costs; some will be able to claim state benefits alongside their income, but what of those who are not entitled to anything from the state?

The only way to tackle child poverty and improve living standards is by ensuring that women and other low-paid workers are paid at a rate that is beneficial to society—that is, the living wage. I acknowledge that the minimum wage is a starting point on the way to the living wage, but if we are to have fairness and equality in society for the lowest-paid workers, we must ensure that the living wage becomes the new national minimum wage.

I commend the work of the living wage campaign and the work that takes place in living wage week to raise awareness of the issues that affect people in low-paid work, with the aim of improving their living standards and lifestyles.

17:45

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Given the role reversal that has happened today, I should thank Kezia Park—or is it John Dugdale?—for introducing the debate. I support the work of both members on the campaign.

The living wage campaign is evidence that campaigns can start very small but grow until they are part of mainstream consciousness. I pay tribute to the activists in east London who started the campaign and have stuck with it all the way. They are the pioneers and visionaries; we are merely followers, but that is no bad thing.

The campaign for a living wage is not radical or extreme. It does not ask the impossible. It is a campaign for fairness and justice that seeks dignity for all. If it is successful, the state will no longer have to subsidise rotten low pay. At its most basic level, the campaign will enable families to provide for themselves. I hope that everyone supports the campaign and—more important—takes action on the living wage.

The campaign has gained widespread support, from charities, churches and all the major trade unions, such as Unite, Unison, the GMB, the Public and Commercial Services Union, RMT, ASLEF and the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians. We can be sure of one thing. Wherever there are campaigns for social justice, the UK's trade unions will be there, agitating, organising, educating their members and encouraging them to help to bring about progressive change. Let no one say that trade unions are irrelevant; in these days of austerity they are more important than ever. Of course, the living wage is a central plank of the Scottish Trades Union Congress's better way campaign, which offers a practical alternative to austerity.

Like Malcolm Chisholm, I remember debates during the 1997 election campaign, when Labour promised to introduce a national minimum wage. I remember the scare stories about how the minimum wage would be a disaster for business, costing jobs and being bad for competitiveness. At the time, as Iain Gray said, security guards and cleaners were earning £1 or £1.50 an hour. If that is what people mean by competitiveness, they can keep it.

I also remember that during the election campaign some people, including Cilla Black, Jim Davidson and Paul Daniels, said that they would leave the country if Labour won the election and introduced such policies. After Labour's win, I wrote to them, to offer to run them to the airport if they wanted to keep their promise. It is unfortunate for us all that none of them took me up on my offer.

We have come some way since the introduction of a £3.60 per hour minimum wage in 1998. The rate is now £6.19. Major employers, such as the GLA, Glasgow City Council and KPMG, as well as solicitors, plant hire companies and colleges, have signed up to the living wage. I pay tribute to those employers and encourage others to follow.

We are not asking for the revolution—we might ask for that tomorrow. The living wage rate would deliver an annual salary of about £13,000. I hope that through the forthcoming procurement reform bill and John Park's proposed living wage bill we can deliver genuine progress on the issue in Scotland and begin to lead the way. The living wage will not eradicate poverty and injustice, but it will deliver cash into the pockets of many of my constituents, who desperately need help.

I do not know about you, Presiding Officer, but I want to live in a society in which people have access to skills and education and a good standard of living. I want to live in a society in which there is decency and equality. I hope that all members support the living wage and a better way.

17:50

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Like other members, I thank Kezia Dugdale for lodging this motion and John Park for opening the debate. I have been happy to support their long-standing efforts on this issue on many occasions, and I look forward to continuing to do so.

It should be unarguable, in our wealthy society, that the exchange of work for a wage implies a basic minimum, acceptable, liveable standard. The idea that poverty pay still continues to keep people in a position in which they are in effect being subsidised by the taxpayer because they are dependent on in-work benefits is extraordinary. Other members have mentioned how extreme the situation is with regard to poverty pay, even with the existence of the minimum wage. The rate that has not been mentioned is that for 16 and 17-year-olds, which, in nearly a decade, has gone from £3 an hour to only £3.68. Of course, the real minimum minimum wage, for apprentices, is more than £1 below that.

The idea that a working week should allow a basic, acceptable standard of living should be such a little thing to ask for. It should be seen as a modest proposal, and a decent society should ensure that that happens. However, sadly, it is regarded by some as something inflammatory. Some of those who will argue that market conditions do not allow us to have the living wage are the same people who say that market conditions imply that they, on six or seven-figure incomes, should get a little bit more every year—and a little bit more, and a little bit more.

I was struck by Ian Bell's comments on the living wage in today's *Herald*, although the headline might have been a bit disappointing to some of the campaigners. In the piece, he says that the living wage

"encourages some employers to do the least they can get away with, and then boast of the fact".

I think that he is arguing that the living wage is necessary, but not sufficient. He is quite right to say that, if we want a more equal society, we need to look at pay at the top end, not just eliminate poverty pay at the bottom end.

Some of the same people who tell us that a living wage is unaffordable are those who have awarded themselves 27 per cent increases on already inflated incomes. To argue that market decisions make that a necessity and dictate those choices for them is breathtaking hypocrisy.

Margaret Thatcher once said that there is no such thing as society. Some have defended her by saying that what she meant was that society is made up of individuals and individual choices. Well, so are markets. There is no such thing as market forces; there are only the decisions of—in this instance—individual employers. For some of the most major employers in our country to argue that market forces determine that there must be inflated salaries at the top and poverty pay at the bottom, while their decisions are the decisions that set those market conditions, is breathtaking hypocrisy, and we should have none of it.

As well as addressing top pay and the living wage, we must go further, as John Wilson says, and consider our entire welfare state, including out-of-work benefits. If the living wage is necessary in order to achieve the basic acceptable standard of living, we must recognise that people on out-of-work benefits are living in breathtaking poverty and, in the current circumstances, do not have the ability to do much about it.

I thank John Park and Kezia Dugdale once again for making this an issue that will come back to the chamber time and again.

17:54

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): I congratulate Kezia Dugdale on securing the debate. I am sorry that she cannot be here this evening and I wish her a speedy recovery. There is no doubt that John Park ably deputised for her in putting across the case in such an articulate manner.

As Neil Findlay said, the campaign for the living wage grew from the actions of two parents in London who were on the minimum wage and found that they were working so many hours that they did not have any family time.

The momentum has built across the United Kingdom, particularly in Scotland, where the living wage has been a success. As Christina McKelvie said, that has been demonstrated in my local area by South Lanarkshire Council, which has delivered a living wage that benefits nearly half of its 16,000

employees. As Mary Fee and Christina McKelvie said, the beneficiaries of the policy are often women. That increases the focus and the impetus to make progress on the issue.

A living wage has three direct benefits. First and foremost, it puts more money into people's pockets. Increasingly, families are struggling—on average, families have become £1,200 less well off in the past year. There are rising fuel bills and other challenges for families. At lunch time, I was talking to people from the co-operative retail sector, who said that, from the footfall in their shops, they can see that people are struggling to make ends meet and even to make basic food purchases. Although the living wage does not address all those issues, at least it makes a contribution.

Allied to that, there is an economic benefit. If we put money into people's pockets and they spend it in local shops and businesses, that will boost the economy. That is particularly true when the money goes to those who are lower paid and who need to spend it. To be mildly controversial for a minute, if for example we pass the benefits of free prescription charges to those on six-figure salaries, the cash benefit to them is more likely to lie sleeping in bank accounts than to make its way into the local economy.

The final benefit is to business itself. Patrick Harvie is right that there are still those who say that the living wage is not a good idea because it raises business costs, affects the bottom line and undermines value to the shareholder. However, the statistics that John Park and Malcolm Chisholm gave from two studies in London show that, if a business recognises the worth of an employee by paying them more, they are more likely to be motivated to stay with the company and less likely to be off sick, and the business will operate more efficiently and effectively as a result. There are therefore benefits to businesses from the living wage.

I again congratulate Kezia Dugdale. I look forward to working with John Park on his proposed bill on the issue. The campaign has grown, but the fight must continue so that we can provide a real benefit and make a real difference to families and individuals throughout the country.

17:58

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): The debate has been constructive and helpful, and it is unfortunate that Kezia Dugdale cannot be here. I pass on my best wishes to her.

Only last week, we talked about the debate and I informed Kezia Dugdale that I was to respond on behalf of the Government. She said that it would

feel like déjà vu and that there would perhaps be nothing new to add but, actually, there is. That is because of the uprating issue that members have mentioned, which has raised the profile of the issue once again. If this debate does nothing else, it puts in the public domain the issue of the living wage in a helpful and constructive way.

Members have repeatedly covered the benefits of the living wage. I was struck by Patrick Harvie's comment that the living wage is not the ceiling or the top level at which people should be paid, but the minimum, the floor or the starting position for a fair wage and fair recompense for work. I do not think that I have ever heard Mr Findlay be so reasonable, in calling for something that is not the revolution, but that is absolutely the right approach to take, as agreed by members across the chamber.

Mary Scanlon deployed a useful tactic that should perhaps be encouraged—she could be the reasonable face of conservatism in the future. She spent more time talking about her role as a Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body member than she did saying as a Conservative that the living wage is unaffordable.

We must be cognisant of advice and of the European Commission's view on the applicability of the living wage to procurement. Further work can be done in relation to the procurement bill and John Park's bill. I commend his bill and his speech in leading today's debate.

Many members—particularly Mary Fee and Christina McKelvie—covered the gender issues, as was appropriate. Mary Fee also covered the geographic issue. The benefit in dealing with geographic inequality is well worth considering.

John Wilson posed a question—or rather, made a comment—on the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board, which I will take up with the relevant minister. He made the appropriate tie with the minimum wage, which is in some ways the more effective policy to ensure full private sector compliance with paying reasonable wages. I am also familiar with the campaign for the minimum wage not to be based on age.

Malcolm Chisholm made clear arguments for the living wage, as did Iain Gray, who made an important point about the power of persuasion and the culture of expectation for public sector contracts, third sector partners and others. The Government has tried to achieve what was suggested.

What is the Government doing on the issue? In line with the Living Wage Foundation rate, we will uprate the living wage from £7.20 to £7.45 from 1 April 2013, as recommended. Through our pay policy, we are targeting pay uplifts to the least well paid in the core Scottish Government staff. We are

encouraging partners and the private sector to deliver the living wage, and we are looking at what other devolved Administrations and public sector bodies can do.

Patrick Harvie: As well as debating how far we can go through procurement, can the Government do other things with the private sector? For example, the Government could say to the bosses of the likes of Amazon and Diageo, “Yes—you can apply for a regional selective assistance grant, but only if you ensure that the people who clean your offices and serve your dinners in the canteen are paid the living wage.”

Derek Mackay: That is a helpful suggestion. We are talking about raising awareness, working through the options that are available through procurement and dealing with the culture of expectation. We can study the analysis of the procurement consultation, which has closed, to see what other mechanisms we can use to encourage the private sector to comply. The member's helpful suggestion relates not necessarily to procurement but to the conditions of grants, which are well worth exploring.

Substantial progress has been made in local government. Seventeen local authorities pay the living wage and a further 12 plan to introduce it or have stated an intention to do so.

Neil Findlay: What does the minister say to those in local government who have argued that it does not make sense to upgrade to the living wage because, if that was done, all that would happen is that low-paid people's benefits would be removed?

Derek Mackay: As a first point of principle, is it not better to give employees a proper wage for the job that they do? However, I understand the point that resources that are given to people with one hand are sometimes taken away with the other. That is why we need an integrated approach to welfare benefits and pay, to ensure that it pays to work. By delivering a proper minimum wage and a living wage, we can achieve that.

I encourage the local authorities that have not yet delivered the living wage to do so. In my visits to local government and in meetings with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I have raised the living wage. I am delighted that the pace of implementation has improved.

Mary Scanlon: I will ask about something that I did not mention in my speech. Does the minister encourage every MSP from every party in the Parliament to ensure that they pay their employees the living wage?

Derek Mackay: I am sure that opportunities are given through volunteering and so on, but I certainly suspect that the living wage should be

delivered for paid staff, if we are debating that in the chamber.

Neil Findlay *rose—*

Derek Mackay: I have about one minute left to cover the Government's response and I have taken three interventions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You can take more time, if you wish.

Derek Mackay: To be helpful to members, I say that I will want to seek assurance on local authority compliance. It is not good enough just to say, "We are delivering the living wage," and leave it at that. I must return to local government to ensure that it delivers the uprated level and to ensure that the policy is consistent and is not delivered with a one-off tick-box mentality. However, my view is that local government, as independent corporate organisations, recognises the importance of the living wage and has stepped up to the plate.

The Government has been able to intervene on the inequality agenda, whether by protecting those affected by the UK welfare changes; in our pay policy, on which I believe that we are leading by example; or by preserving a number of universal benefits, which has protected some of the least well-off. I think that our finding the resources to fill the gap—in the Scottish welfare fund—will also be welcomed as it will help to protect some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland.

I am sure that we can build an expectation around implementation of the living wage, keep up the pace of policy commitment and ensure that we use every tool in the box to tackle the inequality, low pay and poverty that exist in our country. Frankly, in a country as rich as Scotland, they are unacceptable.

Meeting closed at 18:06.

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